The Arc of American Religious Historiography with Respect to War: William Warren Sweet's Pivotal Role in Mediating Neo-Orthodox Critique

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THE ARC OF AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORIOGRAPHY WITH RESPECT TO WAR: WILLIAM WARREN SWEET’S PIVOTAL ROLE IN MEDIATING NEO-ORTHODOX CRITIQUE

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an examination of how American religious historians have described Protestant support for American war from 1702 through 1992. It is a historiography that contributes to the lack of recent American religious historiographies that consider church histories written prior to Sydney Ahlstrom’s 1972 text. In addressing this shortfall of scholarly attention to pre-1970s church histories, this work examines what each historian wrote about war in order to trace historical trends. Starting in 1930 here is a clear shift away from the uncritical triumphal language that justified warfare as a corollary to American expansion and exceptionalism. William Warren Sweet’s 1930 *The Story of Religions in America* is central to the more critical historical narratives within the field of American religious history. Therefore, this work indicates that those who view the histories written between Robert Baird and Sydney Ahlstrom as a monolithic group fail to recognize the shift toward critiquing Protestant support for war starting in 1930.

The historians within the first chapter of this dissertation (Robert Baird, Leonard Bacon, Leonard W. Bacon, and Peter Mode) wrote unabashedly universal validation for Protestant support of war, especially wars against Native Indians. Therefore, when William W. Sweet was critical about Protestant support for war and wrote little concerning wars against Indians, he broke decisively with those Christian historians who came before him. These narrative trends indicated he was part of a new cultural and political paradigm. The new worldview called into question liberal Protestantism’s ability to resist American nationalism and isolationism. Protestant liberal nationalism made it impossible for many Protestants to resist enthusiastically supporting the Spanish-American War and WWI while isolationism made it impossible for many Protestants to confront fascism in Germany even as late as 1939. While critiques of liberal Protestant theology did not appear in Sweet’s work, he did provide the first significant critique of Protestant support for war.

Chapter two investigates the theological developments in America during the 1920s and 1930s that William Sweet’s was aware of when writing his initial critique (1930) and his updated critique (1939) of Protestant support for the Civil War, the Spanish-American War and the WWI. Sweet had knowledge of the writings of the Methodist liberals at Boston University, European neo-orthodoxy, and the *Christian Century* writings of Reinhold Niebuhr. Particularly influential on Sweet’s concept of theology were three critiques of Karl Barth written in America in 1928 by Albert Knudson, Wilhelm Pauck and Reinhold Niebuhr. These three reviews of Barth influenced the language of Sweet in his 1939 review of theological developments in the 1920s and 1930s.

Chapter three traces how Sweet’s history was the first to criticize both Northern and Southern Protestant clergy during the Civil War. In addition he denounced the Protestant clergy during WWI for their turning their churches into government agencies that promoted the war. Sweet’s critical narrative stemmed from and highlighted a crisis within liberal Protestantism. This crisis was magnified by the vast majority of Social Gospel liberals abandoning their pacifistic ideals to support a war that they truly believed would free the world from future war. Once the war was over, Protestants in large
measure retreated to an idealist pacifist and a politically isolationist position that refused to resist the rise of fascist Nazism even after Hitler invaded Poland. To fundamentalist and Neo-orthodox Protestants these events clearly demonstrated the naïve way too many Social Gospel liberals approached war and their failure to understand the destructive power of social evil. The theological critique of liberalism that was spreading throughout American academic universities during the 1920s and 1930s provided a compelling and productive way to track the trends within the narrative accounts of American religious history.

Chapter four evaluates how Clifton E. Olmstead’s 1960 work made significant strides in overcoming the lack of discussion of Native Indian wars within Sweet’s work. Olmstead described Protestant settlers at war against Indians, analyzed why the wars occurred, and provided a critique of Protestant support for those wars. Olmstead discussed how the settlers perceived the Indians as ignorant, shiftless, and depraved savages and pointed to these attitudes as reasons for lack of success in missions and in leading to hostilities. Earlier accounts justified settlers’ attitudes toward the Native tribes but Olmstead questioned them in an attempt to critique them. He also provided the most significant analysis of neo-orthodoxy and the Niebuhr brothers’ influence on American theology from the Great Depression through 1960.

Olmstead’s work set the stage for two historians in the fifth chapter, Martin Marty and Sydney Ahlstrom. They both wrote longer and more detailed criticism of Protestant support for war against Native Indians that led to genocide-like practices against Indians especially during Western expansion. The other historians in chapter four were Winthrop Hudson and Edwin Gaustad both of whom wrote relatively little concerning Protestant support for war. Chapter five also explored how historians Catherine Albanese and Mark Noll described Protestant support for war and how their interest in describing war paralleled their interest in writing about neo-orthodox theologies in America from the 1930s through the 1960s.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 2002, Catherine Albanese wrote *American Religious History: A Bibliographical Essay*. The essay organized American religious histories into three classifications: consensus, conflict and contact. She classified consensus history as any general narrative history that made central the success of Anglo-Protestantism. For her, consensus history included all grand-narratives of American church history written from Robert Baird’s *Religion in America* in 1842 up through Sydney Ahlstrom’s *The History of the American People* written in 1972. She pointed to Ahlstrom’s work as the last American religious consensus history. According to Albanese, American religious historians that followed Ahlstrom turned to smaller more topical subjects focusing on religious pluralism. She divided the post-Ahlstrom histories into either conflict or contact narratives. Albanese designated R. Laurence Moore’s *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (1986) as exemplary of conflict, suggested that Thomas A. Tweed’s *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (1997) was illustrative of contact, and, likewise, regarded her own *America: Religions and Religion* (1981) as representative of contact.

This dissertation complicates Albanese’s descriptive categories, especially her assessment of American religious consensus history, by focusing on how American church and religious historians interpreted American engagements in war. It contributes

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1 American historiography typically classifies consensus history (1940s-1960s) as a time-period when the common ideas that united Americans were more important than the conflicts that separated them. This period was contrasted with the progressive time-period (1900-1940s) that focused on competing social and economic forces that divided groups, sections and classes. When this paper refers to consensus history, it is within a much larger American religious consensus tradition of historiography whereby the success of Protestantism is championed by each comprehensive writing of American church history from 1842 through the early 1990s. Thus, my use of consensus history is broader than both traditional American history in general and Albanese’s use of the term in particular. While Albanese classified her text *America Religions and Religion* (1981) as contact history, I described her work as a consensus history. I classified her work in this way since her history described the ‘oneness’ of religion in America as the historical dominance of public Protestantism.

2 Prior to Clifton Olmstead’s work in 1960, each American historian discussed in this text would most accurately be described as an American church historian since they focused so overwhelmingly on the history of Protestant denominational growth and doctrine. These earlier historians only gave a cursory overview of religious traditions outside of Protestantism usually to suggest that the other traditions were somehow inferior to Protestantism. After 1960, there are a few historians who could be considered American religious historians, namely Olmstead, Ahlstrom and Albanese. Yet, even these three historians who made such a great effort to be as inclusive as possible toward as many American religious traditions, and to describe them in a positive way, still wrote much more about Protestant denominations and the influence of Protestantism on American culture. Therefore, while towards the second half of this project I begin to referer to more historians as American religious historians, I still consider and name all the historians as American church historians.

3 In general American church and religious historians did not describe the bloody battlefield of war, the individual soldier who fought in wars, or the battlefield strategy of war; rather the historians in this study described how various Protestant denominations supported the war effort.
to the lack of recent American religious historiographies that evaluate church histories written prior to Sydney Ahlstrom and it presents the first to evaluate the subject of war. In addressing the shortage of scholarly attention to pre-1970s American church histories, this work examines what each consensus historian wrote about war in order to trace historical trends. The dissertation is not a historiography of religion and war in America, but a much more selective examination of the language employed by American church historians with respect to how they described war.

Focusing on the theme of war reveals an important shift in the 1930s away from the uncritical triumphal narratives that justified warfare as a corollary to American expansion and exceptionalism. This work indicates that those who interpret American religious histories written between Robert Baird (1842) and Sydney Ahlstrom (1972) as monolithic fail to recognize the complexity of consensus narratives within the field of American religious history. The dissertation argues that an important shift began in 1930 concerning how historians of American religion viewed war. This shift provided a criticism of Protestant support for war that reflected a growing concern among historians of American religion about the close relationship between Protestantism and American nationalism. In 1930, William Warren Sweet was the American church historian who broke away from earlier historical accounts that justified Protestant support for war. His text questioned and critiqued an American Protestantism that he described as blindly adhering to a government war policy. This type of criticism escalated in 1970s in the context of a growing disaffection with America’s war in Vietnam.

Motivating influences on how or why a certain author describes war in a particular way is inherently difficult to demonstrate and often impossible to prove. Certainly there are many factors to be acknowledged in accounting for the shift this dissertation describes. For one thing, Sweet’s text incorporates a more modern and scientific method of writing history in an effort to produce objective history. This is a contribution Sweet has already been noted for by other historians, like his biographer James Ash. In addition to the methods that Sweet employed in writing his history this dissertation acknowledges the importance of cultural influences associated with the expansion of American industry and economy during the 1920s, the financial collapse in 1929, the Great Depression of the 1930s, and theological developments in America during the 1920s and 1930s. To provide a deeper analysis of the intellectual factors involved in the innovative way Sweet’s text critiqued Protestant support for war, this dissertation takes an in-depth look at the theological developments that he would have known while writing in the late 1920s and 1930s.

This historical investigation of the 1920s and 1930s neither confirms that Sweet’s more critical descriptions of Protestant support for war were dependent on theological developments nor proves that these developments were the most critical influence on Sweet. Rather this historical backdrop to Sweet’s history provides a more detailed look into the interconnectedness of academic circles during the 1920s and 1930s, especially concerning historical and theological studies at three academic institutions and two journals. Chicago University, Union Theological Seminary and Boston University all informed Sweet’s knowledge of theological developments during the 1920s and the 1930s. Likewise the Christian Century and The Methodist Review were two publications where Sweet published articles and where he found material that he incorporated into at least two of his historical works: The Story of Religion in America and Makers of
Christianity—From John Cotton to Lyman Abbott. This theological background reveals Sweet as a liberal Methodist historian who defended Protestant liberalism against three theological attacks: fundamentalism, Karl Barth’s neo-orthodoxy and Reinhold Niebuhr’s political realism.

This analysis of historians’ interpretations of war revealed a long time-period when American church historians justified and even celebrated Protestant support for American war. This justification for war was a tradition begun by colonial English clergy who settled in both Virginia and New England. The tradition was maintained by theologically trained ministers and missionaries including Robert Baird (1842), Leonard Bacon (1874) and Leonard Woolsey Bacon (1897). Baird received his theological training at the Calvinistic College of New Jersey and he maintained his Calvinistic Presbyterianism throughout his career as a pastor and missionary. Baird’s Calvinistic theology led him to interpret Native American’s as unregenerate heathen in need of both Christianization and civilization and as Native Indians continued to reject conversion, he maintained that self-defense and increased agricultural production justified the use of military power to remove the Native Indians. Leonard Bacon and his son Leonard W. Bacon both studied theology at Yale College and were long-term Congregational pastors whose theological outlook provided them with a more understanding view of Native Indians. Their texts, to a greater extent than Baird’s, described the Natives as people who initially befriended the early Protestant settlers. As time brought more and more attacks from Indians, however, the elder Bacon’s text described the justification of military defense and war as a way to increase settlers’ land holdings. This justification for Protestant support for war was present in all three historians’ accounts of the Revolutionary War and in the younger Bacon’s text as he described the justification of Northern Protestants as they supported abolition and President Lincoln in his military struggle.

Peter Mode was not trained in theological studies and was not a minister or missionary as he trained as a historian at Chicago University. Mode’s text follows in the steps of his theologically trained predecessors as he justified Protestant support and participation in every American war from Native wars through the Civil War. His text was published four years following the end of WWI so it was remarkable that his text was silent about Protestant support for WWI. Sweet, like those historians before Mode, was theologically trained at Drew Theological Seminary which was a Methodist seminary. He also pastored at a Methodist church for two years before going to the University of Pennsylvania to be trained as a historian. His seminary training in theology did not prevent him from interpreting Protestant support for war as too driven by an over-zealous regionalism or nationalism. Sweet, in 1939, cynically suggested that in 1917 the Protestant churches in America had as much chance of ending all future war by supporting a war against Germany as they had in winning the world for Christ in this generation (he was describing the pre-WWI generation).4 Sweet’s interest in theology was manifest in his historical writing and was nowhere clearer than in his 1939 chapter on ‘The Great War.’ In this chapter he defined theology and he surveyed the field of theological developments that had shaped American theology for the past twenty years. Even if Sweet’s descriptions of Protestant support for war were not dependent on these current theological developments, he still found them interesting and important enough to

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4 Sweet, The Story (1939), 551-2.
include in his historical account. These pre-1940 historical accounts demonstrate that it was not easy for American religious historians who were theologically trained to ever completely detach their historical accounts from their knowledge of theological developments.

American church historians during particular time-periods wrote narratives that justified Protestant support for war (1842-1923), began to critique Protestant support for some wars (1930-1966), and increasingly condemned Protestant support for many wars (1970-1992). At the center of this historiographical shift towards questioning and critiquing Protestant support for war was William Warren Sweet’s *The Story of Religions in America* (1930). Sweet’s work provided a significant criticism of both Northern and Southern Protestant clergy during the Civil War. He asserted that Protestant denominations were largely responsible for polarizing the nation into Northern and Southern regions that became willing and even eager, largely due to divine justification, to go to war against each other. He initiated a critique of Northern Protestant support for the war that resulted in a longer and deadlier war. His text included a prominent attack against Protestant clergy during the First World War as he described the growing ranks of Protestant ministers who turned their churches into government agencies that promoted war and preached propaganda.

Sweet’s more critical narrative concerning Protestant support for war highlighted a crisis within American liberal Protestantism during the 1920s and 1930s. Sweet described both fundamentalism and European neo-orthodoxy stressing their similarities in order to defend Protestant liberalism’s optimism against the liberal critics’ pessimistic attacks. Historical research concerning the theological discourse during the 1920s and 1930s connects Sweet to some theological scholars not mentioned in his text. Three individuals standout: Reinhold Niebuhr, the ethicist at Union Theological Seminary who increasingly critiqued of Protestant liberalism throughout the 1930s, Wilhelm Pauck, a German historical theologian who worked at Chicago Divinity School, and Albert Knudson, a Boston University personalist who wrote much about Methodist theology and church doctrine. In 1928, each of these scholars reviewed Karl Barth’s theology and the language they employed to describe neo-orthodoxy was similar to the language Sweet used in writing his definition of theology and his summary of Barth’s theology. Yet Sweet’s more critical stand against Protestant support for war can only be circumstantially connected to the theological critiques of liberalism that were being developed by Reinhold Niebuhr and Karl Barth in the 1920s and 1930s. In addition, Sweet’s definition of theology prior to his discussion of neo-orthodoxy points to a connection between Sweet and earlier church historians who were trained by denominational Divinity Schools. American religious historians who came after Sweet would be much less likely to grind theological axes while composing their histories.

The crisis within Protestant liberalism was magnified by the vast majority of Social Gospel liberals abandoning their pacifistic ideals in order to support a war in 1917.

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3 Protestant liberalism is well defined by Gary Dorrein. See his *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and modernity, 1900-1950*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 1-10. Here he documents the formation of liberalism as the joining of two historical forces: evangelical piety and Enlightenment modernity. These forces were not always easy to keep in equilibrium and the movement as a whole was far from uniform. It is important to keep in mind that certain schools of thought within liberalism either leaned closer toward pietism or toward modernity.
Once the war was over, Protestant liberals in large measure retreated to an idealist pacifist and a politically isolationist position that refused to resist the rise of fascist Nazism even after Hitler invaded Poland. These events demonstrated the naïve way too many Social Gospel liberals approached war and their failure to understand the destructive power of social and national evil. Even those Protestant leaders who wrote and preached about evil were unable to resist enthusiastically supporting America’s entry into WWI (a war they had renounced for two years). Likewise, they failed to recognize the national evil that Hitler was unleashing on Europe and once they did recognize it, they failed to respond until after Pearl Harbor.

This historiography is also about the American church and religious historians who wrote about war. In exploring what each historian wrote about war, this historiography describes, to as great an extent as possible, the background of each historian. Some background information was unavailable. There was much more to find out about Martin Marty than there was concerning Peter G. Mode, the Chicago historian whose life was undocumented following his dismissal from the university in 1927. Yet knowledge of the historians past is important for understanding the context of their work. For example, Robert Baird has been criticized in modern times for his 1842 prediction that the Protestant churches in America would peacefully resolve the slavery problem. Historians usually point to the increasing animosity between the North and the South in the 1830s as the Southern economy became increasingly dependent on slave labor, a fact that they assume Baird would have been aware.

What these criticisms too often overlook is that Robert Baird was a missionary to Europe from the mid-1830s until the 1850s. Prior to his missionary work in Europe, he was a Presbyterian missionary for eight years to impoverished urban areas in the North and to poor rural areas of the Midwest. Thus, his knowledge of the growing dependence of the South on slavery and the increasingly mean-spirited attacks between Northern abolitionists and Southern pro-slavery Protestants following the mid-1830s could very well have been very limited. From 1835-42, Baird’s focus was on missionary work in Europe where Protestantism was waning. He communicated the successful growth that American Protestantism experienced following the Revolutionary War. Baird’s interest in the early 1840s was in converting European crowds to the American style of church growth separated from state sponsorship not in examining the social and economic factors surrounding American slavery. These background considerations shed light on the complexity of factors surrounding Baird’s optimistic description of a lasting peace.

Sweet’s connection to theological developments in America during the 1920s and 1930s provides an important context for understanding the American religious histories written after the 1930s. Yet there have been no American religious historiographic examinations that have identified the 1920s or the 1930s as a decisive time-period in the development of American religious history. One foremost reason for this is the American religious historiographical focus on Ahlstrom’s work that the earlier histories are reduced to texts that made possible Ahlstrom’s achievement rather than being the creative works of historians whose past is worth exploring. This dissertation illuminates William Warren Sweet’s role in taking American religious history in a more critical direction when describing Protestant support for war. It also reflects upon the biographical, cultural and theological forces that contributed to the consensus writings of American religious historians from Robert Baird in 1842 through Mark Noll in 1992.
1.1 Trends in American Religious Historiography

The vast majority of historians who wrote historiographies about American religious history have been very similar to Albanese’s essay—brief articles that describe general trends within American religious historical accounts during specific time periods. Very few, if any, historiographies have examined in detail the personal and social forces that directed historians to describe events in a certain way. Most simply describe how American religious histories written between Robert Baird (1842) and Sydney Ahlstrom (1972) all organized their histories with the success of Protestantism at the center of their narrative while maintaining some kind of narrative theme like volunteerism, the frontier, the Social Gospel, or democratization. The less-grand-narrative histories written after Ahlstrom utilized a more narrow focus to stress the importance of issues like race, immigration, Catholicism, religious pluralism and the accomplishments of women in American history.

In 1968, Paul Carter wrote an essay entitled “Recent Historiography of the Protestant Churches in America” which was published in *Church History*. He mentioned that the Social Gospel was in better historical shape because of Martin Marty and that Henry May was so focused on the success of mainline Protestants in an industrialized America that he left out Catholics, Episcopalians and Quakers. He noted William Sweet’s focus on the frontier along with his exclusion of Lutherans from the frontier. Carter also critiqued all of the historians he mentioned for failing to discuss the success of Mormonism in America. In spite of these shortcomings, he argued that the field as a whole had progressed greatly from the writings of Robert Baird (1842) and Leonard W. Bacon (1897).

In 1994, Nathan O. Hatch wrote “The Puzzle of American Methodism” which was an essay exploring the historiography of Methodism, or more accurately the lack of American religious historians interest in writing about Methodism. Hatch began his essay with an analysis of American religious historiography. He concluded that prior to the 1960s the three main academic institutions that produced American church history were Harvard, Yale and Chicago. Some early pioneers who studied at Harvard were Alan Heiment, Edmund Morgan, William McLoughlin, Sydney Ahlstrom and Henry May. Yale professors who carried the momentum of American church history into the future were H. Richard Niebuhr, Edmund Morgan, Sydney Ahlstrom and John Smith. Finally there were several Chicago scholars who significantly impacted the academic field including William Warren Sweet, Sidney Mead, Robert Handy, Winthrop Hudson, Jerald Brauer and Martin Marty. All three schools, Hatch argued, shared a focus on consensus history that was intellectual history, celebrating the development of Puritanism into mainline Protestantism. After the 1960s, however, the field changed to address non-consensus history—a history that focused on what R. Laurence Moore referred to as “outsiders.” American religious historical studies began to address smaller sects, Catholics, Mormons, Jews and groups of every ethnic origin. The problem, according to Hatch, was that for the pre-1960s historians, Methodism was seen as too emotional and revivalistic to be taken seriously by intellectual historians and for the post-1960s historians Methodism was considered too close to mainline Protestantism to be included in their studies. The rest of Hatch’s article described the tremendous growth of Methodism and argued that Methodism could explain the character of religion in America.
better than Puritanism. The discussion of historiography within his article was poignant in describing intellectual grand-narratives of Protestantism prior to the 1960s and smaller post-1960s studies of lived-religion that were much more diverse in describing America’s plurality of religious expressions.

In 2003 Stephen J. Fleming wrote “Becoming the American Religion: The Place of Mormonism in the Development of American Religious Historiography.” This was an article that explored how Mormonism was portrayed within the writing of American religious history from Robert Baird through the present. Fleming demarcated these histories as pre-1970s and post-1970s and he argued that since the 1970s Mormonism has become the most popular religious movement to write about and that it has surpassed Puritanism in importance for the field of American religious history. In the histories written prior to the 1970s, however, Mormonism was demonized, discredited, marginalized or at best ignored. Even as late as 1972, Fleming argued, Sydney Ahlstrom struggled to include within his grand-narrative a section on Mormonism that equaled their importance within the history of religion in America. Like the emotional Methodists, the Mormons were too anti-intellectual to be taken seriously by the intellectually focused pre-1970s consensus histories. Following the 1970s histories, however, historians interpreted Mormonism as a religious ‘outsider’ whose growth was as fascinating as its theological foundation and founder. Yet the fact that Fleming was able to write an essay on the place of Mormonism within American religious historiography demonstrated the growth of historical interest in non-consensus, non-mainline Protestant religious groups in America.

In 2009 Danny Dunivan wrote a short article entitled “Recent Revision of Practices in American Religious History.” He explored how postmodern historical methods have deconstructed the grand narratives of the past during the last twenty-five years. He claimed the postmodern orientation of American religious history resulted from two influences. First, there was a turn to the social sciences (anthropology, ethnography, and sociology) as primary historical methods. Second, there was the developing new revisionist structure that unexplored subjects like geography (no longer Puritan New England), race (no longer solely white), gender (no longer solely men), religious pluralism (no longer Protestantism), and popular culture (no longer intellectual history). Dunivan concluded that these postmodern histories in many ways fulfilled the vision of Ahlstrom by becoming ever more inclusive of all religious expressions in American history.

In 2010 Kevin Schultz and Paul Harvey wrote a lengthy article entitled “Everywhere and Nowhere: Recent Trends in American Religious History and Historiography.” Their article was premised on examining why so many United States’ historians discussed religion in such a very limited way or simply ignored it when religion has been so prevalent and so important to the American people. The article highlights five trends in American religious history over the last twenty-five years which the authors hope will help influence American historians to take religion more seriously. The five areas were pluralism, outsider religions, religion and politics, social history, and lived religion. The five areas that this article highlights as trends within the field of American religious history over the last twenty-five years were very similar to how the other three articles described the field since Ahlstrom’s grand-narrative.
This survey indicated a great interest in what has happened within American religious history since Sydney Ahlstrom’s work, especially during the last twenty-five years. It also points to the overgeneralization of American religious histories written prior to Ahlstrom. Even though there may be some value in classifying a historian’s work into a theme, the practice too often encourages others, even scholars, to dismiss older historical works as being limited to that particular theme. Robert Baird’s historical work cannot be reduced to volunteerism. Neither can William Sweet’s work be fully explained by his interest in the frontier nor Martin Marty’s impact limited to a defense of the Social Gospel. A lifetime of events and experiences shaped the writing of American church and religious historians who paved the way for the last twenty-five years of newer, ever-more diverse, historical accounts of lived-religion in America.

1.2 Early American Histories

Religiously motivated war provided much of the cultural and political milieu during European colonization. The Spanish conquest of Native peoples in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the name of the Catholic Church was well known by the English Protestants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as they began to settle the east coast of what would become the United States. Many of the first histories written in the new settlements described God’s providence protecting and delivering Protestant settlers engaged in warfare against Indians. They also contained supernatural explanations justifying Protestant rationale supporting war. Both Anglican and Calvinistic-Puritan writers promoted stories of God directing Protestant settlers in their wars against Native tribes which resulted in the successful founding of English settlements.

These first English authors of seventeenth and eighteenth century colonial history described war as justified based on a worldview steeped in religious attitudes portraying enemies as evil-doers and savages and Protestant compatriots as agents of God. These earliest historical accounts celebrated the new-world voyages as divinely ordained. A few years after the founding of the Virginia colony by the English, the Reverend Alexander Whitaker (1585-1617) arrived in Virginia in 1611. Two years later he wrote Good News from Virginia which began the Protestant tradition of justifying the settlers’ presence in America based on a divine calling, the availability of bountiful land, a heroic people on a journey, and the sovereign protection of God.

In 1630, prior to leaving the Arbella, John Winthrop (1588-1649) continued this tradition of describing English settlements as having a special, divine destiny in both his sermon entitled A Model of Christian Charity and again in his History of New England which was published posthumously in 1649. A few years passed before Edward Johnson (1598-1672) anonymously published, in 1654, Wonder Working Providence of Sions Savior in order to commemorate the divine providence which guided the founders of New England’s colony. Early in the eighteenth century, in 1702, Cotton Mather (1663-1728) published his Magnalia Christi Americana. Mather’s seven volume work was a

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6 The brutal Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) which began as a religious war between Protestants and Catholics in what is now Germany is exemplary of this religiously motivated violence. The war grew from a regional religious conflict into a continental struggle involving just about every European nation.

Puritan celebration of the sovereignty of God in the founding of Massachusetts and in glorifying Christ’s great works in America. The historical narratives of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century often described settlers’ wars against Native Indians as justified by evidence of divine intervention and supported by religious beliefs that allowed Puritans to declare sacred the land acquired from the conquered heathen simply by obtaining possession of it.\(^8\)

These early English accounts, both Anglican and Puritan, would eventually be replaced by nineteenth and twentieth century accounts that provided a more modern historical criterion for evaluating historical evidence justifying Protestant support of American warfare. Before examining these more modern empirical histories, the first chapter will briefly analyze Cotton Mather’s 1702 historical documentation of divine justification for Puritan support of war against Indians. This will facilitate a comparison of the four early modern historical narratives’ written between 1842 and 1923 with Cotton Mather’s pre-modern historical account that stressed the supernatural acts of God in establishing the Puritan settlements in New England. The four later histories would continue to justify Protestant support for war but their methods would change as they utilized a more modern and natural empirical method for documenting their historical narratives.

1.3 Chapter Contents

The first chapter will examine historical accounts written from the 1840s through the 1920s. In 1842, some nineteen years prior to the Civil War, Robert Baird wrote and published his *Religion in America* for a European audience captivated by the growth and varieties of American Protestant denominations in America. His discussion of war centered on the success of Protestant settlers’ warfare against Native Indian tribes. Utilizing a more modern and scientific approach to history that was gaining acceptance by the mid-nineteenth century, Baird justified the Protestant support for war against Indians based on self-defense and increased land cultivation. He largely abandoned the supernatural explanations for Protestant settler success in their new environment that had dominated the earlier historical accounts written by English settlers. Baird’s discussion of the Revolutionary war was brief compared to his account of Indian wars. He did, however, include the large role played by Protestant ministers in demonizing the British and encouraging their congregations to support the fight for Independence. This more scientific approach to the writing of American religious history would be continued in the late nineteenth century by the Congregationalist Church father and son team of Leonard Bacon and Leonard Woolsey Bacon. They, like Baird, indicated their belief in a supernatural God. Yet they would rely on historical data in justifying Protestant support of Indian wars, the Revolutionary War and the Union Army during the Civil War.

Modern historical-critical methods of analysis along with theological developments in

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\(^8\) Fessenden, Tracey, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. In Chapter One, Fessenden has demonstrated how Puritans brought the religiously sacred into the secular by equating God’s conquest of their own sinful souls with their conquest of heathen lands. Puritans described this holy infiltration into everyday life using supernatural language of divine intervention whereby God chose to aid the settlers in clearing the Indians and thus God’s cleansing the land was equated to God’s work in cleansing their souls. This making of the exterior conflict that Puritans had with Indians into an interior encounter was presented by Fessenden on pages 19-27.
America would soon make obsolete these uncritical justifications of Protestant support for American war.

Chapter two will explore the theological developments that occurred within the United States during the 1920s and 1930s and how they are connected to William Warren Sweet’s *The Story of Religion in America*, a text published in 1930. In fact this chapter will examine in-depth the *sitz im leben* of Sweet during the 1920s as he prepared his text that critiqued the Civil War and the First World War. The theological developments of the 1930s would have been poignant for Sweet as he revised his 1939 manuscript which included a significant and lengthy condemnation of American Protestant support for the Spanish American War and World War I. Sweet’s 1939 and 1950 editions of *The Story* included increasing harsh critiques of Protestant liberal support for isolationism, as it condemned the failure of Protestant churches to confront German fascism along with the liberal Protestant leaders who called for American neutrality at any price. In the 1920s and 1930s, theology in America was a rapidly changing field with Chicago University, Boston University and Union Theological Seminary all striving to be at the forefront of theological inquiry and historical investigation. One year before a young Reinhold Niebuhr went to Union, William Sweet, almost ten years Niebuhr’s senior, arrived at Chicago. Both scholars published articles in the *Christian Century* which was published in Chicago. Additionally, the liberal Protestant scholar who was most often attacked by Niebuhr was the Dean of the Divinity School at Chicago University who hired Sweet: Shailer Mathews.

At Chicago, Sweet became close friends with Wilhelm Pauck (1901-1981), a German theologian and church historian. Pauck grew up in Berlin and his father served in the German army during WWI. In spite of the war, he received an outstanding education and attended the University of Berlin where he studied with Karl Holl (1866-1926), Adolph von Harnack (1851-1930), and Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923). He supported Karl Barth’s (1886-1968) critique of liberal Protestantism but rejected the more dogmatic aspects of his dialectical theology. Pauck was able to give Sweet a Reformed German view of Barth’s ideas and how they were shaped by World War I. He would also be able to give Sweet a firsthand account of the pain and suffering that WWI brought to so many European families, especially the families in post-war Germany.

With Sweet’s strong interest in furthering Methodist causes, the second chapter will also examine the Methodist connection to liberal Protestantism, WWI, socialism and their reaction to the new theology of Karl Barth. Methodists, in general, were late to the Social Gospel movement but by the turn of the twentieth century Methodist leaders were

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9 Dialectical theology is also referred to as crisis theology and the dialectical theology represented by Karl Barth eventually became known as neo-orthodoxy in America. It is a theological system that emphasizes the great tensions, paradoxes and ambiguities within Christian faith. In many ways it was a reaction against modern liberal faith in reason since it claims God is hidden from human rationality and can only be revealed by divine grace. Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976) each developed, in their own way, the dialectical theology they learned from Wilhelm Herrmann (1846-1922) their teacher at Marburg. Much of the difference in their theological outlook stemmed from Barth’s Reformed background and Bultmann’s Lutheran background. Barth would focus his attack against liberalism through his dogmatic theology while Bultmann would focus his attack against liberalism through an attack on the ‘historical Jesus,’ through demythologizing scripture and through existentialist exegesis. See McCormack, Bruce, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
many of the loudest voices within the liberal Protestant theological tradition. Boston University, at this time, was a stronghold for liberal Methodist theology and there were three prominent theologians who received their PhDs from Boston. These three scholars regularly published articles in the *Methodist Review*. The three scholars were Albert C. Knudson (1873-1953), Francis J. McConnell (1871-1953), and Edgar S. Brightman (1884-1953) all three of whom were students of Borden Parker Bowne. The *Methodist Review* was the publication where the young Sweet published many of his articles while he was still a professor at Drew University. Between 1914 and 1930, Sweet and the Boston University liberal scholars published at least twenty-nine articles in the *Methodist Review*.

This chapter will argue that the greatest theological development that Sweet was aware of during his writing history in the 1930s was the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr. In the 1920s both Niebuhr and Sweet published articles in the *Christian Century* and in the 1930s Niebuhr began to intensify his break with liberalism. In doing so, he turned more decisively toward theological realism as he perceived the inability of pacifism and isolationism to restrain the evils of Nazism that were taking over Germany. Niebuhr also, like Knudson and Pauck, wrote a review of Barth’s neo-orthodoxy in 1928. Although Sweet maintained his liberal world-view throughout his academic career, his description and condemnation of American Protestant support for WWI and his critique of German fascism contained elements that, if not inspired by Niebuhr, were to some degree shaped by reflections on the theological and political writings of Niebuhr.

In examining the cultural and theological situation surrounding Sweet during the 1920s and 1930s, this chapter will uncover many of the ways in which Sweet’s knowledge of current events motivated him to update his *The Story of Religions in America* in 1939. These theological developments inspired Sweet to include the first chapter-long-condemnation of Protestant support for World War I. Sweet’s earlier account provided the first condemnation of Protestant support for American war besides those critiques of Southern ministers during the Civil War. His later editions included stronger criticisms of liberal Protestant leaders rushing to embrace war with Germany and preaching propaganda during WWI. Sweet’s work provided the foundation for future American religious historians to critique Protestant support for war against Native Indians and the propaganda used to demonize the Native population that was being displaced.

The third chapter will closely examine the 1930 and 1939 historical accounts of American religion written by William Warren Sweet. The 1930 edition was entitled *The Story of Religions in America*. Sweet brought an even greater degree of scientific objectivity to his historical descriptions of Protestant support for war than those historians in chapter one. He was a professional historian trained at the University of Pennsylvania under scholars dedicated to the pursuit of empirical objectivity. These scholars taught

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10 Some of the leading Methodist liberals were Borden Parker Bowne, George A. Coe, Harry F. Ward, Georgia Harkens, Harris Franklin Rall, Bishop Francis McConnell, Albert Knudson, Edgar S. Brightman, Daniel Day Williams and Ernest Title.

11 In 1897, Leonard Woolsey Bacon wrote the first American church historical critique of the South’s Protestant support for slavery and their claim of divine justification for going to war against the North. He critiqued both the Southern use of scripture in justifying their cause for war and their preaching hatred against the North from their pulpits. L. W. Bacon strongly defended and justified Northern support for abolition and using military force to end slavery and unite the nation.
Sweet that it was the historian’s duty to present facts in order to corroborate one objective reality within their historical accounts. Thus, Sweet was well prepared, in 1927, to join the highly scientific and socio-historical “Chicago school” of “social environmental history” which emphasized the scholarly goal of producing texts that reflected objectively-verifiable history.12

Sweet’s lack of writing about the Native Indian wars was a significant break with the earlier historians who wrote lengthy accounts that justified Protestant wars against Native tribes. Sweet, in focusing on post-Revolutionary War westward expansion, described only one settler military encounter with Native Indians that occurred in Virginia. The most decisive and revolutionary change within his historical text, compared to the historians who came before him, was that he provided an original critique of Protestant support for war. He wrote the first critique to blame both sides for their preaching hatred before and during the Civil War, blaming Protestant clergy’s enthusiasm for the war as a major factor in increasing the war’s violence and lengthening its duration. He also provided the first critique of American Protestant support for WWI. European theological reflection on WWI and Niebuhr’s turn to realism, after witnessing the suffering in Germany following the war, set into motion the development of two powerful critiques of liberal Protestantism that made possible Sweet’s critique of Protestant support for various wars.

Chapters four and five will follow the development of American religious consensus histories written between 1960 and 1992. Those two chapters will trace the influence of William W. Sweet on those histories along with the continued influence of theological developments in America during the 1940s and 1950s. Chapter four will examine three American religious histories written during the 1960s. The three professionally trained historians were Clifton Olmstead, Winthrop Hudson and Edwin Gaustad. Hudson was a graduate student of Sweet and all three were greatly influenced by Sweet. Two of the three historians wrote relatively short accounts concerning settler wars with Native groups and one failed to mention settler wars at all. Hudson was the historian who did not describe them; Gaustad presented short descriptions of major outbreaks of violence between settlers and Native tribes without justifying the settlers; and Olmstead provided the first serious critique of Protestant settler wars against Native Indians.

In many ways, Sweet’s 1930 edition The Story of Religion in America set the stage for Olmstead’s criticism as it presented two unique critiques of Protestant support for war to appear in any overarching historical account of religion in America. Sweet wrote the first American religious consensus history to criticize Protestant ministers during the Civil War and during the Great War. Sweet critiqued the Protestant ministers’ enthusiasm for war in both the North and the South. He also provided a critique of the schizophrenic way the Protestant clergy went from preaching peace in 1916 to enthusiastically supporting the United States government’s call to arms in 1917 and back again to a deepened pacifism in the 1920s. Sweet’s updated 1939 text actually condemned Protestant support for the Spanish American War and the First World War.

12 Ash, James, L. Protestantism and the American University: An Intellectual Biography of William Warren Sweet. Dallas, TX: SMU Press, 1987, 64. The University of Chicago’s Divinity School’s impressive faculty that was largely assembled in the 1920s was aided by the vision of Shailer Mathews, dean from 1907-1933, and by a million dollar gift from the Baptist John D. Rockefeller in 1925.
since during both of these conflicts the majority of Protestant clergy preached pro-war sermons motivating hatred for the nations America was fighting.

Chapter five begins with an exploration of Martin Marty’s *Righteous Empire*—a text that when compared to any previous comprehensive American religious history provided the most critical description of Protestant support for violence and war against Native Indians. Marty’s criticism of settler war extended to a critique of American Protestant leaders support for war during the Civil War, WWI and to a lesser extent WWII as he credited the Protestant clergy with largely learning from their mistakes during WWI. Ahlstrom’s and Noll’s historical texts provided two other examples of comprehensive American religious histories that criticized Protestant settler violence against Native Indians although to a lesser extent than Marty’s text. Surprisingly, Albanese, who was a student of Marty, did not describe settler warfare against Native groups even though her comprehensive American religious history opened with a chapter on Native Indian religions. Not surprising is that her lack of interest in writing about war may have stemmed from her lack of interest in addressing European neo-orthodox theology or American political realism, two developments that helped inspire Sweet’s critique of Protestant support for war.
CHAPTER TWO

WAR JUSTIFIED BY GOD AND NATURAL EVIDENCE: EARLY AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORIANS DESCRIBE PROTESTANT SUPPORT FOR WAR, 1702-1923

This chapter will examine the place of warfare within the historical accounts of four American church historians who wrote general histories of the growth of Protestantism in America from 1842 through 1923. It will also compare and contrast them with the 1702 historical account of the English Puritan Cotton Mather. The comparison and contrast will focus on how each historical account described war, how war against Native Indians was justified, and how Protestant clergy support for each war was described and defended. The four authors examined are Robert Baird, Leonard Bacon, Leonard Woolsey Bacon, and Peter G. Mode. Each of these four authors employed more modern and scientific methods in writing their historical accounts than did the historical accounts that were written during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as exemplified in Cotton Mather’s account. All five historical narratives justified Protestant support for settler wars against the Native population. Much of the motivation for the Protestant settler wars against Native tribes was similarly described, usually based in self defense and survival. The difference in the narratives rested primarily in Mather writing a pre-modern narrative based in divine providence while Baird and those following him utilized a more modern historical narrative based on empirical evidence. Mather’s history described and justified Protestant settler war against Indians based on the divine working out of God’s plan. God’s hand supernaturally guided and protected the settlers as they cultivated the land, brought civilization to the wilderness, and Christianized the Native heathens. Mather’s account was similar to earlier Puritan accounts of Protestant settlement and thus differed significantly with the historical account written by Robert Baird and by those historians who would follow him.

Robert Baird wrote prior to the Civil War so his historical account only addressed Protestant support for settler wars against Natives and support for the Revolutionary War. While Mather utilized a divine justification for settler violence against Indians, Baird employed more natural and historical forces to justify war against Indians. According to Baird, settler fear of surprise attacks, defense of settlements, and greater agricultural output all served as rationale for Protestant support of war against natives. Many of these same factors, within Baird’s account served to justify colonial Protestant support for war against the British crown during the Revolutionary Era.

Leonard Bacon and his son Leonard Woolsey Bacon both wrote historical accounts of Protestant success in America. L. Bacon’s text was a general history of the Christian Era that included the Protestant settlement of New England. His account of Protestant settlement was quite similar to Robert Baird’s in that settler fear was described in a way that justified their violence against Indians. L. W. Bacon’s historical account focused on Protestant success in America so while his father’s text ended with the settling of New England, the son’s account described Protestant support for the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. While L. W. Bacon did not question the violence of early
Protestant settlers against Indians, his historical text did point out the unnecessary and unjust suffering caused by federal troops who forcefully removed the Cherokee Nation from Georgia even though the tribe had been largely civilized and Christianized by missionaries following the Revolutionary War. L. W. Bacon was the first American church historian to write about the Civil War. In describing the years prior to the Civil War, he questioned the Christian nature of the South’s clergy in their embrace of slavery following the mid-1830s. He also pointed out the increasing economic benefit to the South that slavery played in the cotton industry.

L. W. Bacon’s historical account of the South during the Civil War provided a rationale for later American church historians to utilize in condemning Protestant support of violence and warfare. William Warren Sweet, who mentioned L. W. Bacon’s history, wrote a pivotal historical account in 1930 that documented and critiqued the effects of Protestant ministers in the North and the South preaching hatred and destruction against their Protestant brothers. Sweet would update his text in 1939, adding a chapter on WWI in which he once again condemned the Protestant clergy in America for whole-heartedly embracing Wilson’s war department by preaching hatred towards Germany and by spreading propaganda during army recruitment drives.

In 1923, Peter G. Mode published his historical text about the success of Protestantism in America by focusing on religion in the American frontier. He was a historian trained at the University of Chicago and he embraced the more modern and scientific approach to history that was in vogue at Chicago. His history even more than Baird and both Bacons relied on historic records and factual data in telling the story of Protestant dominance in America. Like L. W. Bacon, Mode described the settler wars, the Revolutionary War, and the Civil War. Mode’s historic account, however, failed to include any of the younger Bacons critique of southern Protestant support for the Civil War. Rather, Mode utilized historic facts and data to justify Protestant support for self-defense against Indians, colonial independence from Great Brittan, and the Union struggle to unite the country and end slavery.

2.1 Cotton Mather (1663-1728)

Book Seven of Cotton Mather’s Magnalia Christi Americana contained a rather lengthy and detailed appendix entitled “The Remarkables of a Long War with Indian-Salvages [sic].” It was in Book Six, however, where he thoroughly documented the supernatural works of God among the day-to-day activities of New England Puritans. Although this book did not contain direct supernatural evidence supporting Protestant wars against Indians, it did contain seven chapters describing supernatural evidence of God’s intervening power in the history of New England.

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13 Mather, Cotton, Magnalia Christi Americana; or, The ecclesiastical history of New-England from its first planting in the year 1620 unto the year of Our Lord 1698, in seven books. London: Three Crowns in Cheapside, 1702, VII, Appendix, p.60.

14 Mather’s Book Six was the basis for Dorothy Z. Baker’s America’s Gothic Fiction: The Legacy of Magnalia Christi Americana. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2007. In the introduction of her book she points out that the stories of God’s acts of Providence within Mather’s Book Six foreshadowed the future of sensational American short stories and fictional narratives. Mather’s six chapters included seven supernatural works: 1) supernatural rescues at sea, 2) supernatural rescue from death, 3) the supernatural voice of God in thunder, 4) supernatural religious conversions, 5) supernatural
In Book Seven, Cotton Mather detailed the continuation of the Puritan war with Natives and the role that divine Providence and the sin of the people played in justifying Puritans’ killing and being killed by Indians. Mather’s Calvinistic worldview of God being in control of everything was revealed when Mather wrote, “It was hop’d the War would now come to an immediate End; but the Great God who Creates that Evil, had further Intentions to Chastise a Sinful People by those who are not a People. Rather than end their hostilities, the Natives, following a brief winter respite, resumed their violent attacks and kidnappings of settlers.”

Earlier portions of Book Seven described numerous lengthy accounts of attacks, kidnappings, forced marches, settlers’ babies and children being killed and women being abused—all somehow connected to God’s supernatural actions in providing present punishment for sinners and future blessings for the elect. While Book Seven often described the Indians as savages, heathens, and barbarians, it also aligned itself with Chapter Six of Book Six which detailed supernatural Indian conversion narratives. The last two Books of Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana* presented a rather complex picture of Native Indians since Mather utilized very rich rhetoric to describe them in various contexts. Therefore, his description in Book One might be the best place to find a clear description of Natives and the supernatural support he described for the Puritans’ wars against Indians.

In Book One, Cotton Mather detailed the supernatural works of God when the first Puritan settlers arrived and encountered Native tribes. His depictions allowed for comparison with later historians who wrote about the same events and who most likely had knowledge of Mather’s work. Cotton Mather perceived evidence of the wonderworkings of God’s Providence in having the Puritans make landfall north of the Hudson River at Cape Cod. He wrote, “And yet behold the watchful Providence of God over them that seek him! . . . Had they been carried according to their desire unto the Hudson River, the Indians in those Parts were at this time so Many, and so Mighty, and so Sturdy, that in probability all this little feeble Number of Christians had been Massacred by these bloody Salvages.” According to Mather, the goodness of God was ever ready to protect God’s saints and prepare them a home. His history continued, “The good Hand of God now brought them to a Country wonderfully prepared for their Entertainment by a sweeping Mortality that had lately been among the Natives.” Here, Mather stated that God supernaturally prepared the coast for the settlers to find a home by killing off the majority of the Natives prior to the settlers’ arrival.

Mather noted that the supernatural Providence of God did not warm the northern Atlantic coast during the first winter, as the Puritan settlers began to suffer from an unusually cold winter. Despite the real threat of freezing to death during a harsh winter, Cotton Mather described the most prominent Puritan settler fear as being toward potential Native Indian attacks. He wrote, “But these Believers in our Primitive Times, were more afraid of the Barbarous People among whom they were now cast, than they were of the Rain, or the Cold: These Barbarians were at the first so far from accommodating them

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15 Mather, *Magnia*, VII, Appendix, p.64 (In quotes taken from Cotton Mather the increased capitalization is in the original).
with Bundles of Sticks to Warm them, that they let Fly other sorts of sticks (that is to say, Arrows) to Wound them.” This statement clarified Mather’s contention that fear of the Indians was so great the Puritan settlers could not comprehend receiving aid from the Indians since they would rather freeze than face an Indian attack. Thus, the supernatural protection of God was required to support Puritan survival of both winter cold and Indian surprise attacks.

Earlier, Mather expressed his amazement at the hardships the first winter brought to the Puritan settlers as he described the “Frost-bitten and Weather-beaten face of the Earth.” Now, however, as he continued to describe the Indians’ ability to inflict horror into the hearts of the settlers: “The very Looks and Shouts of those Grim Salvages, had not much less of Terror in them, than if they had been so many Devils.” In this statement, Mather suggested that it was good for the Protestant settlers that God destroyed so many Natives before their arrival since the few that remained were extremely frightening. His description also indicated that Natives were to be feared, could not be trusted, and must always be defended against since they were as scary as satanic creatures. In being described as “devils,” Mather attributed to the Indians supernatural characteristics of torment which required a supernatural divine effort to eradicate. Mather’s text presumed divine intervention in support of the Puritan settlers’ wars against the evil Indians since it was God’s will that the Puritan settlers defeated the “agents of Satan.” According to Mather, this allowed the settlers to possess the land that God wanted them to have through warfare—which equated to God clearing the Indians off the land.

Mather’s narrative history, even in Book One, presented complicated descriptions of Indian Natives and Puritan settlers’ reactions to Natives. He narrated a story of God’s Providence in sending five Natives very close to a story in which he described Natives as “grim savages” shooting arrows and terrorizing Puritan settlers. Mather declared that it was a “Remarkable smile of Heaven” when a small group of Puritans went ashore, saw five Native Indians, followed them into the woods, discovered ears of Indian corn, filled their Shalop, enabling them to have seed for the spring and thus to avoid starvation. Here the “savages” represent God’s supernatural providence in that they allowed the settlers to avoid starvation.

While Cotton Mather’s description of Natives was complicated because they were “devils” who inspired great fear on the one hand yet they were described as guides to follow to find corn on the other hand. The common denominator in his history was that the Natives revealed the active supernatural hand of God upon the Puritan settlers. It was God’s supernatural Providence that was at work in all three of these passages from Mather: God used the Natives to punish the sins of the settlers during the ten-year war, God killed off the Natives before the first settlers arrived, and God allowed the settlers to follow the Indians in order to find the stores of corn. For Cotton Mather it was all evidence in support of God’s providential supernatural power at play in the founding of New England and it all justified defensive war against savage and barbaric Indians, even Indians who were used on occasion to chastise a sinful Puritan people, or to deliver them from starvation.

18 Mather, Magnia, I, 2, p.8.
19 Mather, Magnia, I, 2, p.8.
20 Mather, Magnia, I, 2, p.8.
2.2 Baird, Bacon, Bacon, and Mode

The four American church historians I have chosen to be representative of the 1840s through the 1920s all wrote what they considered to be comprehensive religious histories of America. Each of their histories uncritically celebrated the success of Protestantism in America as well as the support Protestants gave to the conduct of war. The historians are Robert Baird, Lenard Bacon, Lenard Woolsey Bacon, and Peter Mode. During this time period historical accounts of American Protestants’ participation in war became more modern, mundane and temporal. These historians used an increasingly scientific rationale to justify Protestant support for war as they attempted to base their narrative accounts on historical evidence. Within these authors’ texts there are relatively few references to supernatural forces, divine explanations, or providential justification for war as compared to their Puritan predecessors.

Robert Baird’s 1842 history of the success of Protestantism in America attempted to provide historical data in support of Protestant denominational achievement rather than supernatural explanations. Baird and both Bacons wrote American church histories based on the calibration of the growth of Protestantism in America as compared to Europe. In 1923 Peter G. Mode wrote an even more modern historical account of the spread of Protestantism throughout the American frontier. Mode’s history focused on the growth of Protestantism within America due to his description of the secular environment that significantly affected the growth of Protestantism on the American frontier. By and large these historians described Protestants’ support for warfare that was justified based on empirical evidence and secular interpretation of historical data. Among the more common historical evidence they utilized in their narratives included Native Indian surprise attacks, better European methods of cultivating land, failed missionary efforts, protection of settlements, self-defense, and the acquisition of needed lands during their descriptions of settler wars. They refer to historical evidence like the desire for self-government and the dominance of the Anglican Church when their description turned to the Revolutionary War. All of this historical evidence painted a picture of fearfulness on the part of Protestant settlers in their struggle against Indians or by Protestant colonialists in their fight against the British Empire.

2.2.1 Robert Baird (1798-1863)

Robert Baird’s *Religion in America* indicated his strong belief in God along with his belief that Protestantism in America was blessed by God. His general religious history, however, did not base Protestantism’s success in America on God’s supernatural intervention. Baird wrote his history in 1842 while living in Europe and his text utilized a very modern criterion for interpreting the historical evidence surrounding the growth of Protestantism in America. This more modern and secular approach to history was demonstrated in his writing about warfare in America and the support Protestants gave to the fighting of wars. His text described colonial Protestants at war against Native tribes, and although his text lacked significant detail about the Revolutionary War, it did provide descriptions of Protestant hostility and resentment toward England and the Church of England. The historical evidence within Baird’s account suggested that the Protestant

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21 In reality these four authors’ “comprehensive” religious accounts of the American people were fundamentally historical-surveys of the growth and success of Protestantism in America.
settlers were justified in defending themselves against the Indian Natives, and had little choice but to do otherwise.

Baird characterized the Natives as savages who often attacked without warning, forcing the settlers to rely on military power to ensure their safety and prosperity. In addition to security, Baird argued that war also provided the settlers with land. Baird’s modern justification for the acquisition of Native land was based on a scientific rationale that the European-style of agriculture was a more productive use of land than Native hunting and gathering. Thus, colonial wars with Natives and the fruits of those wars were described by Baird as necessary and justified based on a secular evaluation of the historical evidence.

Robert Baird substituted common sense explanations of practical necessity in place of the appeals to divine intervention that earlier English Protestant writers had used. His historical narrative was supported with a large volume of historical data and this evidence based approach to writing church history influenced the field of American religious history by demonstrating the success of writing a more secular text. His history justified Protestant support for war during the Indian wars and Protestant support for war during the Revolutionary War. Baird’s fact-filled historical descriptions predisposed the American church historian who followed him. His model of justifying Protestant support for American wars against Indians and the British would be followed by Leonard Bacon, Leonard Woolsey Bacon, and Peter Mode. While L. W. Bacon provided a moralistic critique of the south before and during the Civil War, it was not until 1930, when William Sweet published his *The Story of Religions in America* that an American religious historian would critique and question Protestant support for another war besides the south during the Civil War. Sweet’s history provided a clear criticism of Protestants leaders’ blatant political support for both the Civil War and the First World War. Sweet especially focused on Protestant clergies’ preaching propaganda from the pulpit in support of President Wilson’s war agenda. Following Sweet’s central critique of Protestant support for American wars, American religious historians increased their criticism for Protestant support for war, specifically with regard to support for wars against Native Indians. All American religious historians, however, who published widely comprehensive American religious histories from the 1840s through the 1990s, followed Baird in justifying Protestant support for the Revolutionary War.

Robert Baird was born just outside of Pittsburgh in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, on October 6, 1798. He attended Jefferson College and studied theology at the College of New Jersey\(^\text{22}\) from 1819-1822. In 1827 he joined the American Bible Society and spent two years providing Bibles to the poor as well as preaching in impoverished Presbyterian churches in urban New Jersey. In 1829 he joined the American Sunday School Union and travelled throughout the Mississippi Valley organizing Sunday Schools in poor rural Midwestern towns. In 1835 after eight years of traveling around the United States, Baird sailed to Europe as a missionary for the American and Foreign Christian Union. He fell in love with missionary work in Europe, and sailed across the Atlantic eighteen times over the next sixteen years. Baird traveled over three hundred thousand miles to advance Protestant evangelism through the distribution of Bibles, the organization of Sunday

\(^{22}\) Now Princeton University but was named the College of New Jersey until 1896.
Schools, and the promotion of temperance reform. In 1841, he gave a series of lectures in Stockholm, Sweden, where his audience showed great interest in his reports about the flourishing of Protestant evangelicalism in America. The notes from these lectures would provide the framework for what would become his classic historical account of religion in America.

In February of 1849, four months after celebrating his fiftieth birthday, Robert Baird sought the healing power of a warmer climate because his health was failing. He sailed from the English port of Southampton to the West Indies on board the Great Western. As the steamship left port, Baird was relieved that his travel destination involved a warmer climate allowing his to somewhat escape the political realities of the United States where the California gold rush and the Northern states’ push to admit California into the Union were becoming divisive issues between the North and the South. His health continued to deteriorate over the next twelve years and as his decline increased the first gun shots were fired in April of 1861 by a South Carolina militia upon the Federal arsenal at Fort Sumter. Two years later, Robert Baird died while the United States was embroiled in the midst of an increasingly violent Civil War.

Prior to the Civil War during the mid-nineteenth century, the Atlantic Ocean had become less mysterious through the familiarity of repeated travel. The Atlantic had become the major throughway for the transport of goods between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. During previous decades, the Atlantic was a major transport center for slaves and the raw materials that slave labor produced. According to Robert Baird, who was a minister, a missionary, and an author, God’s working through history was not supernatural. It was, however, a historical reality.

The year after he sailed to the West Indies, the United States Senate’s debate on slavery produced the Compromise of 1850. But Robert Baird’s trust was not in politics; he placed his trust in God. And he believed that God, through the marvelous evangelical church in America, would peacefully resolve the slavery issue. His belief in the ability of the evangelical churches to unite America precluded any other outcome, and so seven years earlier, he boldly and publicly predicted a peaceful Protestant resolution to the slavery issue. It was a prediction that proved true for eighteen years, but which failed to take into account the implications of the Southern states desire to protect the economic benefits of slave labor.

Robert Baird’s history was entitled Religion in America; it described the history and the success of the American Protestant evangelical churches. Baird compared the

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25 It should also be noted that from 1835 until 1851, Robert Baird was primarily traveling around Europe so his 1842 prediction of a peaceful resolution to the slavery issue was made without firsthand knowledge of the increasing animosity between the abolitionists in the North and the slave owners in the South. His time in Europe must have also delayed his knowledge of the degree to which the Protestant denominations in the South were preaching the biblical defense of slavery, so much so, that they came to believe that the protection of the Godliness of Southern culture must be achieved by any means—even war against Northern Protestants.
26 Definitions of what an ‘evangelical’ Christian is have changed over time and thus make it extremely challenging to compare descriptions of evangelical attitudes about war in various decades and centuries. Historians who describe evangelical Christians in America, however, utilize specific characteristics that
vitality of American Protestantism to the relative stagnation of European state-established Protestantism. The full title of his history presented an accurate account of the book’s contents: *An Account of the Origin, Relation to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States, with Notices of the Unevangelical Denominations*. Baird’s work proclaimed the triumph of Protestant evangelical Christianity in America and began with a description of the “Aborigines of North America.” Two sections of his work will be examined to discover the way he described war, the evidence he used to justify Protestant support for war, and his more modern and secular approach to writing history.

The first section described the evidence, events, and attitudes of early settlers toward the Native population by describing the need for protection against a fearful tribal people prone to attacking outsiders. In the second section, he described the historical evidence surrounding colonial evangelicals’ attitudes toward England and their fear of the English Church at the start of the Revolutionary war. Baird’s justification of early American Protestants’ support for wars and their preaching hostility against enemies provided examples of how his narrative description utilized a more modern criterion grounded in historical evidence. In addition, his work rejected the supernatural justification for war provided by earlier puritan historical authors like Cotton Mather.

A common theme throughout the first section of Baird’s work described the contrast between the comforts of the settlers’ newly created civilization and the miseries of the savages who roamed the wilderness. This contrast supported Baird’s more European and modern rationale that the colonial settlers were within their legal rights to acquire lands through war and trade from the unhappy Natives who did not properly utilize their land. Baird described the cultivation of fertile land and the development of civilization as a higher good than the less productive “chase” that occurred while the Natives were hunting. Baird’s description of these Indian failures provided a basis for supporting colonial Protestant settlers’ wars against Indians.

In describing war with Native Indians, Baird utilized more modern and secular evidence along with natural elements in support of war. He described the natural bounty of the wilderness that the English settlers encountered as fostering their belief that God naturally preserved the abundance of America for their settlements so they could displace uncivilized tribes. Baird distinguished between the calm noise of nature and the wild noise of the Native people. He wrote, “A profound and solemn silence reigned everywhere, save when interrupted by the song of the birds that sported amid the trees, the natural cries of the beasts which roamed beneath, the articulate sounds of the savage

tribes around their wigwams, or their shouts in the chase or in the battle.”

Baird compared the “misery” of the “savage” Indians with the “comfort” of the “civilized” Protestant settlers.

Baird continued to describe how the settlers tamed the wilderness, writing, “The forests are giving way to the cultivated fields or verdant meadows. Savage life, with its wigwams, its blanket coverings, its poverty, and its misery, yields on every side to the arts, the comfort, and even the luxuries of civilization.” In this statement, Baird’s description of Indians supported the Protestant settlers’ wars to take over the Indians’ idle land so that the Protestant settlers could utilize the land for agriculture and for creating civilized settlements. This natural and secular argument stressed how increased agricultural yields from the Protestant settlers justified the removal of impoverished Native tribes whose way of life only yielded suffering and pain.

Robert Baird listed the reasons for the Native peoples’ despair and anguish. They included:

- The want of resources for domestic happiness; the evils resulting from polygamy; the depressions naturally caused by the sickness of friends and relatives without the means of alleviation; the gloomy apprehension of death: and we cannot wonder that the ‘red man’ should be miserable, and seek gratification in games of chance, the revelries of drunkenness, or the excitements of war.

In this statement, Baird focused on the lifestyle of the Native people as the cause of their misery. He blamed their desire for war on the misery of their existence. Here, Baird alluded to the strongest evidence in support of war: self-defense. He argued that the Natives were an unhappy people prone to surprise attack since they found some happiness in the rush of adrenaline produced by war. Therefore, his descriptions supported the settlers as being justified in developing defensive positions and in implementing military counter attacks. The Protestant settlers’ military defense was a response to the risk of Native attack. In his description of the Native Indian character, Baird was influenced by modern scientific ideas that supported war when war advanced the social good by creating more civilization. Baird utilized evidence in support of war that brought punishment to the Indians who were perpetuating evil.

In writing about this modern rationale of Protestant settlers’ use of warfare against indigenous people, Baird emphasized the Natives’ cruelty. When Baird described the settlers’ reaction to the attacks of the Natives, he portrayed the Indians as embodying both a friendly humanity and a fierce hostility. This was reminiscent of Cotton Mather’s description of Indians as both savage killers who attack without warning and as God’s providential aides who allowed the settlers to find food. Baird wrote, “Though hospitable and kind to strangers to a remarkable degree, they are capable of the most diabolical cruelty to their enemies. The well-authenticated accounts of the manner in which they sometimes treat their prisoners would almost make us doubt whether they can belong to the human species.” According to Baird, war against an aggressive and cruel enemy was naturally justified and did not need any divine or supernatural justification.

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Baird’s historical account nullified the supernatural explanations of earlier Puritan histories and hinted at the secular historical accounts of the future. His text detailed the empirical evidence that was required of defensive war and that led to the remarkable success achieved by the Protestant settlers. He wrote, “what from the wilderness-state of the country, the unfriendliness of the Aborigines . . . the infant colony had to deal with many difficulties . . . notwithstanding the disastrous wars with the Indians . . . it had become a powerful providence long before the establishment of American Independence.”

Baird’s description of the savage Natives who enjoyed warfare provided justification for defensive war.

Early in his history, Baird mentioned that English political and ecclesiastical control was something the Protestant colonists had to overcome in the same way they had to overcome the aggressive warfare of the Native tribes. He described the Carolinas as being “under the direct control of the crown, but [also as being] governed by their own legislatives. Their prosperity was slow, having been frequently interrupted by serious wars with Native tribes.” Here, Baird indicated that both the control of the English monarch and the hostilities of the Natives were two reasons for the economic hardship Protestant settlers were suffering. According to the amount of text dedicated to the description of Native attacks, much more fear and destruction were perpetrated by the Natives than by the English crown.

Baird increasingly described the Protestant settlers’ fear of Native tribal attacks as the primary evidence in justifying Protestant settler support for war against Natives. The Protestant military attacks were presented as a rational response to the terror of Native Indians’ aggressive attacks. The historical evidence presented by Baird postulated a rational need for Protestant wars that would provide the new settlements security and peace. Baird’s history illustrated the fear produced by Native attacks through an emotional appeal to familial love as additional evidence in support of war. His text detailed the terror faced by the English settlers at the hands of the Natives. The fear of potential attacks was far greater than any other oppression that the settlers had to endure in their new wilderness home. Baird reported:

The horrors of savage warfare, by which some of the colonies were repeatedly decimated, and during which the poor settler, for weeks and months together, could not know, on retiring to rest, whether he should not be awakened by the heart-quailing war-whoop of the savages around his house, or by finding the house itself in flames. Ah, what pen can describe the horror that fell upon many a family, in almost all the colonies, not once, but often, when aroused by false or real alarms! Who can depict the scenes in which a father, before he received the fatal blow himself, was compelled to see his wife and children fall by the tomahawk before his eyes, or being dragged into captivity worse than death?

This passage demonstrated the similarity of Baird’s emotional language to Cotton Mather’s language in depicting kidnapped and tortured settlers. Whereas both narratives revealed a similar horror of being forced to watch helplessly as family members are executed, each account was motivated by a different goal. Mather’s language described

32 Baird, Religion, 7-8.
33 Baird, Religion, 11.
the supernatural work of God even as settlers were executed by savages. Baird, on the other hand, created an emotional image of intense fear as part of his modern rationale in support of Protestant settlers’ defensive war against an aggressive enemy.

In developing his more scientific criterion for the Protestant settlers’ defensive war, Baird included the more modern idea of land ownership based on the proper utilization of agriculture and the legal idea of the King’s charter. In addition, he described the innovative ways the English attempted to compensate the Natives for their land. According to his account, Protestants, unlike the earliest Catholic colonizers, actually recognized that the Natives possessed some basic land rights. These land rights, however, were not actually able to protect Native people’s ownership of land from the Protestant settlers. Baird argued that Protestants looked to the precedent set by the Spanish monarchy and the Catholic Church rather than follow the idea of common law. This granted the English monarchy and the Protestant settlers a strong rationale for disregarding the Native tribes’ land rights. Baird claimed the English monarchy had a sovereign right to the American territories as was established by the precedent of the Catholic Pope during the Spanish conquest. 35

Baird described the evidence surrounding Protestant support for war stressing the earliest settlers’ payments to the Natives in exchange for their land. He described their payment system as equitable even though the settlers had royal rights to the land, a clear military advantage, and difficulty determining what price the Native tribes should be paid for land they clearly did not need. He wrote,

> In no case, indeed, did the newcomers seize upon the lands of the aboriginal occupants without some kind of purchase; . . . Thus, although with the exception of lands obtained by right of conquest in war, I do not believe that any [land] was obtained without something being given in exchange for it . . . Indeed, in many cases, it was difficult to say what exactly justice implied. To savages roaming over vast tracts of land which they did not cultivate, and which even for the purpose of the case, were often more extensive than necessary—for them to part with hundreds, or even thousands of square miles, could not be thought a matter of much importance. 36

Baird acknowledged some of the land acquired by the Protestant settlers was through military conquest. He argued that his acquisition of land by military conquest was less common than land acquisition through trade and since their trade for land was always fair, any Indian attack was unjust and necessitated military protection.

Another piece of evidence offered by Baird in support of Protestant support for war was the use of military action in order to punish aggressors. Baird argued that the settlers’ enslavement of Indians resulted from the Protestant settlers’ desire to punish the wicked aggressors. In spite of this violent exploitation of Natives, Baird proclaimed with a sense of pride “never, I believe, since the world began, have colonies from civilized nations been planted among barbarous tribes with so little injustice perpetrated upon the whole.” 37 Baird stated that acquisition of land by conquest was never the intention of the settlers but rather it was the result of a justified “hazard” of war. He wrote that the land

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was claimed by settlers “only on indemnification being given, as they fully recognized
the right of the Natives to the soil. The only exceptions, and these were few, were the
cases in which the hazards of war put them in possession of some Indian territory.”
Here, once again, Baird described the land seized from the Natives as occurring during a
defensive war in which the settlers were rationally justified. In addition, Baird made clear
that the Protestant settlers were justified in their wars against aggressive Indian tribes.

Baird’s descriptions of the Natives and the eventual wars fought between Natives
and English settlers reflected a modern criterion which was utilized to present historical
evidence for war against Indians. His modern historical standards examined physical and
sensory evidence in order to describe historical situations of Protestant support for war
against the Indians. Baird characterized the Natives as savages who needed to be feared,
rather than as pawns of a supernaturally active God as described in the history of Cotton
Mather. Baird also stressed the failure of Natives to cultivate the land properly and the
need to punish the Natives’ aggressive military tactics as evidence justifying Protestant
support for war. Baird’s history emphasized historical data for the English settlers’ need
for protection through wars fought with the Natives and for lands acquired through trade
and through wars.

Before Baird described the Revolutionary War, he provided a four stage history of
war with Natives in order to describe how the Native attacks slowed Protestant progress.
He described the first time period, 1607-1660, as generally peaceful. Only four minor
outbreaks of hostilities were mentioned in his narrative: one in Connecticut in 1637 with
the Pequot tribe, one between the Dutch and the Algonquin Indians in 1643, and two in
Virginia in 1622 and 1644. He mentioned that these wars against Indians were short with
relatively little property damage. The second and third time periods were from 1660-1720
and 1720-1750 respectively. These were two difficult periods for the colonies as all
suffered from serious Native Indian attacks. The three worst were in Massachusetts
during the King Phillips’ War in 1675, in Virginia during the Grand Rebellion which
almost completely destroyed the colony in 1675-6 and in the Carolinas where a war with
Tuscarora natives broke out in 1711-2.

Baird assigned 1750-1775 as the fourth period of settler warfare against Indians.
Baird characterized this time as one of great unrest as all the colonies became consumed
in helping England defeat France. This resulted in the English and colonial conquest of
French Canada which motivated England to raise colonial taxes and attempt to rule
peacefully the Canadian Catholics. These economic and religious issues contributed to
the American colonies uniting and declaring war against England. Remarkably, Baird
did not include in his narrative the fact that during the French and Indian War (1754-63)
most Native tribes sided with the Catholic French against the Anglo-Protestant colonists.
Baird could have used this evidence as another reason to justify Protestant support for
war against Native Indians which would have yielded another legal cause for the seizing
of Indian land.

Baird’s narrative next addressed the “National Era” and the colonial Protestants’
reaction to the impending conflict with England. Baird immediately pointed out that the
Revolutionary War had devastating and tragic results for Protestant evangelical churches.

38 Baird, Religion, 46.
39 Baird, Religion, 90.
40 Baird, Religion, 91.
He wrote, “Young men were called away from the seclusion and protection of the parental roof, and from the vicinity of the oracle of God, to the demoralizing atmosphere of a camp; congregations were sometimes entirely broken up; churches were burned, or converted into barracks or hospitals, by one or the other of the belligerent armies.”41 In this statement, Baird described the difficulties churches encountered while all the colonies were at war. In order to fight the war, armies had to be created from the local population and churches were decimated. According to Baird, in spite of the loss in members and destruction of buildings, almost all Protestant evangelical churches strongly supported the call to war against the British.

Although Baird did not address the evangelical attitudes during years leading up to the Revolutionary War, he did describe their position toward war once war broke out. He wrote, “When the Revolution came at last, the Baptists and Presbyterians were, almost to a man, in its favor; and many of these, but especially the former, whose preachers had suffered by far the most from the civil authorities in the earlier part of the century.”42 He described Protestant evangelicals’ feelings of ‘repugnance’ and ‘hostility’ toward the established Anglican Church in England and in the colonies in the South, like Virginia and the Carolinas. While these feelings could not compare to the horrors of attacks from savages, they still provided Baird rational evidence supporting war against England by colonial evangelical Protestants.

Baird described Protestants’ dissatisfaction with the established church in Virginia as a major cause for dissent. Yet he claimed that very few Protestant churches would have predicted that this issue would result in a war to sever all ties with England. He wrote that the Presbyterian churches in Virginia were “very judicious and patriotic . . . while it displayed a firm spirit of loyalty towards the government of England.”43 However, they also naturally sympathized with the colonial war effort to be free of the religious and political control of England. He went on to state, “Few persons supposed at that time that the struggle [for anti-establishmentarianism] was to end in a separation from the mother country.”44 Accordingly, Baird described the Protestant colonial desire for religious and political freedom from England as the primary rational evidence supporting the settlers’ increasing feelings of antagonism toward the established English Church.

Baird stated that immediately following the writing of the Declaration of Independence, the Presbytery of Hanover in Virginia issued a statement of support for the Revolutionary War. According to the statement the church defiantly recognized the righteousness of rebellion against England and “thereby identified themselves with the cause of freedom and independence.”45 He reported that the vast majority of Protestant evangelical churches in colonial America followed their example of total support for the Revolutionary War. Baird connected the evidence that justified Protestant support for war with religious liberty and political freedom which were two key ideas that shaped the attitudes of Protestant evangelicals during the Revolutionary War.

41 Baird, Religion, 93.
42 Baird, Religion, 98.
Baird described rational and natural evidence that produced fear and hostility among Protestant evangelicals and generated the validation for Protestant support for fighting in war and it did not matter whether the war was against Native tribes or against English troops. When Leonard Bacon wrote his historical account some thirty years after Baird, the country had undergone many significant changes including the devastation of the Civil War. Yet almost nothing had changed in Leonard Bacon’s historical description of Protestant settlers fighting wars against Native Indians or the modern rationale he utilized in describing the justification for Protestant leaders supporting war against Native peoples.

2.2.2 Leonard Bacon (1802-1881)

Leonard Bacon was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1802 only four years after Robert Baird was born. Baird, however, died during the Civil War, while Bacon lived until 1881, the year after the United States census bureau declared the frontier closed, and the same year Sioux Chief Sitting Bull surrendered to U.S. troops in Montana. When the young Leonard reached the age of fifteen, he was accepted at Yale College and he graduated in 1820. Following graduation, he sought training for the ministry and was accepted to Andover Theological Seminary. At Andover, he was engrossed in the “romantic temperament of many of his generation in a time of economic growth, rising nationalism, and westward expansion at home.”46 Thus, according to Hugh Davis, “he espoused a muscular Christianity that required knowledgeable men willing to take decisive action.”47 The main action he took was to become a pastor of the New Haven Center Church. It was a decision he would never regret as he remained pastor there for forty one years.

In 1874, Leonard Bacon published a history entitled New England Churches in which he recounted the history of the founding of the New England colonies up through the conflict with the Native tribes in the 1630s. Twenty three years later in 1897 Bacon’s son, Leonard Woolsey Bacon, published a major historical work entitled A History of American Christianity. While his father’s work ended with the founding of the Puritan colonies and their interaction with the Native population, his son’s historical account was a more general history of Christianity in America and included sections on the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. When the elder Bacon wrote his history, approximately thirty years had passed since Baird’s history had been published in America. Both Bacons’ histories were similar to Baird’s writings, in that their accounts of religion in America proclaimed the triumph of Protestant evangelicalism and they described Protestant support for war based in the modern historical ideals of factual data and rational evidence.

Leonard Bacon spent his career as a pastor in America while Baird was a missionary in Europe; however, both men fully supported the same Protestant evangelical social goals and the benevolent societies founded to meet those goals. Both men invested their time and money in an effort to propagate Sunday school societies, Bible and tract societies, foreign and home missionary societies, and temperance organizations. Both

47 Davis, Leonard Bacon, 27.
authors believed that liberal ‘disinterested benevolence’\textsuperscript{48} was the foundational for the radical success of American evangelical Protestantism. There were, however, subtle doctrinal and denominational differences revealed within both of their historical writings.

Robert Baird was a Presbyterian educated at the more conservative and Calvinistic College of New Jersey which had been founded in response to the more liberal Harvard and Yale, so his historical description focused more on personal accounts and the need for individual salvation. He also organized his history around the church doctrines of various Protestant denominations. His open hostility toward Native tribes and his persistent labeling the Indians as savages was likely based in their general refusal to convert to Christianity. Leonard Bacon, in contrast to Baird, was a Congregationalist educated at Yale College and Andover Seminary who focused his history more on the need for social improvement and benevolence societies which led him to write more about social issues. While Bacon in general sided with the settlers’ use of violence against the Natives, his narrative also described the early friendships and social networks which developed among the Puritan settlers and members of the recently encountered Native tribes. His use of the term “savage” when referring to Native Indians also occurs much less frequently than in Baird’s account, perhaps because he wanted to emphasize potential friendships between Native groups and settlers.

Leonard Woolsey Bacon’s history followed in his father’s footsteps. In fact his historical account of the English settlements in America largely ignored the conflict and wars with Natives. Rather, he wrote about doctrinal, denominational, and political differences between the various groups of primarily English settlers. When discussing religious issues, the son was greatly influenced by his father. This was indicated by his chapter on the “Planting of the Church in New England” where half of his eighteen footnotes refer to his father’s history. The influence of his father’s Christian ideals of disinterested benevolence and social improvement was also evident when he addressed the treatment of the Cherokee tribe some twenty five years prior to the Civil War. The younger Bacon expressed his outrage at the forced migration and violence done to this tribe and the persecution of the missionaries in Georgia. This chapter will present a more in-depth examination of L. W. Bacon’s description of Protestants support for war following the analysis of his father’s justification of the Protestant support for war against Natives.

In Leonard Bacon’s historical account of New England, he described the Protestant evangelical civilization created by the Puritans as the culmination of history. He began his historical narrative in the first century in order to describe the founding of the New England colonies as the climactic act of God that fulfilled Jesus’ mission, Constantine’s conversion, and even Luther’s rebellion. By the time Bacon wrote about

\textsuperscript{48} An American Protestant ideology also referred to the Evangelical United Front. This ideology stemmed from the early nineteenth century in which various evangelical groups worked together on Christian education, home missions, and foreign missions. The impact of the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening (1790s-1830s) led to a renewal of theological discourse. Some of the most prominent liberal thinkers who connected conversion with social improvement were Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), and Lyman Beecher (1775-1863). These evangelicals were instrumental in establishing benevolent societies such as the American Bible Society, the American Sunday School Union, and the American Home Mission Society in order to minister to the unconverted and poor. This ideology is also associated with revivalist Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) who in the 1820s preached a moral perfectionism that could be attained in this life for individuals and for society.
the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower*, he already had composed over three hundred pages of Christian history in support his forthcoming history of American Christianity. Bacon’s narrative of historical events resembled an inspirational sermon. This resulted from years of preaching and developing his history based on a series of lectures on church history that he delivered at Yale College in 1871. Bacon’s history reflected back upon the Puritan histories where God’s providence was highlighted in describing the first settlers as national heroes and as God’s saints who were sent to New England to do God’s bidding. Bacon wrote, “Our thoughts follow the lonely *Mayflower* on the broad ocean, with her freight of human life—of brave and loving hearts, of undaunted courage and unswerving faith—making her way slowly against adverse winds, tossed by the waves, yet struggling towards the west. The probabilities are against her, but God is with her.”

Here, Bacon described the settlers’ faith and God’s protective presence on board the ship that brought the Puritans to New England.

Following their arrival in New England, Bacon described the Protestant settlers’ encounter with the Natives. He wrote, “Sixteen volunteers obtained leave to travel by land . . . . They saw Indians, who fled from them in terror and could not be overtaken.”

In his first portrayal of the Natives, Bacon’s idiom was less harsh than Baird’s initial description of the ‘misery of the savages.’ Bacon revealed the humanity of the Native people who experienced fear when they encountered the Pilgrims for the first time. In this passage, the Natives were not described as wild, barbarous, or savage. Bacon did, however, utilize that label as he described the Protestant settlers’ reaction towards the Natives after they conducted a surprise attack.

Bacon next described the Puritan settlers as curious when they formed an exploration party to locate Natives and to establish alliances with them. Bacon portrayed the Protestant settlers’ first quest as an attempt to find friends among the Natives following the departure of the *Mayflower* back to England. Once the *Mayflower* left, the remaining settler families would have to work hard to create a colony in the wilderness. Bacon reported that “they desired to meet their wild neighbors, to open a friendly intercourse with them, and to make them large satisfaction for the seed corn. They found at least two wigwams which had been lately dwelt in, but the people were gone.”

Bacon’s depiction showed that although the settlers perceived the Natives as “wild” they also considered them to be a neighboring people who could become allies and teach them how to survive in their unfamiliar surroundings. Bacon’s narrative suggested that the thirty years between Baird and Bacon enabled Bacon to describe the Natives in a much more positive light. Prior to Bacon’s description of the settlers’ reaction to Native attacks on New England settlements, his account relayed the settlers’ reliance on the potential help the Natives could provide rather than on the degradation, hostility, and violence that Baird used to describe them.

Bacon described the first Native Indian attack on the New England settlement as unexpected. He wrote, “While they were preparing, in the twilight, for breakfast and for their journey, they were alarmed by a great and strange cry, and a shower of Indian

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arrows.’” Even in describing this surprise attack, Bacon did not label the settlers’ attackers as ‘savages.’ Instead his description focused on their alarm and fear of the Natives’ menacing war chant and numerous arrows. He continued, “A short engagement followed—the shooting of arrows on the one side and of bullets on the other; but the Indians fled as soon as one of them, who had seemed to be their leader, had been wounded.” Bacon’s description demonstrated that the Puritan settlers’ support for war against the Indians was justified since the Indian attack forced them to arm themselves. In addition, the settlers were justified in pressing their military advantage since their superior arms protected them and enabled them to force the Natives to retreat.

The Protestant settlers’ physical advantage enabled them to repel the attack and wound the Indian leader. Bacon concluded this episode by stating, “The victors, after pursuing the enemy far enough to show that they were not afraid nor any way discouraged, gave solemn thanks to God for their deliverance, and gathered up a bundle of arrows that might help to show in England what manner of entering in they had among the wild Natives.” In summing up this first Native attack, Bacon described the settlers as attempting to prove to the Indians that ‘they were not afraid’ indicating that the author perceived the settlers as actually being afraid but not wanting to make their fear known to the Indians who had just attacked. His narrative presented evidence of the settlers’ fear and their need for defense as justifying the Puritan support for war against the Indians. Bacon acknowledged the Protestant settlers’ advantage in weaponry and he acknowledged the Puritan settlers giving thanks to God for granting them victory. Yet, the author clearly stressed the fact that it was their advanced military weapons that allowed them to naturally defeat their militarily disadvantaged foes. So while the Puritans were inclined to believe that God supernaturally defeated the Native Indians, Bacon’s secular historical narrative pointed out that the settlers’ guns and bullets enabled them to force the Native Indians to retreat since they were fighting with bows and arrows.

Bacon’s narrative described the settlers’ emotional response to the early morning attack. He wrote, “Some of them, remembering how the day began, would have remained in the boat, deeming it better to brave the elements than to stumble upon a nest of savages.” Although Bacon avoided the term savage when describing the first Native attack, he employed the term when he described how the settlers responded to the surprise attack. It was a term used in the past by Baird to convey the need for war against an aggressive and uncivilized foe and in utilizing the term here, Bacon, may have been suggesting some support for the settlers’ fear of future attacks by Indians. Therefore, in this unusually dramatic passage, Bacon used the settlers’ fear of attack by an uncivilized people to argue for the necessity of war by asserting that the settlers, in hindsight, would have chosen to freeze to death on the open water rather than to become victims of Indian aggression.

Following his description of the first Native attack, Bacon described how the settlers sought peaceful relations even as they worked to build a defense against future attacks. He stated,

52 Bacon, The Genesis, 314.
54 Bacon, The Genesis, 314-5.
55 Bacon, New England, 316.
Great smokes of fire, miles away, reminded them that, while they trusted in God, they must be ready to defend themselves. Some of them attempted to find the Indians, in hope of establishing friendly relations with them; but they could find only deserted wigwams. No Indian showed himself near them; but they never knew how many savages might be lurking and watching in the woods around them.\textsuperscript{56}

In this section, Bacon referred to the early Puritan settlers’ belief in God. His historical narrative, however, did not suggest any divine supernatural protection for the settlers. Bacon’s historical narrative stated that even though the settlers trusted in God, they still realized that they needed to prepare a strong defense to protect themselves from the Natives. In addition, Bacon indicated that the settlers continued to hope for peaceful relations with the Natives while still constantly fearing for their lives. According to Bacon, although the settlers trusted in God, they also knew they needed a reliable defense. So here again Bacon, like Baird, justified the Protestant settlers support for war and for building defensive military outposts in order to achieve security.

Fear and anxiety continued as a major premise within Bacon’s passage, “Along with the epidemic, which was sweeping so many into graves carefully concealed, there was the growing danger of an attack from the Indians—danger that the surviving Pilgrims might be cut off all at once.”\textsuperscript{57} Although, Bacon had twice referred to the Natives as savages, even here while describing the settlers’ fear of being suddenly annihilated by Indian attacks, he simply referred to the Natives as “Indians” and not as “savages” or “barbaric” as Baird so frequently had described them.

Bacon’s depiction of the Protestant settlers’ rational fear and anxiety about death at the hands of Natives was ever present. His rhetoric, however, was much more subdued than Baird’s historical account. Bacon’s narrative vividly described the desire of the settlers for friendship with their Native neighbors. His account generalized the fulfillment of this foreshadowed alliance with one of the more friendly Native tribes. He wrote, “A savage came boldly along their little street, straight to the rendezvous, where their town meeting was deliberating on the means of defending the settlement against hostile visitors. At that point they came out to meet him not suffering him to go in, for they were naturally unwilling to let him see how few and weak they were. To their surprise, he bade them ‘welcome’!”\textsuperscript{58}

Bacon described the appearance of this unclothed visitor using much the same colorful language as Baird writing about the pristine wilderness preserved for the Protestant settlers. Bacon wrote, “His costume was very much as if he had just come out of primeval paradise—stark naked, only a leather about his waist.”\textsuperscript{59} Bacon described the shock and surprise that the settlers felt as this Native welcomed them into his village. In this encounter, Bacon uncharacteristically described the Native as a “savage.” This might have resulted from the Indian coming boldly into their presence and surprising the Puritans. Bacon’s choice of terminology could also be related to the visitor’s lack of clothes and his uncivilized appearance. According to Bacon’s account, which contained

\textsuperscript{56} Bacon, \textit{New England}, 319.
\textsuperscript{57} Bacon, \textit{New England}, 326.
\textsuperscript{58} Bacon, \textit{New England}, 327.
\textsuperscript{59} Bacon, \textit{New England}, 328.
parallels to Baird’s history, the Natives’ lack of clothing was a “shocking sign of the Natives’ primitive and uncivilized condition.”

Bacon described the information that the Puritan settlers gained from the Natives in such a way as to create a narrative that made modern and rational claims about the Puritan possession of the land and about the need for Puritan settlers’ support for war in order to defend their settlements. He wrote the following about the Native visitor that, “From him they learned that the place where they were was called Patuxet; that about four years before it had been devastated by a disease which had left neither man, women, nor child remaining, and that there was no Indian claim to the soil which they had begun to occupy.” It came to be known by the settlers that this visitor was a warrior of Massasoit, the leader of a smaller tribe in the area.

Protestant settlers joined this tribe to form a trade alliance that was not always easy to maintain. Bacon wrote that the settlers were fearful that the Natives would learn their weaknesses and defensive positions, especially since they were unaware of the strength of the surrounding Indian tribes. Because of this, his narrative indicated that the settlers planned to visit the natives, to gauge their strength, to reaffirm their alliance, and to end any possibility of confusion that might cause an attack. All this needed to be done because the settlers were afraid of the Natives who were described as being ‘wild’ and ‘uncertain allies.’ In this historical episode, the distinction between Bacon’s text and Mather’s text was significant. Whereas both historians agree on the major historical details, the motivating forces behind the historic facts differed greatly. According to Mather, God’s hand wiped out the Natives through supernatural forces that prepared the land for the Puritan settlement at Cape Cod. According to Bacon, the Puritans had a natural and legal right to the land they possessed since years prior to their landing the Natives who lived there died from disease and now the Natives did not have any claim to that particular land.

Bacon’s history echoed Baird’s account of the beautiful and pristine land that was being better utilized now that Christian civilization took root in the soil that once provided the hunting and gathering domain of Native Indian tribes. His history recorded information contained within the settlers’ own report which described picturesque details both of their personal adventures and of their observations of the country through which they passed. At that time, the land appeared to be a dangerous wilderness, even emptied of its wild inhabitants. Now, however, it was a delightful land developed with towns and villages, made sacred by the building of Protestant places of worship, adorned with homes scattered around the hillsides or along the valleys, and flourishing in the wealth created by Christian civilization.

These remarks by Bacon paralleled the conclusions of Baird’s primary distinction between the settlers and the Natives in his historical narrative. Baird’s account focused on the contrast between the misery of the savage lifestyle and the comforts of civilization brought by the European settlers. For Bacon as well as for Baird, ‘the industry of Christian civilization’ justified land acquisition by any means necessary. Friendship and alliances, in Bacon’s account, were preferable to war and represented the settlers’ first

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60 Bacon, New England, 328.
61 Bacon, New England, 328.
62 Bacon, New England, 346.
response to Indians. Yet, he also described Puritan support for war against the Indians as completely justified by detailing the settlers need for military defense.

According to Bacon, although the settlers were able to make allies with some of the smaller neighboring tribes, they were unable to come to peaceful terms with the more powerful tribes. Therefore, Bacon described the ever present fear that gripped the settlers. His text stated, “In such uncertainty were they night and day. The entire force to defend that outpost of civilization against the uncounted hordes of savages was at the utmost, not more than fifty men and boys, including all who had lately come by the Fortune.” Bacon concluded his section on the colonial encounter with the Natives by stressing once again the fear and anxiety that faced these early Protestant settlers. Fear and anxiety was produced by the idea that at any moment they could be killed by countless “hordes of savages.” Both Baird’s and Bacon’s descriptions of Protestant settlers’ support for war against Native peoples were much more detailed and descriptive than Baird’s and L. W. Bacon’s descriptions of Protestant evangelicals support for the Revolutionary War. Much of the description of the Revolutionary War by Baird and L. W. Bacon centered on the Reconstruction period as Protestant denominations struggled to recover following the War for Independence.

2.2.3 Leonard Woolsey Bacon (1830-1907)

Leonard Bacon’s third child was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1830 and was named Leonard Woolsey Bacon. Like his father, he attended Yale College and graduated in 1850. He was a Congregational pastor in both Connecticut and New York. He published several books including three historical accounts: *Irenics and Polemics, with Sundry Essays in Church* was published in 1898 the same year that he published his historical account of American Christianity, and in 1904 he published a history of the Congregationalist denomination. In 1898, he wrote an extensive *History of American Christianity* that focused on the success of American Protestantism. It included sections on the Revolutionary War and Civil War—two wars not included in his father’s historical account. In addressing the years prior to the Revolutionary War, the younger Bacon described colonial Protestant evangelicals’ support for war with England in the same limited way as Robert Baird.

Both L. W. Bacon and Baird emphasized the damage the war did to every Protestant denomination. L. W. Bacon wrote, “Seven years of war left the American people exhausted, impoverished, disorganized, and conscious of having come into possession of a national existence, and stirred with anxious searching of heart over the question what new institutions should succeed those overthrown in the struggle for independence.” This passage indicated that his historical narrative would focus on the post-Revolutionary War period, neglect the soldiers who actually fought in the war, and underemphasize the support Protestant clergy and congregations gave to the war effort.

While writing his chapter on “Reconstruction,” L. W. Bacon described some of the suffering that various Protestant denominations endured during the war, as well as their original position toward the British just prior to war. Concerning the support each denomination gave to the cause of war, L. W. Bacon claimed,

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64 Bacon, *A History*, 209.
the Episcopalian and Methodist ministers were generally Tories, and their churches, and in some cases their persons, were not spared by the patriots. The Friends and the Moravians, principled against taking active part in warfare, were exposed to aggression from both sides. All other sects were safely presumed to be in earnest sympathy with the cause of independence, which many of their pastors actively served as chaplains or as combatants, or in other ways; wherever the British troops held the ground, their churches were the object of spite.

These were the only statements L. W. Bacon made concerning the hostility between the Protestant evangelical churches that supported the Revolutionary War against those churches which supported England. Like Baird’s account, according to L. W. Bacon all evangelical Protestant churches were in earnest sympathy with the causes of independence and provided dedicated support for the war effort against the British. Furthermore, all Protestant denominations eventually perceived the English troops, as well as the Anglican Church, as symbols of hostility, especially as the war dragged on year after year.

Baird, Bacon, and L. W. Bacon wrote three of the earliest surveys of religion within the history of America. All three of these writers when describing, even briefly, the historical circumstances surrounding war against Indians or against the British utilized a more modern historical criterion, than Mather, which utilized historical evidence that justified Protestant support for war. Fear of Indian attacks became the most common rationale for this more modern model of justifying the need for defensive war within the histories of Baird and both Bacons since they could describe in detail the Indian attacks which produced so much fear. Though the English troops were civilized, they proved somewhat more difficult for Baird and L. W. Bacon (his father’s history ends with the Indian wars) to depict the British as “savage” aggressors who would necessitate and motivate Protestant denominations to support war. Yet no matter how complicated the rationale, each historical account of war described Protestant support for war through the increasingly modern criterion of natural evidence and historical data.

The seventeenth century settlers’ fear of potential Indian attacks resulted from the physical and psychological danger that occurred during surprise attacks that were recorded by both Virginia and New England settlers. The eighteenth century Protestant colonists’ fear resulted from the potential of the English state-run Church and the Anglican bishop to completely dominate the increasing variety of colonial Protestant denominations. Thus, these historical accounts justified Protestant support for war against enemies by writing evidence-based narratives of fear and anxiety toward enemies who could only be defeated through war.

By far, the greatest historical difference between the Bacons and Robert Baird was that the Bacons wrote after the Civil War. All three of these Protestant church historians were from the North and held Northern anti-slavery positions. Although Baird wrote before the Civil War, his history celebrated the fact that the Northern states abolished slavery in the 1830s and struggled to keep slavery out of several territories. While the elder Bacon’s historical narrative did not discuss the Revolution or slavery, his

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65 Bacon, A History, 209.
66 Baird, Religion in America, 300.
son’s narrative described the slavery issue and the injustice of the “Southern Institution” that developed as cotton production became more profitable.

Baird, who wrote in Europe in 1842, still had hope, as did the elder Bacon, that the strength of the evangelical churches in America could resolve the slavery issue, by ending slavery in the South. They surmised that this could be achieved without schism, dissolution of the Union, or bloodshed. Two years later, when the Methodists split over the issue of slavery, they were proven wrong about schism; following the secession of South Carolina they were proven wrong about the strength of the Union; and when South Carolina militia fired on Fort Sumter they were proven wrong concerning the shedding of blood. While L. W. Bacon spent few words describing the evangelical attitude toward the build-up of the Revolutionary War, he wrote a more detailed account of Protestant evangelical attitudes and reactions in the years prior to the Civil War.

Leonard W. Bacon demonstrated his strong support for missions among the Native Indians when he wrote about the shameful treatment of the Cherokee Nation by Georgia and the federal government and he connected their forced removal to a Civil War battle. He began his historical account of this Civil War incident some twenty-five years before the start of the war as he described the violent, military removal of the Cherokee from the state of Georgia in the middle of the 1830s. He described this event as one of the most treacherous injustices ever perpetrated by the United States government. Much of L. W. Bacon’s indignation was the result of the destruction of the successful missionary efforts among the Cherokee Indians.

L. W. Bacon cited Century of Dishonor by Helen Hunt Jackson to highlight the success of missions among the Cherokee. He wrote, “Missions of several sects were established in their country, and a large number of them had professed Christianity and were leading exemplary lives. There is no instance in all history of a race of people passing in so short a space of time from the barbarous stage to the agricultural and civilized.”67 This highlighted the rationale for why he thought the removal of the Cherokee was so unjust, it was because of the tribe’s newly Christianized and civilized condition. L. W. Bacon claimed that the land prospectors in Georgia, who failed in their efforts to remove the Cherokee nation, not only petitioned the federal government for help, but that they began to execute Cherokee Indians and to arrest the missionaries.68 Here L. W. Bacon’s criticism of the treatment of Indians stemmed from the fact that he described it as violence done to Christian converts who were civilized and not because it was an unjust seizure of Indian land.

L. W. Bacon concluded this section on the mistreatment of the Cherokee by reminding the reader of one instance of justice that took a long time to be fulfilled. He asserted that during the Civil War justice came upon the sons of the fathers who killed missionaries while attempting to drive a Christian tribe off their land. He wrote,

But the mills of God went on grinding. Thirty years later, when in the battle of Missionary Ridge the chivalry of Georgia went down before the army that represented justice and freedom and the authority of national law, the vanquished and retreating soldiers of a lost cause could not be accused of superstition if they remembered that the scene of their

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67 Bacon, A History, 265.
68 Bacon, A History, 267,
humiliating defeat had received its name from the martyrdom of Christian missionaries at the hands of their fathers.”

In this statement, L. W. Bacon suggested that during the Civil War, the Union Army under the direction of Ulysses S. Grant provided national justice, albeit delayed, when the Union Army defeated the Confederate Army of Tennessee under General Braxton Bragg. His use of the literary phrase “mills of God” referred back to a short lyrical poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882). Longfellow’s poem was entitled “Retribution” and it stated,

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Though the mills of God grind slowly;  
Yet they grind exceeding small;  
Though with patience he stands waiting,  
With exactness grinds he all.
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L. W. Bacon utilized this literary metaphor to bring a clear historical sense that the injustice done to the missionaries on Missionary Ridge was eventually avenged even if justice took a long time to achieve. His narrative utilized a poetic metaphor to venerate the vengeance that was administered to the Georgia militia by the Union Army during the Civil War. And for L. W. Bacon, their defeat represented national justice. Justice was accomplished since the sons of the evildoers who forced the removal of the Christian Indians and the persecutors of the missionaries were routed on the battlefield. He also argued that the Civil War was made necessary by the general evidence of Southern injustice against slaves and the armies of the North could avenge this particular injustice done to Christianized Indians.

Except for this one case of unjustifiable military intervention against Indians, L. W. Bacon wrote about the historical evidence in support of war against Native tribes in much the same way as the historic accounts of his father and Robert Baird. In general, all three historians maintained that historic evidence supported war against Native Indians even when war resulted in the removal of Natives from their land. Baird claimed that seizing Native territory was a particular right of the Protestant settlers who brought modern agricultural technology to these new settlements and which resulted in significantly better crop production. L. W. Bacon’s history, however, was the first general religious history that did not support all American military action against Natives. Rather, he concluded that war was not justified when it resulted in destroying missionary efforts and killing converted Indians just to remove them from the land. He also connected the need to go to war with historic evidence in support of war that could correct major injustices like the freeing of slaves or providing revenge against the sons of those who persecuted missionaries and converted Cherokee Indians.

Leonard W. Bacon evaluated the modern historic evidence concerning Protestant evangelicals in the North and in the South during the Civil War time period since both groups thought their cause for war was justified. He focused on this task while at the same time arguing that the cause of the South was clearly wrong and unjust when evaluated by historical evidence. His history emphasized the injustices of Southern slavery. He also described the Southern Protestant evangelicals’ changing position on slavery once the Southern economy became increasingly dependent upon slave labor.

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69 Bacon, A History, 269.
70 The literary phrase was stated earlier by the Greek skeptic, Sextus Empiricus (160-210 BCE), when he wrote “the mills of the gods are late to grind, but they grind small.” Against Professors I.287.
L. W. Bacon claimed that the vast majority of Protestant evangelicals at the turn of the nineteenth century thought slavery needed to be abandoned. In support of this claim, he cited the 1818 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. This General Assembly, according to L. W. Bacon, represented “the Christian citizenship of the whole country, North, South, and West.” According to his historical work, the opening statement expressed “the universally accepted sentiment of American Christianity of that time.” It stated, “We consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another as a gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature; as utterly inconsistent with the law of God, which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves; and as totally irreconcilable with the spirit and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

L. W. Bacon argued that due to the “Southern Institution” the united Protestant evangelical front against slavery came to an end in the mid-1830s. According to L. W. Bacon, the historical evidence pointed to 1833 as the year of change, when a new religious system of support for slavery took hold in the South starting in Mississippi. He named the new religious justification for slave labor the “Southern Apostasy” since it destroyed Christian unity which was opposed to slavery in the United States. L. W. Bacon credited the Presbyterian minister, James Smylie, with developing the Christian pro-slavery movement. The Reverend Smylie ‘discovered’ biblical support for the institution of slavery. He even proclaimed that slavery was righteous in the sight of God at a time when most Presbyterian ministers in Mississippi rejected this view. His newly discovered biblical support for slavery rapidly grew throughout the South. In documenting this, L. W. Bacon’s historical account recorded that in less than one year this view of slavery had become the dominant Southern Christian position.

There were three popular historical accounts, referred to by L. W. Bacon concerning the growing support for slave labor, which won over Southern Protestant evangelicals. The first was economics and the ever increasing monetary value of slavery to the Southern financial system once the cotton gin was invented. The second was anger at the increasingly radical abolitionists in the north. The third was fear of slave insurrection which according to L. W. Bacon was by far the largest influence on Southern Protestant attitudes concerning slavery. Much of this new-found fear in the South was reported as originating in the bloody slave uprising of Nat Turner in 1831.

Although, L. W. Bacon’s history conceded that much of the anxiety over the potential of slave revolts was real, his account rejected this as the primary cause of fear in the south. Slaves in reality had very little power and very limited access to weapons. L. W. Bacon purported that the fear of slave revolt was actually a scheme to conceal the more powerful intimidation that dominated Southern culture. The dominant fear in the South was the fear of being killed for speaking out against slavery. This ultimate fear spread throughout every community in the South as the Southern economy became more dependent on slave labor. L. W. Bacon judged the historic situation and described it as a rapidly spreading virus of fear made manifest from Southern threats of violence, financial

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71 Bacon, A History, 268.
72 Bacon, A History, 268.
74 Bacon, A History, 277-8.
75 Bacon, A History, 279.
ruin, and hanging of those who opposed slavery. Since this fear in the South was actually a fear of the Southern guardians of its institution, L. W. Bacon concluded that this fear was not a legitimate support for war against the Union. Rather this fear would have been evidence for a defensive war against the Southerners who profited from the unjust institution of slavery.

The Protestant evangelical clergy in the South did not resist the Southern cultural and regional influences that made it necessary for them to embrace racism and impossible for them to resist the injustices of slavery. L. W. Bacon described the Protestant evangelical churches in the South as granting support to the institution of slavery which was the same institution these churches had very recently condemned. The dual forces of regional support for Southern culture, along with fear of violent attacks from pro-slavery forces thus created the need for a biblical justification of slavery from the Southern evangelical churches. Throughout this section the author revealed the historical evidence of this heretical abuse of the Bible by Southern Protestant evangelicals.

L. W. Bacon’s discussion of the Methodist and Baptist division into Northern and Southern organizations presented another historic example of the increasing Protestant denominational support for slavery in the South. During the 1844 Methodist General Conference, the Northern churches demanded that persons owning slaves be excluded from the ministry. The resolution was passed and in 1845 the ‘Methodist Episcopal Church, South’ was organized in opposition to the General Conference. L. W. Bacon ironically suggested that “under the fierce tyranny then dominating the South the Southern Baptists [refused to] fall behind their Methodist neighbors in zeal for slavery.”

L. W. Bacon concluded that this cultural competition in support of slavery resulted in the Alabama Baptist Convention demanding that the national Baptist mission’s department grant slave owners the same privileges and rights given to persons without slaves. The mission’s department refused and the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in May of 1845. This new-found radical Southern Protestant support for slavery took place in a relatively short time when a whole new culture developed around the institution of slavery, granting it both modern justification and biblical sanction. It was the Southern clergy’s role in the biblical support of slavery which L. W. Bacon condemned as heretical.

Next, L. W. Bacon explained the historical events surrounding the Protestant evangelical reaction in the North prior to the Civil War. The most distressing political development for the Northern evangelicals was the ‘Compromise of 1850.’ This Congressional Act permitted popular sovereignty to determine if the Kansas territory would be a free or slave state and established the Fugitive Slave Law. L. W. Bacon remarked that the Fugitive Slave Law strongly solidified anti-slavery attitudes in the North to a greater degree than the previous hundred years of abolitionist rhetoric. This law not only antagonized abolitionist but it also was generally rejected in the North on the premise that it was unfair, cruel, and went against the modern ideals that all people should be free, especially those who fought hard enough to escape the Southern slave system.

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76 Bacon, A History, 280.
77 Bacon, A History, 303.
78 Bacon, A History, 303.
79 Bacon, A History, 341.
The religious outrage in the North was provoked even more by the idea of Kansas becoming a slave state. Thus, according to L. W. Bacon, the North needed a man to fight for freedom in Kansas. Eli Thayer was that man. He appealed to a Northern Protestant sense of justice to support his vision of a ‘Kansas Crusade.’ Northern Protestants, especially evangelical clergy, concluded that the fight against slavery was necessary since slavery itself was so unjust. Their conclusion motivated support for Eli Thayer’s mission to Northerners as far away as New Haven where Protestants rushed out to the new frontier in order to fight against slavery. It also motivated a deep financial swell of support as Northern ministers took up collections for weapons against the pro-slavery aggressors who tried to claim Kansas for their own.  

L. W. Bacon’s history described the depth of Northern evangelical opposition to slavery and especially the spread of slavery. Even Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887) believed fighting slavery was naturally and rationally justified. He demonstrated this justification by raising large sums of money for guns against the pro-slavery boarder jumpers who migrated to Kansas for the sole purpose to cast ballots in favor of slavery. Thus, Northern Protestants were described by L. W. Bacon as able to find enough rational, biblical, and financial support for killing pro-slavery squatters. In many ways this violence was portrayed similarly to the killing of the Natives since it was supported in just about every possible way as a worthy cause.

When L. W. Bacon described the Protestant reaction to the political developments prior to the Civil War, he detailed some of the most significant aspects of the evangelical revival of 1857-1858. His historical account claimed that this revival had an impact comparable to the Great Awakening and that it empowered Protestant churches to survive during the Civil War years. He noted that like the Great Awakening of 1740 was providential preparation of the American church for the struggle for independence. In the same way, he argued the church might not have successfully passed through the Civil War without the spiritual reinforcement that God granted during the religious revival of 1857 and 1858.

In spite of the revivals in “every city, village, and hamlet in the land,” the divisions between North and South could not be overcome. In fact, according to L. W. Bacon, just the opposite happened as the revivals made the slavery issue impossible to ignore. The revivals strengthened the Northern Protestants’ position concerning both the evils of slavery and against the Southern churches fall into heresy. Southern Protestants, who were becoming financially dependent on slave labor, increased their defense of slavery by utilizing both modern historical means and biblical interpretation in order to justify their position. L. W. Bacon summed up the Southern Protestant commitment to the justice of their cause by quoting a Southern Presbyterian declaration which reinforced the South’s “‘deep conviction of the divine appointment of domestic servitude,’ and of the ‘peculiar mission of the Southern church to conserve the institution of slavery.’”

While L. W. Bacon thought the Southern Protestant defense of slavery was heretical, his history argued that it was impossible to understand the complexity of the Civil War years without recognizing the sincerity of the Southern Protestants. As the Southern economy became more dependent on slavery, Protestants increasingly

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80 Bacon, A History, 341.
81 Bacon, A History, 344.
82 Bacon, A History, 343.
83 Bacon, A History, 346.
perceived slavery as divinely sanctioned. Accordingly, L. W. Bacon’s history stated that Southern Protestants became more entrenched in interpreting the defense of slavery as a God ordained support for war against those who would seek to threaten slave labor. From a Southern Protestant perspective, therefore, the Civil War was necessary and was justified in using modern and religious evidence to maintain their way of life. In the North the Protestant evangelical perspective held that the Civil War was a necessary war, justified by modern and religious evidence in order to free the slaves. L. W. Bacon’s history generalized that although the Southern Protestants were not justified in their position on slavery, they still held to their convictions with the same modern historical criterion and religious dedication that the Northern Protestants, did which resulted in a very bloody Civil War.84

L. W. Bacon concluded his section on the Civil War by addressing the war’s influence on the spiritual life of evangelical Protestants. His history briefly mentioned how the war changed the soldiers. He indicated that most of the soldiers benefited greatly from the wartime experience. Since the majority of soldiers fought for causes they believed God sanctioned, they perceived their military service to be for the glory of God. He suggested that the Protestant soldiers were strengthened into better and more disciplined Christians because of the military discipline they received. In addition, he described the war as granting the Protestant evangelical church “higher conceptions of the joy and glory of self-sacrifice, and deeper and more vivid insight into the significance of vicarious suffering and death.”85 Like the military discipline that would strengthen an individual Christian, this quote indicated L. W. Bacon believed that Protestant denominations were strengthened by the forced self-sacrifice and suffering brought on by the Civil War years. Thus, even though L. W. Bacon viewed the Southern Protestants as heretical in their biblical justification for supporting war against the North, he described their support of war and the Protestant influence on the soldiers both in the North and the South as having a positive impact on both the nation and the individual soldier.

L. W. Bacon recognized that some soldiers were weakened emotionally because they were deprived of family relations, and were physically damaged due to the horrors of the Civil War. However, he claimed that the cases of broken soldiers were so few as to be a cause for celebration.86 This was the only place where the author addressed the human trauma of suffering and death in war. But L. W. Bacon’s historical narrative dismissed these critical issues in order to describe the Protestant evangelical support for war and he provided an account that indicated soldiers’ suffering could provide a new perspective on Christ’s redemptive suffering and death. He did this when he wrote about how individual soldiers’ suffering granted Protestant denominations a “deeper and more vivid insight into the significance of vicarious suffering and death.”87 Furthermore, this historical account provided no violent battlefield scenes of wounded soldiers or starving civilians forced to endure a military blockade. While his historical account described in some detail the evangelical attitudes about the impending war and how both sides justified the war through modern, rational and biblical arguments, it neglected to indicate any historical change in those attitudes during or after the Civil War.

84 Bacon, A History, 348.
85 Bacon, A History, 350.
86 Bacon, A History, 350.
87 Bacon, A History, 350.
L. W. Bacon’s history, much like Robert Baird’s and his father’s, described Protestant denominations as united in their cultural worldview concerning the support they gave to soldiers fighting in America’s wars. All three historians primarily focused their accounts on the increasingly modern rationale based on historical evidence. This was true even while L. W. Bacon’s history increasingly addressed the religious motivations for the Civil War, since the religious motivation of each side was often connected to biblical interpretations of slavery and a modern sense of liberty and justice. The modern criterion in support of war utilized by all three authors was continued by the next historian Peter G. Mode whose history described Protestant support for war justified by three modern historical criteria: (1) protection against fear and anxiety, (2) correction of injustice, and (3) punishment of aggression.

2.2.4 Peter George Mode

Peter G. Mode was an early twentieth century church historian who wrote about Protestantism in America utilizing the most modern scientific standards for presenting historical evidence. He described Protestant settlers at war with Natives in legal terms of self-defense, settlement protection, land acquisition, and punishment of aggressors. In the early 1920s, Mode, a young and promising American Church historian, was gripped by the frontier thesis of the historian Fredrick Jackson Turner (1861-1932). Mode wrote a history of Protestantism in America entitled Frontier Spirit in American Christianity which was published in 1923. Peter Mode was teaching at the University of Chicago when he wrote his version of how the American frontier influenced the historical development and growth of Protestant denominations.

He began his academic career at the University of Chicago and wrote his dissertation on the effects of the bubonic plague on English monasteries. Following the completion of his dissertation and his appointment at Chicago, Mode turned his academic attention toward issues within American religious history. He was an assistant professor of church history at Chicago from 1916 until 1926. Under the leadership of Shirley Jackson Case (1874-1947), Mode began to gather source documents concerning American church history. In 1921, Mode published the first American church history sourcebook which focused on gathering denominational records from the colonial period. He quickly and quietly left his University of Chicago appointment amid a divorce scandal in 1926. His leaving prompted the Dean of the Divinity School at the University of Chicago to offer William Warren Sweet a professorship in American Church History. In 1927, Sweet was lured away from DePauw University knowing that he was being given a chance to develop a new field of study within American history. It was also a research opportunity to collect existing source materials from the most influential Protestant denominations.

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88 Turner received his PhD in history from John Hopkins University in 1890. He was a professor of history at Wisconsin University from 1890 until 1910 and a professor at Harvard University from 1911 until 1924. Turner’s frontier thesis was argued in a scholarly paper in 1893 entitled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” which he presented at the Chicago World Fair. The paper argued that the rugged individualism of American citizens was unique and shaped in large measure by the wild land that settlers had to cultivate. In addition it stated that the overwhelming economic and political success of the United States stemmed from westward expansion and the settling of the Wild West.

89 His dissertation was published and it was entitled The Influence of the Black Death on the English Monasteries, Menash WI: George Banta Publishing Co., 1916.
denominations in America, especially those churches that settled on the frontier west of the Mississippi River.\footnote{Ash, James, L. Protestantism and the American University: An Intellectual Biography of William Warren Sweet. Dallas, TX: SMU Press, 1987, 66-70.}

Even to a greater extent than Baird, Bacon, and L. W. Bacon, Peter Mode’s history provided evidence based on modern historical methods. He utilized these methods in describing the Protestant settlers’ military action against Native tribes. His primary argument was that the settlers’ military action only occurred as a last resort following attacks by Natives. The historical evidence he described in making this argument was that the violent wars with Native Indians did not ensue until after their settlements were attacked and after heroic missionary efforts had failed to Christianize the Natives. In support of his idea that the American frontier was central to American Christianity he cites the \textit{History of American Christianity} by Leonard Woolsey Bacon. Mode praised his history as the only work on American Christianity that acknowledged the influence of the frontier on the early nineteenth century spread of Christianity and the increasing inspiration that benevolence and social improvement societies had within America. Accordingly, Mode supported the way L. W. Bacon’s text demonstrated the many ways the frontier affected church life in America. Mode, however, was also quick to criticize L. W. Bacon for presenting the frontier as simply one stage or ‘incident’ within the development of American Christianity rather than as a central and continuing force within American Protestant Christianity. Mode wrote, “Frontier contact has been more than an incident. It is the one unifying feature in all the vicissitudes of our national development.”\footnote{Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit}, 11.} In examining this “unifying feature,” Mode’s history described the English settlers’ interactions with Natives.

The importance of the frontier according to Mode’s historical account, stemmed from the earliest English settlers considering their settlement as a launching pad for exploring the growing English empire. This process of exploration lasted for over a century and a half, during which various generations of primarily European Protestant settlers seized America’s interior only to discover that their own character had been impacted by the people and events encountered while settling the frontier. Mode suggested, therefore, that the conquest of the frontier produced some qualities like self-reliance and resourcefulness that almost unconsciously embedded themselves in the fabric of American Christianity.

He described, in some detail, the English colonists’ interactions with Native people and the wars which ensued. He initially praised these interactions since the English came with a sense of moral and spiritual responsibility toward the Natives. Mode noted the English Royal Charters for Virginia, Massachusetts Bay, the Carolinas, Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania as evidence of the obligation that the English monarch placed upon settlers to introduce Christianity and civilization to the Native peoples.\footnote{Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit}, 15.}

Mode emphasized the English settlers’ failures as they attempted to Christianize and bring civilization to the Native tribes. His description of this missionary failure framed his account of Protestant settlers’ support for war against Natives. The failure of missions, according to Mode, resulted in increased Native hostilities which inspired the settlers’ need for military protection and self-defense. Initially, his text praised the
English monarch, King James I, for his effort to establish a missionary presence in America and he credited the King for financing the first missionary school in Virginia which educated Indian boys from the ages of twelve through twenty-one. Mode wrote that it was “the earliest expression of the interest shown by Englishmen in the well-being of the American savage . . . [it was] designed to give lads of seven years and younger a knowledge of Christian principles, and youths from twelve to twenty-one an acquaintance with a trade.”

The institution attempted to train individuals in order to produce Indian missionaries with a seminary-type ministry who would be able to convert their own people. Although the term “savage” was used in the following quote, Mode used the term much less than the three historians who wrote before him and he used it as an indicator of the Natives’ need for Christian education whereas the others often employed the term to describe the Natives’ military tactics.

Mode noted that the first missionary outreach, however, was short-lived because of a Native attack. He described how this “ideal prototype of constructive missionary effort” was completely destroyed by “the prejudice and malice of the Indians themselves . . . during the disastrous massacre of 1622.” He did not provide any detailed historical evidence of this massacre or the Protestant settlers’ reaction to the attack other than the closing of the mission’s school. He placed all the blame for this initial attack on the Natives and the attack provided the settlers with a rationale for protection in the future. This indicated Mode’s reliance on a more modern conception of defensive war against Native Indians which justified the Protestant settlers’ polices concerning Natives. His reliance on modern and rational evidence in his description of the historical situation surrounding Protestant support for the wars against Indians excluded supernatural explanations for war or for military successes. In stressing the self-defense that the settlers needed, Mode justified the Protestant support for settler wars against Natives.

While writing about the seventeenth century, Mode purported the lack of missionary success among the Native groups as evidence of the settlers’ need for protection. He accused the Puritans of neglecting their spiritual duty to the Indians. In 1631, however, this situation changed when John Eliot arrived in Boston and devoted his life’s work to Indian missions. Mode noted that Eliot justly deserved the title “Apostle to the Indians” and as a result of his efforts the number of converted and civilized Natives around Boston had grown to over eleven hundred. In writing about the eighteenth century, Mode credited John Sergeant, Eleazer Wheelock, and David Brainerd with impressive missionary results through their mastery of Native languages and providing education to Native children. Mode’s history described these individual and heroic missionary accomplishments which appeared to ensure the success of Native American missions. The situation, however, was very different and Mode directed blame for the general failure of Protestant missions on the Natives. Heroic and effective missionaries were far too few and financial resources far too scarce to have any significant, long-lasting success and Native surprise attacks would permanently end the limited missionary funds. Large-scale conversion of the Natives could not ultimately be achieved since the

93 Mode, *Frontier Spirit*, 16.
94 Mode, *Frontier Spirit*, 16.
95 Mode, *Frontier Spirit*, 18.
vast majority of missionaries were forced to work alone and unsupported due to fear of Native attacks.\textsuperscript{96}

Missionary failure was only one part of the evidence that contributed to the justification for war against Indians as Mode placed settlers’ fear of surprise attacks as the ultimate reason for the eventual wars that would force Native peoples from their land. Similar to Baird and the Bacons, Mode asserted that fear of Native attacks provided an initial motivation for the settlers to convert and civilize the Natives; however, once the Natives proved unwilling and resistant to conversion, war became the most rational solution for self-defense. Defensive war was a solution backed by modern historical evidence indicating that only military power could guarantee the colonists’ safety and security by either displacing or killing aggressive Natives. In Mode’s description of Protestant support for war, his primary evidence justifying war with Natives stemmed from the fear and anxiety of surprise Indian attacks. The need for self-defense following the failure to convert the Native inhabitants was present in Mode’s description of European settlers’ attitude toward the Native Indians: “Unless a savage was civilized, it was recognized that he was liable at any moment to swoop down and extinguish the white man’s settlements.”\textsuperscript{97}

In this section of his history, Mode followed the previous historians’ accounts of religion in America and grounded his argument for Protestant support of defensive war on modern criteria based on historical evidence. His historical argument not only left out the idea of supernatural support of war or divine justification for war, but he also never mentioned God, even when describing Puritan settlers and what they believed. Although Mode’s historical account defended Protestant support for war against Indians, its reliance on more natural and secular evidence in describing historical events surpassed the histories of Baird and both Bacons. The earlier histories alluded to the Puritans’ belief in God even if those historical narratives did not describe any supernatural historical evidence they still discussed the Puritan concept of God’s providence. Mode’s text, however, did not mention God or any aspect of divine belief by Puritan settlers. In addition, Mode’s text set the stage in America for historians to write increasingly secular accounts of religion in America which focused on natural and secular historical data, rather than describing references to supernatural events or divine beings. Since Mode’s history focused so much on the frontier with all of the frontier’s natural and secular historical evidence, future American religious historians became more skeptical about American wars and Protestant support of those wars.

Peter Mode’s history also described the importance of financial factors as evidence leading to the failure of missionary efforts and how material prosperity led to colonial neglect of missions. He stated, “Materialism wrought deadening influences upon the Churches, paralyzing the finer spiritual sense of missionary obligation. The savage with his paint and curious garb ceased to arouse curiosity and compassion.”\textsuperscript{98} Mode insisted that the historical connection was strong between the settlers gaining material wealth and their deteriorating perception of the Natives. Increasingly, the Protestants who moved west began to view the Natives as “hopelessly slothful and imprudent [as well as]...”\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{96} Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit}, 20.
\textsuperscript{97} Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit}, 21.
\textsuperscript{98} Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit}, 22.
bitterly resentful.”

His history described these negative attitudes toward Natives along with the Natives’ increasing resistance to conversion and to missionary education for their children as discouraging to even some of the most devoted missionaries.

Mode’s account described an increasing colonial wealth which transferred into building larger towns and cities. This in turn created agricultural communities that were spread out further, forcing Indian tribes to retreat further and travel farther in search of food that previously had been provided by their traditional hunting grounds. The increasingly larger Protestant settlements created better defensive fortifications which resulted in little or no interaction between the settlers and the Indians. Mode pointed to the settlers’ eventual loss of contact with Indian tribes as a factor in the failure of missions and the frequency of wars, since the more frequent contact by earlier settlers provided them with frequent reminders about the altered life-style of the displaced tribal people. The physical separation of English townsfolk from the Indians was symbolic of the failure of colonial churches to make a financial commitment to missions for the Indians.

Mode reported that settlers began to push ever further into the American interior at the close of the Colonial period. As this was occurring, Protestant relations with Native tribes became even more violent as the Natives desperately attempted to stave off the intruders’ encroachments. As Natives defended their territory, Protestant settlers who were bold enough entered the territories of Kentucky, Tennessee, western Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Mode described how these settlers relayed tales of heroism and horror which revived the old colonial fear of Indian attacks and kidnappings.

The Protestant settlers’ increasing fear of the Natives, Mode stated, was a motivating factor for the settlers traveling further out onto the western frontier. At times, his history utilized a rhetorical style similar to Cotton Mather’s since both historians depicted the anguish and horror of family members being attacked by aggressive Native Indians. Mode, however, did not suggest a divine rational for the attacks and always pointed to the wilderness and the naturally aggressive ways of the Natives as he described the Protestant settlers justification for supporting war.

The frontier settlers, within Mode’s history, faced “the burning of cabins, the capture of wives and children and the scalping of unwary travelers and planters. Life on the frontier became an unceasing vigil against the stealth of the Indian war band.” He described the fear of family members back at home waiting to hear news of their loved ones safety out on the frontier: “parents, sisters, and friends were racked with anxiety as they thought of their loved ones who at any moment were liable to fall as victims in the next visitation of the savage.” Mode’s emphasis upon frontier violence pointed out the modern and secular support for a war of self-defense against Native Indians. The violence of the Natives was described by Mode, on the one hand, as a natural part of the frontier landscape. On the other hand, however, earlier historians described Indian attacks in a way as to justify that the Protestant settlers were fighting defensive wars against the Indians. The increasing Native violence was also described by Mode as initiating a renewed call for missionary activity among the Indians.

99 Mode, Frontier Spirit, 22.
100 Mode, Frontier Spirit, 23.
Peter Mode’s history next described war following the Revolutionary War Era in which he described the Protestant evangelicals’ increased desire for world missions. This new push initially spurred a new-found interest in ministering the gospel to Native peoples. Mode stated that many evangelical societies sprang up for “propagating the gospel among the unhappy heathen.”\textsuperscript{102} World missionary societies in New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Berkshire focused their activities on the “heathen at the door . . . by caring for the [spiritual] needs of the savages.”\textsuperscript{103} However, even with the new found enthusiasm for missions at the turn of the nineteenth century, there were century-old problems that persisted and which could not be overcome. In a very short time period missionary efforts were easily transferred from the Native tribes, who were resistant to the gospel message, to a new found ministry of caring for the needs of white settlers on the new frontier. Missionary societies promoted very successful campaigns to raise funds for their new outreach to white settlers. They proclaimed that ministries to the settlers on the new frontier would be much more successful than missions to Indians. Mode captured the direction of these missionary societies as they initiated a rapid expansion of their outreach to the settlers while at the same time they offered fewer resources to evangelize the Natives. Mode’s more secular analysis reported that missionary societies produced publications claiming their increased ministry to settlers was crucial for their Christian outreach since the value of converting a white settler was equivalent to the salvation of a Native Indian.\textsuperscript{104} In this way, by focusing on the secularity of the frontier and the natural historical data of failed missions and native attacks, Mode’s historical narrative provided the most modern historical account of Protestant growth in America until the 1930s with the publication of William Warren Sweet’s critically objective history. In writing about the historic conditions of the 1830s, Mode indicated that American Protestant missions’ new goal shifted from evangelizing Indians to making sure the increasing numbers of western settlers remained in the Protestant evangelical tradition. He captured this new goal by writing that the mission societies turned all their resources toward the creation of an American “homogenous Christian civilization.”\textsuperscript{105} Mode then critiqued the new situation in which Protestant missions and American nationalism had virtually become indistinguishable, since the task of maintaining America as a Christian nation was inseparable from the idea of creating a model Protestant nation that would export Protestant evangelicalism around the world. He described this heightened Protestant nationalism, “Providence had thus set itself to the task of developing a race [in America] whose character should contain the elements calculated to make it an outstanding missionary people.”\textsuperscript{106} These words demonstrated Mode’s idealism concerning American missions and the historic irony of America being a missionary nation that attempted to convert the world to Protestantism while at the same time abandoned its missionary outreach to Native Indians. Thus, even though Mode did not present a critique of Protestant support for war against Indians, he did present one of the strongest critiques of Protestant denominations abandoning Indian missions. In

\textsuperscript{102} Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit}, 25.  
\textsuperscript{103} Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit}, 26.  
\textsuperscript{104} Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit}, 28.  
\textsuperscript{105} Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit}, 33.  
\textsuperscript{106} Mode, \textit{Frontier Spirit}, 34-5.
addition, his critique of Protestant nationalism was only a very small step away from criticism of Protestant support for war. Future American religious historians would develop his critique of Protestant nationalism to include a critique of war.

Mode next described the determined growth of Protestantism in America which was largely driven by revivalism and frontier missions to settlers. While his section on missions briefly included depictions of warfare between Protestant settlers and Native Indians, Mode primarily avoided descriptions about the violent wars with Natives. Mode wrote little about the details concerning the death and destruction of the wars against the Indians even though these wars enabled Protestant settlers to occupy Native land on the frontier. In addition, Mode wrote only a few years after the horrifying destruction of World War I, which would indicate that the battleground version of war should be fresh on his mind. His inattention to the details of warfare continued in his writing about revivalism even though he described the colonial Great Awakening as a unifying event for the Revolutionary War. Some possible explanations for Mode’s lack of writing historical detail about war include: (1) he was so disturbed by the brutality of WWI that he did not want to describe any war in detail; (2) he thought secular historians, like George Bancroft, were better suited to provide historical evaluations of war; or (3) he simply wanted to describe the essential influence of the frontier thesis upon American Protestantism without the disturbing details of American wars. Yet, none of these explanations fully account for Mode’s lack of attention to war in America, especially the last explanation, since the frontier experience in many ways was premised on violence and the perpetual condition of potential attacks from Natives.

The lack of attention to war within Mode’s section on missions was particularly striking since he endeavored to describe through modern evidence the settlers’ rational fears and need for military protection. Unfortunately, he neglected much of the history of Protestant settler military conquest, brutal enslavement, and forced relocation of Native tribes to reservations. Thus, although his history of Protestantism provided a more modern account of the evidence for settlers defending themselves through war, it did not provide the violent details of American Protestants at war or the violent aftermath of Protestant support for war.

While writing about the history of revivalism in America, Mode referred to the Revolutionary War; however, much like his description of war while writing about missions, his depiction of warfare was lacking. The revivalism of the Great Awakening was a unifying event in the colonies and produced much growth within the colonial Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches. These Protestant church-bodies became united within the colonies to such an extent that they violently rebelled against Anglicanism and the English crown. Yet to a large degree, Mode’s history avoided the details concerning how Protestant evangelicals reacted to the battles of the Revolutionary War. Furthermore, his historical account only briefly mentions the War of 1812 when he noted that this war brought a “spiritual and moral deterioration usually attending militaristic strain.” In addition, he neglected the historical factors leading up to the Revolutionary War and never mentioned how Protestant evangelicals came to support the war, how the increasingly homogenous Protestant nation survived economically, or even how the colonial Protestant churches were used in support of the war effort.

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107 Mode, *Frontier Spirit*, 43.
Mode’s account of American revivalism extended from the struggle for independence through the end of the War of 1812, and included the division of the churches over abolition in the 1840s. He wrote about these time periods without describing any details about the violence or blood-shed that occurred during the fighting. Writing about the pre-Civil War years he focused more on missions than on slavery, claiming that since the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist evangelicals had became so engaged and enraged over the issue of slavery they had neglected their missionary outreach. He credited Charles Finney and other Northern evangelists with the abolitionist message that galvanized the North against the South leading up to the Civil War. He also skipped the death and destruction of the war and brought up the Reconstruction Era revivalism of Dwight L. Moody.

The frontier was the most important historical prism from which to observe Protestant evangelical history in America, according to Peter G. Mode. It did not, however, provide him a place from which to write descriptively and in-depth about Protestant support for war against Native tribes, British soldiers, or Northerners at war against Southerners. Even in his lack of description about American wars and the soldiers who fought in them, his historical text still did provide an account that justified Protestant support for war, especially settler wars against Indians. Writing so close to WWI, a historical investigation into the religious aspects of America’s earlier wars would have been new and fresh and poignant. Mode, nonetheless, chose to follow closely in the footsteps of the American religious historians that came before him. In doing this, Mode failed to write a thorough historical account of war which would have included the destruction, suffering, and death that accompany warfare. If he had done so, this might have led him to produce the first general American religious history that took a critical stance against the overwhelming Protestant support for past wars.

2.3 Conclusion

Robert Baird, Leonard Bacon, Leonard Woolsey Bacon and Peter Mode all wrote American religious histories between 1842 and 1923 that focused on Protestant success in America. Prior to Baird, in 1802, Cotton Mather wrote a Puritan history of the founding of America and the way God miraculously allowed the Puritans to overcome all the difficulties of settling in a new environment. Much of Mather’s history focused on the conflicts with Native tribes and the need for Puritans to defend themselves against Indians’ surprise attacks. Baird, Bacon, L. W. Bacon, and Mode all wrote similar accounts that justified Protestant support for war against Indians; however, the justification for war against Native groups was quite different from the earlier historical accounts. The four authors who wrote after Mather attempted to demonstrate the need for war against Indians through more modern and natural historical methods which replaced the supernatural explanations and justifications for war that filled Mather’s historical account.

Baird’s historical narrative justified Protestant support for war during settlers’ defense of settlements, during the settlers acquiring additional land, and for the colonists during the Revolutionary War Era. The vast majority of his narrative on war focused on a description of settlers’ wars with Native Indians and the Protestant support of those military encounters. Leonard Bacon account of Christianity in America also focused on settlers’ wars with Natives and the justification of those wars due to surprise Indian
attacks. Bacon’s account was less hostile toward Native Indians than Baird’s account and he mentioned occasions when settlers and Native tribes befriended each other. Despite these occasional friendships, Bacon’s account maintained that Protestant settlers’ fears and need for defense justified Protestant support for wars against Natives.

Leonard Woolsey Bacon’s historical account continued the argument of his father when he described the justification for Protestant war against Indians. He also continued the argument in his discussion of the Revolutionary War and Civil War. L. W. Bacon provided the first critique of federal and state policy which engendered violence against Indians during the enforced resettlement following the Revolutionary War. His criticism of government cruelty during the Trail of Tears was a condemnation of violence perpetuated against missionaries and against the unjustifiable killing of converted Cherokee Indians who resisted relocation. Thus, his critique centered on protesting federal enforcement of a policy that did damage to a Christian community of Indians, rather than being a protest of Protestant support for war against Indians. His discussion of the Civil War Era justified Northern Protestant support for war against the South in order to accomplish the freeing of slaves and to punish the Georgia sons whose fathers were responsible for the violent relocation of converted and civilized Indians and the persecution of missionary endeavors.

Peter Mode’s historical work, like L. W. Bacon’s, provided justification for Protestant support for war during the wars with Indians. The Revolutionary War and the Civil War, however, were largely left unexplored. Mode wrote more about the Protestant wars with Indians than he did about the other wars and even though his text was not published until 1923, he failed to make any mention of World War I. Mode, to a greater degree than the other three authors, utilized modern historic evidence and natural data in arguing that Protestants were justified in their support for war against Natives. Settlers’ fears and their need to defend settlements from Indian attack were the most common evidence stated in support for war against Indians.

Mode surpassed the earlier American church historians as he limited his historical account to providing historical sources and data as evidence for the American settlers’ use of defensive war against Native tribes. In his greater utilizing these more modern historical standards for describing Protestants at war, Peter Mode foreshadowed future American religious historians who would develop a critique of Protestant support for war between 1930 and 1969. Future religious historians, as early as William Warren Sweet’s 1930 edition of his The Story of Religion in America, employed rational and modern criteria to evaluate historical source evidence surrounding American wars and began to criticize Protestant support for those wars, especially Protestant clergy preaching propaganda from the pulpit.

The earliest historians who chose to critique Protestant support for war, to a great extent, ignored Protestant settlers’ wars against Native tribes and focused primarily on critiquing Protestant support for the Civil War and World War I. These more selective and increasingly critical assessments of Protestant support for war arrived on the American scene in the 1930s with William Warren Sweet’s two editions of The Story of Religion(s) in America. Sweets’ historical accounts were motivated by three ideals: an

108 The following four historians make up the American church historians of the third and fourth chapters: William Warren Sweet is the focus of chapter three and Clifton Olmstead, Winthrop Hudson and Edwin Guastad are discussed in chapter four.
increasing desire to write an objective narrative of American Protestant dominance following the Revolutionary War, to explain the success of Protestant evangelical denominations following the Civil War, and to document Protestant growth during westward expansion on the American frontier. These three ideals were much the same as Peter Mode. Yet it was Sweet who would utilize them to produce the first consensus American religious history that critiqued Protestant support for war. The central place of Sweet’s ground-breaking achievement was made possible because of his academic knowledge of theological developments during the 1920s and 1930s. His 1930 historical critique of Protestant support for the Civil War and the First World War paved the way for more expansive historical critiques of Protestant support for a century of warfare against Native Indians which began to appear in the American religious consensus histories of the 1970s.
CHAPTER THREE

AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS
DURING THE 1920s—1930s AND
WILLIAM WARREN SWEET’S CONNECTION TO THEM

The first chapter of this dissertation demonstrated a connection between American church historians’ utilizing modern-historical-critical methods in order to describe the success of Protestantism in America. Their use of these methods resulted in historical works that justified American Protestant support for war, especially wars against the Native tribes since those wars ensured the settlers’ survival and economic success. The last historian in the first chapter published his book in 1923 at a time when theological developments within America, most notably a crisis within liberal Protestantism, would soon make historical justification of Protestant support and even enthusiasm for war impossible.¹⁰⁹ This chapter will analyze some of the cultural and theological developments within America during the 1920s through the 1930s that were connected to William Warren Sweet either through his work at the University of Chicago, his interest in Methodist history and his reading of the Christian Century which had become the most popular Protestant periodical during this time-period. It will focus on these two decades in order to demonstrate William Warren Sweet’s knowledge of these theological developments and to suggest some ways in which these developments helped to shape Sweet’s first and second editions of The Story of Religion(s) in America which were published in 1930 and 1939.

This analysis and assessment will examine the background of Sweet’s break with the American church historians who came before him as he wrote his more critical and lengthy critique of American Protestants’ support for war during the Civil War, the Spanish American War and World War I. There were cultural, social, economic, and theological factors that helped to shape the historical accounts of William Sweet. Since William Sweet’s 1939 text described the theological developments of the 1920s and 1930s this chapter will examine some of the more specifically theological developments that can be directly connected to Sweet. Some of the most important theological

¹⁰⁹ Much of the twentieth century crisis within American liberal Protestantism stemmed from their radically inconsistent response to war. From the end of the Spanish American War in August of 1898, American liberal Protestants increasingly grew confident in the Social Gospel’s ability to improve society and preserve peace. From 1898 through 1916, American Protestants were largely pacifists who believed large scale warfare, like the battlefields of the Civil War, to be a thing of the past. Yet in 1917 when President Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany, the vast majority of Protestant churches were transformed into pro-war centers that encouraged their congregations to join in the war effort. Protestants in America somehow, inconsistent with earlier beliefs, convinced themselves that this war was a ‘war to end all wars’ and would ‘make the world safe for democracy.’ But in 1919 even after fighting for the side that was victorious, Protestant leaders in America were shocked by the horrors and death that resulted from trench warfare and once again swore off war and turned to a new naïve and radical pacifism which refused to take Nazi Germany’s evil seriously. These somewhat over generalized religious and political forces created a crisis within American liberal Protestantism that made it vulnerable to attacks from European neo-orthodoxy and American political realism.
developments that Sweet knew about were an intensifying of the fundamentalist and modernist controversy, the Methodist liberal philosophy of personalism, the development of European dialectical theology, and the realistic political theology of Reinhold Niebuhr. The last two provided a strong critique of liberal Protestant idealism that presupposed a moral and societal evolution resulting in a revelation of the Kingdom of God in history. William W. Sweet was orientated towards modernism through his liberal academic training in history and he would remain a liberal Protestant scholar his entire career. His 1930 historical work, however, demonstrated that he was aware of these newly developed theological critiques of liberalism and was attempting to defend liberal Protestantism against these new attacks. Much of Sweet’s critique of Protestant clergy preaching pro-war sermons and nationalistic propaganda parallels Barth’s attack on his liberal Protestant professors who supported World War I and Reinhold Niebuhr’s criticisms of American Protestant churches that failed to take a stand against industrial greed or national isolationism during the rise of fascism in Germany.

German Protestant liberalism prior to WWI presupposed faith in the historical unveiling of God’s kingdom on earth. This liberal theology was spread to America through many theological students who went to Germany to complete their theological, philosophical or historical education before returning to America to teach. In addition, this Protestant liberalism contributed to German Protestant support for Germany’s entrance into World War I. Karl Barth’s theology condemned this liberal Protestant thought that justified Germany’s participation in WWI as idolatry due to its presumption that God could be revealed by human activity. In addition to Barth’s attack on liberal theology, Reinhold Niebuhr’s theological realism condemned a Protestant liberalism that supported the industrial capitalists who impoverished their factory workers prior to and during the Great Depression and whose theological idealism and political naïveté failed to confront the evils of Nazi Germany and Empirical Japan until after Pearl Harbor.

In examining how American academics came to be aware of European theology, this chapter will present a historical overview of the spread of European dialectical theology, especially as represented in Barth, to America following 1928 when his *Word of God and Word of Man* was translated into English. Barth expressed the essential theological position of what would become known in America as neo-orthodoxy. This chapter will also point out the significance of three early American critiques of Karl Barth on Sweet’s historical account. All three of these reviews of Barth were written in America, published in 1928, and were largely in response to his *Word of God* text. These three evaluations of Karl Barth’s theology often mischaracterized aspects of his dialectical theology, especially nuances that were established by his Reformed background. All three of these reviewers pointed to Barth as an important critic of Protestant liberalism’s tendency toward idolatry and its failure to take seriously a transcendent God of judgment and grace who cannot be revealed through human action.

The first critique of Barth was written by Albert Knudson, a Methodist philosopher and theologian at Boston University. The second was by Wilhelm Paulk, a German theologian and historian who taught at Chicago Divinity School and whose thought was formulated within the Reformed theological tradition. The third was by Reinhold Niebuhr, a German Evangelical Synod preacher from Detroit, who had just joined the faculty of Union Theological Seminary. Their theological ideas and their
critique of Barth spread throughout American academia and was expressed to a remarkable degree within the writings of William Sweet.

Next, this chapter will put into historical context the theological developments of Reinhold Niebuhr from the 1920s through the early 1940s and how his theological realism was communicated to other scholars and to American Protestantism in general. Most important for establishing the development of Reinhold’s thought will be his many essays written for the Christian Century in the 1920s and 1930s. Secondarily, will be Reinhold Niebuhr’s formal break with the Century in 1940 over the journal’s continuing push for neutrality while Hitler ravaged Europe and Reinhold’s founding of the journal Christianity and Crisis in February of 1941. His articles in these journals will also connect him to William Warren Sweet, who also published in the Christian Century in the 1920s. Starting in 1922, Reinhold had dozens of his articles and editorials published yearly by the Century. In 1925 he turned down the position of associate editor, and in 1928 when he became professor of ethics at Union Theological Seminary he maintained an incredible literary output, much of it published by the Century. In 1923 and in 1924, William Warren Sweet published articles in the Century, and in 1927 he moved to the University of Chicago. Chicago was where the Century was published and where its liberal and pacifistic editor, Charles Morrison, was well known by the University of Chicago’s Divinity School faculty. Many members of this faculty, especially Dean Shailer Mathews, would face harsh attacks from Niebuhr’s pen for their sentimental liberal optimism that pressed politically for American neutrality.

While Sweet’s 1930 text did not make reference to Reinhold Niebuhr, it did mention his younger brother H. Richard and his 1929 text entitled the Social Sources of Denominationalism. This book was based on Ernst Troeltsch’s differentiating between an established “church” organization and an evolving group which he designated as a “sect.” In the book, H. Richard traced the development of American Protestant denominations, claiming that their organizational structure more resembled sects since they were ground in newly developing socioeconomic factors rather than in established theological differences. In the early 1930s, H. Richard was inspired by Karl Barth and many of his writings would display neo-orthodox convictions, especially his contribution to The Church against the World. It was a text co-authored with Wilhelm Pauck and F. P. Miller and it called for the church to be set free from a corrupt culture. The book was interpreted by most of readers as supporting the basic European neo-orthodox positions.

Yet, H. Richard felt uncomfortable with Barth’s more dogmatic views that he perceived as limiting God’s revelation to the biblical text. Perhaps, the greatest influence

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110 Gary Dorrien pointed out that Niebuhr became the foremost Christian social ethicist in America by shifting his political stance in every decade from WWI through Vietnam. Niebuhr began by supporting Wilson’s war agenda but in the 1920s turned to pacifism as a Social Gospel liberal. In the 1930s he turned away from pacifism and liberal idealism becoming a radical Socialist who criticized the New Deal for attempting to preserve capitalism. In the 1940s he turned from Socialism as he led a group of intellectuals, union supporters and politicians who supported American military action against German fascism. In the late 1940s and early 1950s he was a bulwark in supporting the Cold War effort against Communism. In the late 1950s began to condemn the Cold War as too militarized and as unnecessary to U.S. interests. In the early 1960 he supported American intervention in Vietnam to restrict Communism but by 1966 he began to condemn the war as morally unjust. See his introduction to the 2011 edition of Niebuhr, Reinhold. The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of its Traditional Defense. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1944.
on H. Richard’s thinking was Paul Tillich (1886-1965), a German socialist pastor and theologian. Tillich faced threats from the Nazis when Reinhold Niebuhr convinced the Union Theological Seminary faculty, during the Great Depression, to voluntarily reduce their salaries in order to fund a faculty position for Tillich. According to Donald Meyer, Tillich would become one of the most powerful voices in America for a post-liberal religious approach to culture, especially during the 1950s and 1960s.\(^\text{111}\) He, like Barth, strongly protested against identifying modern culture with the kingdom of God but whereas Barth’s theological approach had a strong anti-historical dimension (where revelation was an absolute timeless Word that could not be utilized for historical purposes), Tillich’s had a historical approach grounded in time that combined protest and politics.

While studying in Frankfurt, H. Richard heard Paul Tillich speak and in 1932 he translated Tillich’s *Die religiöse Lage der Gegenwart* (1926) which he titled in English, *The Religious Situation*. Tillich made several important contributions to the thought and works of both H. Richard and Reinhold Niebuhr. Tillich’s concept of inspired realism, or ‘faithful realism,’ came to light in H. Richard’s idea of the importance of being focused on how God works in the current situation. It can also be traced in H. Richard’s 1930s ‘radical faith’ which he developed into the 1950s notion of ‘radical monotheism’ which stressed that individuals encounter God in all events and that history should be interpreted, as it is being transformed, according to God’s will and intentions.\(^\text{112}\)

Both Niebuhr brothers, especially Reinhold, were influenced by Paul Tillich’s conception of religious myth. Tillich formulated his approach to myth in the 1920s shortly after the war. Tillich was an army chaplain during World War I and the human carnage and brutality of the war completely overwhelmed him resulting in two nervous breakdowns. While recovering, he sought a deeper understanding of the mythic nature of religion. He conceived of a symbolic relationship between the individual and that which “concerns them ultimately.” Myth, for Tillich, became the language of encounter between an individual and God, the one and most important universal category of religious expression.\(^\text{113}\) Utilizing Tillich’s conception of religious myths, Reinhold formulated critiques of both conservative fundamentalists and of liberal Protestant scriptural interpretation. Reinhold claimed fundamentalists were radically incorrect in assuming Christian myths had to be interpreted literally. Yet liberal theology was not much better in that it failed to understand the significance of Christian myths since they dismissed myths as lacking historical validity.

Gary Dorrien pointed out that the fall was Reinhold’s favorite example of how fundamentalists and modernist both missed the true essence of religious myths. While fundamentalist and other traditional Christians did make ridiculous claims about the fall as a historical event, Reinhold still viewed them as being more insightful than liberals since at least they took seriously the biblical idea of humanity being totally corrupted by sin. Liberal Protestant theology simply dismissed the biblical story of the fall as


unhistorical and failed to recognize its significance. Here Reinhold sharpened his critique of Protestant liberalism as he condemned liberalism for replacing the scriptural myth of human corruption for modern myths of moral and social evolutionary progress and perfection.\footnote{Dorrien, \textit{The Making}, 455-6.}

Tillich’s formulation of the power of religious myth also fostered H. Richard’s famous attack on liberal Protestantism when he described liberalism’s hollow religiosities that had conceived of “a God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”\footnote{Niebuhr, H., Richard. \textit{The Kingdom of God in America}. Chicago: Willett, Clark and Company, 1937, quoted in Johnson, William, S. \textit{H. Richard Niebuhr}, xvi.} While Sweet’s 1930 text cited H. Richard’s \textit{The Social Sources of Denominationalism}, this chapter will demonstrate that Sweet’s developing friendship with Wilhelm Pauck and his access to the writings of the liberal-turned-realist Reinhold Niebuhr, had a greater impact on Sweet’s developing critique of American Protestant support for war than did the writings of H. Richard Niebuhr.

### 3.1 The Origins of the Christian Century

In 1898 the same year as the Spanish American War, Charles Clayton Morrison (1874-1966), a Disciples of Christ minister, moved to the Hyde Park area of Chicago where he became friends with two Chicago Divinity School professors who also belonged to the Disciples of Christ denomination: Edward Scribner Ames (1870-1958)\footnote{Edward Scribner Ames taught at the University of Chicago from 1900-36. He taught the philosophy of religion and was greatly influenced by the liberal pragmatism of John Dewey and William James. His writing and teaching influenced a generation of students with a religious worldview in support of the Social Gospel and pacifism. See Ames, Edward, S. \textit{Beyond Theology: The Autobiography of Edward Scribner Ames}. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.} and Herbert Willett (1864-1944). In 1908, Morrison bought a struggling Disciples of Christ journal named the \textit{Christian Century} at a foreclosure auction for $1,500. The bi-weekly magazine had been published in Chicago since 1891 when it moved from Des Moines, Iowa.\footnote{The magazine was founded in 1884 as a Disciples of Christ journal under the name the \textit{Christian Oracle} and in 1900 the editors changed the name to \textit{The Christian Century}.} Under Morrison’s guidance the predominately Disciples’ publication was transformed into the most influential liberal Protestant magazine of the 1920s and 1930s. In the years leading up to WWI, the \textit{Century} published many articles written by or about leading figures of the Social Gospel movement. These authors included Washington Gladden (1836-1918), Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), Jane Addams (1860-1935), Edward S. Ames (1870-1958), and Herbert Willett (1864-1944). One popular column was entitled, “The World is Getting Better” and it focused on the optimistic liberal ideal of religious and social progress.\footnote{Delloff, Linda-Marie, “Charles Clayton Morrison: Shaping a Journal’s Identity,” \textit{A Century of the Century}, 1984, 43.} Morrison was deeply interested in the relationship between religion and the surrounding culture and his publication became known for publishing articles that most religious publications refused to print.\footnote{Morrison was steeped in the philosophical liberalism and progressive democracy of John Dewey (1859-1952) who taught in the philosophy department of the University of Chicago from 1894 until 1905.} Prior to 1914, the \textit{Christian Century} published many articles about war, the majority of which were antiwar; however, the publication made no clear religious or
political call for neutrality and pacifism, an agenda that would characterize the magazine’s post-World War I political stand. None of the liberal Protestant leaders [e.g., Charles Morrison (1874-1966), Harry Ward (1873-1966), Kirby Page (1890-1957), or Sherwood Eddy (1871-1963)], following the Great War, were pacifistic or isolationist in the traditional absolute sense of those terms. They remained Social Gospel ministers who envisioned America leading the world into a lasting peace. When they thought the end of the First World War would bring peace and prosperity, they adopted Woodrow Wilson’s idealism, pushed for the creation of the League of Nations and supported the 1920s disarmament campaigns. The rise of German Nazism did not change the minds of most liberal Protestants who saw the history of America as a holy settlement separate from the military conflicts of Europe and they utilized a few selectively chosen biblical passages to oppose the international community’s push to militarily resist German fascism.

While Reinhold Niebuhr was pastor of Bethel Evangelical Church in Detroit from 1915-1928, he embraced the prophetic message of the Social Gospel. His liberal education at Yale Divinity School (1913-1915) led to his support for Woodrow Wilson’s idealistic foreign policy and eventually for the war as a crusade for a new political order. He hoped that the end of the war would result in a permanent peace and was greatly disappointed by the direction of the 1919 Versailles Conference. By 1923, his disappointment had turned to disillusionment and his trip to Germany that same year confirmed the mean-spiritedness of the peace treaty. It was a treaty, Niebuhr perceived, whereby France failed to secure a lasting peace and rather sought to extract vengeance against Germany. During his frequent summer visits to Germany, he remembered his initial opposition to the war that he believed was initiated over economically and politically insignificant reasons. He also reflected on the recklessness of the American Protestant churches’ support for the war and once again he embraced a pacifistic stance concerning war.

As pastor at Bethel, Niebuhr developed an anti-capitalistic gospel emphasis in order to empower the auto industry workers to organize against oppressive working conditions. Most American Protestants in the 1920s were fully enjoying the military triumph of the Allies, the political victories of prohibition and women’s suffrage, and the success of home and foreign missions. However, Reinhold Niebuhr’s grasp of the political realities in Detroit and in Germany brought him little joy. The failure of Christianity to curb the excesses of industrial capitalism or to produce a just peace in Europe shook Niebuhr’s faith in the optimism of Protestant liberalism. In reflecting on the events of the 1920s, he published *Does Civilization need Religion?* in 1927. This text presented an early pre-Augustine and pre-Marx stage of his political philosophy. In addition, it critiqued American Protestant “sentimental optimism” but did not fully express the cynicism that would lead to harsher attacks on Protestant liberals.

In the mid-1930s, as professor at Union Theological Seminary, Niebuhr’s prophetic stance against American isolationism stemmed largely from his German background, his visits to a Germany oppressed by France, and the rise in Germany of

120 Several Niebuhr scholars commented that Niebuhr saw World War I as a European struggle for who would control the rights to colonize and plunder the riches of an undeveloped Africa. Thus he believed that European politicians were sacrificing their young men for imperialist economic gain.
Nazism. His parents were German immigrants and his father, Gustav Niebuhr, was a German Evangelical pastor. The family spoke German at home and he could read German theological writings which allowed him to read the dialectical theologians of Europe (e.g. Karl Barth, Rudolph Bultmann, Emil Brunner, & Paul Tillich) before they were translated. Due to his German roots, he understood to a greater degree than most American pastors and theologians what Hitler was doing in Germany. This chapter will examine in-depth Niebuhr’s Christian Century writings, especially throughout the 1920s, and their impact on the historical writings of William Sweet since, as will be shown, their denominational lives and academic careers followed very similar paths.

3.2 Fundamentalism

Following WWI, motivated by a resurgence of premillennialism, fundamentalist Christians began an intense attack on liberal Protestant doctrines that had attempted to employ science and modernism within their theological framework. American conservatives viewed liberal beliefs such as scientific evolution and historical-critical methods of interpreting scripture as heretical. By the middle of the 1920s, the controversy between liberal modernists and fundamentalist conservatives was intensifying and in 1925 it would come to a head during the debate over evolution in the Scopes Trial. In 1922, the Baptist minister Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969) preached his famous “Shall the Fundamentalist Win?” sermon which commenced a thirty-year conflict over how to interpret scripture. Leading the attack against Fosdick was J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), a Princeton Seminary professor who in 1905 studied in Germany with the well-known liberal theologian Johann Wilhelm Herrmann (1846-1922). Machen, however, would reject his professor’s Protestant liberal theology as Herrmann utilized a subjective mysticism to try to salvage the absoluteness of Christianity at a time when scientific modernism’s approach to religion viewed Christianity as a historical phenomenon. In 1923 Machen wrote Christianity and Liberalism (1923) in which he argued that modernist were not defending a “liberal” Christianity but rather were espousing an alternative religion. In 1924 the dean of the Chicago Divinity School, Shailer Mathews (1863-1941), jumped into the debate with his book Faith of Modernism that expressed his liberal Protestant ideology. In fact, two of the most ardent defenders of modernism were faculty members at the Chicago Divinity School in the 1920s: Shailer Mathews and Shirley Jackson Case (1872-1947).

At Chicago, the liberal and modernist...
socio-historical school of thought was so prevalent within the Divinity School, that one fundamentalist scholar, John Horsch (1867-1941), attacked their entire faculty as being guilty of corrupting Christian reality and biblical truth.¹²⁵ The defense of modernism by Mathews came just two years before Mathews sent Shirley Jackson Case to DePaul University, in order to invite and persuade William Warren Sweet to join the Chicago Divinity School faculty, in a newly created position as professor of American Christianity.

3.3 Chicago Divinity School Liberalism

Shailer Mathews, George Burman Foster (1858-1919), and Gerald Birney Smith (1868-1929) were three leading figures who initiated the Protestant liberal theological culture of the University of Chicago’s Divinity School. All three of these scholars were Protestant liberals who had been greatly influenced by two German liberal Protestant scholars: Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) and Albert Ritschl (1822-1889). This historical review will highlight some of the early associations between the University of Chicago and Union Theological Seminary. It will also point to some early connections between William Warren Sweet and the European dialectical theologians, following World War I, who challenged the German Protestant liberal theology of Harnack and Ritschl. Harnack was a Christian historian and New Testament scholar who began teaching at the University of Berlin in 1888 and his liberal theology was largely shaped by the philosophy and the theology of Ritschl. Ritschl was a professor at Bonn (1846-1864) and then at Gottingen (1864-1889). He conceived of the kingdom of God as the essence of Christianity. The philosophic foundation for this theological idealism was a synthesis of Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) moral evaluation of religion based on his ‘critiques of reason’ and Friedrich Schleiermacher’s (1768-1834) foundation for religious knowledge based on his ‘feeling of absolute dependence.’ Ritschl conceived of science as dealing with physical reality while religion dealt with ethical morality. In utilizing both Kant and Schleiermacher, he also enhanced the religious piety of their ideas by grounding them in the kingdom of God and historicizing them in the Christian community. Thus, for Ritschl, the truth of Christianity was only knowable from within the Christian community. This Ritschlian theology dominated Germany in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and it influenced many American Protestant liberal scholars studying in Germany.

One American student in Germany, studying with Harnack, was William Adams Brown (1865-1943) who went on to a forty-four year career as an American liberal theologian teaching at Union Theological Seminary. Another professor at Union who studied under Harnack was the church historian Arthur Cushman McGiffert (1861-1933). When Brown returned from Germany, Union asked him to teach some of the students for the soon-to-be-retiring church historian Philip Schaff (1819-1893). In 1890, Schaff was replaced by the Lane Theological Seminary historian Arthur McGiffert, and William Brown was asked to replace the retiring Union theologian William G. T. Shedd (1820-1894). Brown, as a new theology professor, wanted to use Ritschl’s Dogmatics as a theological textbook but the text had not yet been translated into English. So in 1902,

¹²⁵ Dorrian, The Making, 203.
Brown wrote *The Essence of Christianity* and in 1906 he wrote *Christian Theology in Outline*. Both became classic texts of the new American Protestant liberalism as Brown trumpeted an American liberal theology that echoed Harnack and Ritschl. His texts educated a new generation of American scholars about the liberal idealism of society being transformed through historical progress.\(^{126}\)

While 1890 was an important year at Union with the hiring of professors’ Brown and McGiffert, it also marked an important time at the University of Chicago as the Baptist Union Theological Seminary became the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. In 1891, William Rainey Harper (1856-1906) was persuaded to leave Yale University where he taught biblical languages to become President of the ‘new’ University of Chicago. Five years earlier the University of Chicago failed under the burden of debt, but now Harper was granted financial resources, from Baptist businessmen including John Rockefeller, to develop a full-scale research university with the ability to recruit a world-class faculty. Harper began with the Divinity School; he recruited Shailer Mathews in 1894, George Foster in 1895, and Gerald B. Smith in 1900. Mathews was professor of New Testament and Christian history and became the second Dean of the Divinity School in 1908. One year after hiring Mathews, Harper persuaded Foster, a religious philosopher, to leave McGill University and come to the Divinity School to teach theology. Gerald B. Smith came to the Divinity School in 1900, after being trained in theology at Union by Professor Brown and receiving additional theological training in Germany, mainly with Wilhelm Herrmann. Herrmann was influenced by Schleiermacher and Ritschl and he attempted to salvage the liberal ideal of Christianity as the final and ultimate revelation of God in history by means of regarding all historical events as signposts and symbols of religious experience.\(^{127}\) Herrmann would eventually teach many American theological students and, most significantly for twentieth century theology, he taught a Swiss student named Karl Barth. During the early twentieth century the Divinity School at the University of Chicago was not only inspired by modernity and German liberal theology. The “Chicago School” of pragmatic and empiricist philosophy was greatly dependent upon William James and John Dewey and their philosophy infiltrated the Divinity School faculty. The Divinity School faculty also leaned heavily toward the historical school of Ernst Troelsch, who pragmatically viewed all religions as historically valid and conditioned, differentiating it from the subjectivism of the Ritschlian School.\(^{128}\)

Shailer Mathews was the first of the three Chicago scholars to arrive at Chicago. His professional career proved quite important to the careers of William Warren Sweet and Reinhold Niebuhr since Mathews was the Dean of Divinity School when Sweet was hired as a Professor of American Christian History and Mathews’ liberalism provided the fodder for many of Reinhold Niebuhr’s most critical attacks. Mathews epitomized the modern, scientific liberal scholar who attempted, though historical and empirical studies, to describe the past with factual accuracy. He attended Newton Theological Institution and took a position as teacher of rhetoric at Colby College. In 1888, Mathews was transferred to the history department and was sent to Berlin to continue his education. In 1890, he traveled to Berlin and studied with Hans Delbruck (1848-1929) and Ignaz

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\(^{127}\) See McCormick, B. L. “What has Basel to do with Berlin?” 63-88, in *Orthodox and Modern*.

Jastrow (1856-1937), two disciples of the renowned historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886). From these two teachers, Mathews became proficient in the idealistic pursuit of objective history that claimed to have the ability to uncover the past “as it was.” He was at Berlin at the same time as William Adams Brown and Walter Rauschenbusch, but he never met them as he avoided religious classes and never attended any of Harnack’s theological lectures.

Mathews returned to America engrossed with the scientific approach to history. He taught at Colby for three years before taking a position at the University of Chicago’s Divinity School. At Chicago, Mathews embraced the role as ambassador for the Social Gospel’s liberal theology that peaked in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1897 he published *The Social Teaching of Jesus* and in 1905 he wrote *The Messianic Hope of the New Testament*. By 1908 he naturally assumed the role as Dean of the Divinity School. In 1912, he took over as editor of *The Biblical World*, a monthly journal that would be dominated by liberal Protestant theological voices from the University of Chicago. From 1913 until 1920 when the publication was discontinued, Mathews published dozens of his own articles along with articles by Gerald B. Smith, William Adams Brown (Smith’s mentor), Shirley Jackson Case and an occasional article by Washington Gladden and the young socialist pastor Reinhold Niebuhr.

Mathews consistently held on to the belief in the modern ideology that religion should be investigated through scientific means. In 1924, Mathews wrote *The Contributions of Science to Religion*, it was a mere three years prior to his quest to bring to Chicago, William W. Sweet, a liberal Methodist historian who was scientifically and empirically investigating and publishing articles about the history of the growth of the Methodist denomination. Mathews also believed that the scientific investigation of religion would demonstrate that social Christianity and the Social Gospel represented true Christianity. In 1926, Mathews wrote an article for the *Journal of Religion* entitled “The Development of Social Christianity in America” which demonstrated the success of the liberal Protestant Social Gospel prior to World War I and in the decade that followed the war. Mathews’ liberal and modern academic predisposition directed him to seek out and bring William Warren Sweet to Chicago.

It was Mathews’ naïve liberal inclinations towards the inevitable success of the Social Gospel that so dominated his writing that he became Reinhold Niebuhr’s favorite liberal to attack. His writings made evident his optimistic hope for a perfected society that was completely achievable by means of a historical process. Mathews’ idealism was ground particularly within the Protestant liberal successes of the past in abolition and temperance that he fully conceived that the success of the Social Gospel would initiate the kingdom of God on earth. This Protestant liberal faith in historic forces destined to bring about the ultimate success of the Social Gospel drove Reinhold Niebuhr to assail the general sentimentality of liberalism in general and of Shailer Mathews’ writings in particular.

George B. Foster served as another pillar of the Chicago Divinity School during its early development. Foster came to the Divinity School in 1895 and was a professor of theology and philosophy of religion until his death in December of 1918. His son died earlier that year in February fighting in World War I. Like Mathews, Foster was a Protestant liberal who saw the value of contextualizing his Ritschlian appeal to emotional

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religious experience with the historicism of Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) and the empiricism of William James (1842-1910). In 1906 Foster wrote *The Finality of the Christian Religion* which revealed the influence of Ernst Troeltsch’s *Die Absolutheit des Christenums und die Religionsgeschichte* (1902) on his thinking as he conducted a thorough investigation into the historical limits on any Christian claim to being absolute. Foster was the professor of Douglas Clyde Macintosh (1877-1948) and they became lifelong friends. Macintosh was a long-time professor at Yale Divinity School and taught Reinhold Niebuhr during his two years at Yale.

A third dominating presence in the development of Chicago Divinity School was the theologian George Birney Smith. As a scholar, he indicated his reliance on Troeltsch in both his *Social Idealism and the Changing Theology* (1913) and his *A Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion* (1916). Both of these books pointed to Christianity’s reliance on historical circumstances. Smith began his career at Chicago Divinity School in 1900 and was a professor of theology and ethics until his death in 1929. He became the Divinity School’s main ethicist and systematic theologian. He came to Chicago after studying at Union with Brown and after a two-year fellowship in Germany that allowed him to study with Wilhelm Herrmann and with Adolph Harnack. In 1910, Smith took over as editor of the *American Journal of Theology*, a post he held for eleven years. During nine of those years he also served as the first editor of the *Journal of Religion*. These posts gained Smith influence in the field of liberal theology and allowed him to challenge the Ritschlian assumptions of his teachers, especially William Adams Brown at Union. Although Smith held most fully to the belief that science was the salvation of religion, he never achieved the publicity or recognition for promoting liberal modernism like Foster and Mathews, two of his faculty colleagues.

Smith’s thinking about how to construct good theology was modeled on the social scientific ideas of modernity and inductive inquiry. He took this scientific basis for theology further than his Ritschlian teachers and his liberal modernist peers at Chicago. While contributing greatly to the development of the modern theological tradition at Chicago, Smith never was granted the same prominence as other faculty members since following the First World War Smith critiqued several aspects of Protestant liberalism. Smith outlived Foster by more than ten years, during which time his theological liberalism was impacted by the devastation of WWI and its aftermath. Both of these factors greatly impacted his theological ideas and pushed him to re-evaluate liberalism. Smith concluded that the evolutionary idealism of liberalism failed to recognize chaos within the universe and, worst of all, was unable either to identify or to oppose evil.

Protestant liberals, according to Smith, too often rested their faith in the evolutionary progress of humanity and continual social improvement both of which stem from divine fiat. Smith countered this naïve liberalism by arguing that anyone influenced by William James had already abandoned a God in control of an evolving world and that the evils of the First World War stood directly in opposition to the benevolent providence of a divine being. Smith never left liberalism and was on the whole more distressed by the 1920s rise of Christian fundamentalism and theories of biblical inerrancy than he was by the dire political situation in Europe. Yet ten to fifteen years prior to Reinhold Niebuhr, Smith was troubled by the naïve way in which Protestant liberalism embraced the Great War and by the way it too often failed to confront evil.

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Smith, Foster, and Mathews all contributed to the success of the Divinity School at Chicago University. The academic freedom they enjoyed under President Harper allowed them to be the first institution to leave behind the idealism of Ritschlian theology and embrace a more naturalistic and empiricist approach to religion and history. Smith was on the forefront of the scientific renewal of theological studies. He claimed that modernity demanded a choice and was not simply another piece of evidence that could be used to support doctrinal beliefs. Smith, like the other modernist scholars at Chicago, held that modernity stipulated a substantial change to faith in doctrines, and that the support system for a trustworthy faith was scientifically verifiable modern knowledge.131 This more scientific approach to the study of religion largely motivated Dean Mathews and Shirley Jackson Case to create a faculty position in the History of American Christianity and to hire William Warren Sweet to fill that position.

3.4 Methodist Liberals

Much of William Warren Sweet’s early work involved documenting and publishing Methodist Church history. He was raised as the son of a Methodist preacher, educated at Methodist colleges, wrote his dissertation on the Methodist Church during the Civil War, began his teaching career at a Methodist college, and maintained a life-long commitment to the Methodist Church. While he was starting his teaching career, he published several articles in the Methodist Review. During this same time period, Boston University boasted the most prominent Methodist philosopher and theologian, Borden Parker Bowne, who developed what has become known as the Boston personalist school.132 Three important Methodist theologians who all carried the personalist school banner were graduate students of Bowne: Albert C. Knudson received his PhD from Boston in 1900, Francis J. McConnell earned his doctorate from Boston in 1899, and Edgar S. Brightman completed his PhD at Boston in 1912. William Warren Sweet’s connection to these Methodist scholars can be established by the fact that between 1914 and 1930, these four authors published twenty-nine articles in the Methodist Review.

The Methodist denomination was relatively late to the modernist-liberal-theological tradition in America, but by the second decade of the twentieth century the denomination had developed into a major leader of the liberal Social Gospel tradition. Much of the Methodist influence upon Protestant theological modernism was due to the success of Bowne’s philosophical personalism in turning the nineteenth century focus of Methodist theology from evangelical pietism to the mid-twentieth century focus on liberal modernism and religious pluralism.133

Some of the most significant Methodist scholars from 1900 through 1940 included Borden Parker Bowne (1847-1910) at Boston, George A. Coe (1862-1951) at Union Theological Seminary, Georgia Harkness (1891-1974) at Garrett Biblical Institute, Albert Knudson (1873-1953) at Boston University, Daniel Day Williams (1910-1973) at Chicago Divinity School and later at Union Theological Seminary, Francis McConnell

131 Dorrien, The Making, 257.
132 Dorrien, The Making, 286. The Boston personalist school was a school of thought developed by Borden Parker Bowne’s personalistic idealism. Bowne’s personalist idealism affirmed the importance of several key liberal doctrines such as moral intuition, religious experience, the Social Gospel and metaphysical religion.
(1871-1953) at Boston University, Harris Franklin Rall (1870-1964) at Iliff School of Theology, and Harry F. Ward (1873-1966) at Union Theological Seminary. The personalist school at Boston University was dominated by three scholars who were raised Methodist in much the same way as William Warren Sweet. Since all of these scholars published so many articles in the *Methodist Review* in the 1920s, this section will describe how the academic careers of McConnell, Knudson and Brightman paralleled the career of Sweet. It will also explore how their writings informed Sweet about personalist philosophy, how these scholars at Boston reacted to World War I, and how they interpreted European neo-orthodox ideas. In addition, this section will highlight connections between William Sweet and the Methodist scholars at Boston and how their ideas influenced his historical writings.

Knudson, like Sweet, was raised surrounded by Midwestern Methodist piety. He had a Methodist preacher for a father and he attended a Methodist graduate school. Both of Knudson’s parents were immigrants from Norway. He was born in 1873 in Grand Meadow, Minnesota and he attended the University of Minnesota as an undergraduate student. He studied philosophy with Williston S. Hough (1860-1912) who recommended he read Edward Caird a neo-Hegelian Scottish philosopher who wrote *The Evolution of Religion*. Knudson felt edified by *The Evolution of Religion* but had reservations about neo-Hegelian idealism in general, as he perceived it as being too vague to be the basis of one’s belief system. He remained confident that the only certainty in life was an individual’s personal experience.

After graduation from the University of Minnesota in 1893, he went on to graduate work at Boston University School of Theology. At Boston his main course of study was biblical criticism with Professor Hinkley G. Mitchell (1846-1920) who taught Hebrew Scripture. Knudson would eventually return to teach at Boston University replacing Mitchell when he was forced out by a fundamentalist uprising within the United Methodist denomination. Knudson’s deep interest in biblical studies did not limit his passion concerning philosophical questions and ideas. The academic year 1896-97 was formative in his scholarly development as he studied philosophy with Borden P. Bowne. Under Bowne’s guidance Knudson found the philosophical grounding he sought within personalist idealism. For Knudson it was a philosophical system that made congruent the ideas of the major philosophers like Descartes, Leibniz, Berkley, Kant, Hegel, and James. Knudson summed up the personalist philosophy in two of Bowne’s essential statements: “First, personality is the key to reality, and second, life is the test of truth.”

In 1897-98, Knudson studied in Germany, under the biblical scholars Hans Hinrich Wendt and Bernhard Wiess, under the church historian Adolf von Harnack, and the theologian Julius Kraftan. He appreciated their scholarly knowledge but found them uninspiring compared to Bowne. From 1898-1900 he taught church history at a United Methodist college: Iliff School of Theology. In 1900, Boston awarded Knudson the PhD based on his work with Bowne and he accepted a position at Baker University, another Methodist University in Baldwin City, Kansas. In another connection with William Sweet’s background, Baker University was the institution where Sweet’s father was president from 1879-86. Knudson worked at Baker for a few years and at Allegheny

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College for a couple of years before he was selected to replace Hinkley G. Mitchell at Boston in 1906.

The second member associated with the Boston University School of Theology whose writings continued to popularize Bowne’s personalist ideology was Francis J. McConnell. McConnell graduated with his PhD from Boston in 1899 and developed a strong allegiance with two Methodist Social Gospel scholars: Albert Coe and Harry Ward. Coe, like McConnell, received his PhD from Boston and he applied Bowne’s personalism to the developing field of religious education. Ward began his teaching career at Boston and went on to teach social ethics at Union Theological Seminary from 1918 to 1941. Coe would teach at Union from 1909 until 1922. The Methodist social Christianity that inspired McConnell’s development stemmed from both the Boston personalist philosophy of Bowne and the Social Gospel ideals of scholars like Coe and Ward.

McConnell’s father was a Methodist minister who moved around Ohio nine times in Francis’ first seventeen years, conducting revival services while at the same time lamenting the fact that frontier Protestantism was dependent upon revivals. In 1894, he graduated from Ohio Wesleyan and enrolled at Boston University. A mere five years after McConnell attended Ohio Wesleyan; William Sweet began his studies there. For eight years following his PhD from Boston, McConnell pastored Methodist congregations in Massachusetts and New York. In 1908, he accepted the invitation to be President of DePauw University where he remained until 1912. One year later, William Warren Sweet would accept a position in the history department at DePauw University and he would remain a professor at DePauw until 1926 when he was offered a position at the University of Chicago. In 1912, McConnell was elected by the Methodist Church General Conference to the episcopacy over Colorado, Wyoming and New Mexico. In 1929, he wrote a biography on Borden Parker Bowne.

The third scholar to continue in the personalist tradition of his teacher, Borden Bowne, was Edgar S. Brightman. He was born in Holbrook, Massachusetts and like many other Methodist scholars his father was a Methodist pastor. He completed his undergraduate work at Brown University and earned a masters of arts in philosophy in 1908. He went to Boston and was enthralled by Bowne’s philosophical personalism for two years. Following Bowne’s death in 1910, Brightman spent two years studying in Germany. In Berlin he studied church history with Harnack; in Marburg he studied New Testament with Adolf Julicher (1857-1938), and Ritschlian theology with Wilhelm Herrmann. Brightman became close friends with Herrmann who was curious about

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136 Richard W. Fox, in his biography of Reinhold Niebuhr, noted that Bishop Francis McConnell was idolized by Niebuhr. See Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography, 2nd ed., Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 101-2. The influence of Boston personalism can be seen in many of Niebuhr’s early articles in the Christian Century. In the March 10th 1927 issue Niebuhr wrote an article entitled, “To Whom Shall We Go?,” declaring that Jesus “believed the universe itself must be interpreted in terms of a personality which expresses itself in love and he believed in the practical and redemptive efficacy of love in all human relationships” 299. In the article “What the War Did to My Mind” Niebuhr went so far as to claim that he “was prepared to preach a new and yet very old gospel in which a personality rather than a book had become central . . . this personality is now the only absolute” Christian Century, September 27th 1927, 1161. Also Richard Fox in his biography Reinhold Niebuhr claimed a personalist influence was even present in Niebuhr’s Yale BD thesis, “The Validity and Certainty of Religious Knowledge,” which claimed that the point of religion was to preserve and promote the ideal realm of personality in an impersonal universe and society (101).
Bowne’s philosophy and Herrmann facilitated the design for Brightman’s dissertation on Ritschl’s theory of religious knowledge. In his conclusion, Brightman pointed out that Bowne’s personalism could provide a corrective to Ritschl’s empiricism. Thus, Brightman’s insight into his teacher’s philosophical system proved important for both his own career and for the legacy of Bowne.  

Brightman’s first teaching position was with Nebraska Wesleyan University as a professor of philosophy and religion. In 1915 he accepted a position at Wesleyan University teaching ethics and religion. He returned to Boston University, in 1919, as a professor of philosophy in the graduate school. A decade following Bowne’s death, his philosophical personalism was far from popular in American philosophy or theology. In the 1920s Brightman used the *Methodist Review* to attempt to make Bowne’s personalism better known and more appreciated. He used religious language in describing Bowne’s philosophical system as the idea that the world is a “society of persons under the leadership of a Supreme Creative Person who gives meaning and immanent cooperation to all that is finite.” Brightman did not think that the First World War and its aftermath were to blame for the lack of American support for philosophical personalism. The philosophy of personalism, he noted, had a hard time competing with the Ritschlian philosophical idealism that most American Protestants used in support of the Social Gospel. In attempting to revitalize Bowne’s personalism, Brightman started a journal called the *Personalist* and he called on all of Bowne’s past students to step up their philosophical writing and publishing. 

By the middle of the 1920s, Brightman had reason for optimism concerning the success of personalism as a philosophic school. While much of his optimism came from his own success at Boston University, much of it was also due to the success of McConnell’s published texts that attracted large audiences and his work as Bishop in the Methodist Church. In 1912, the same year that William W. Sweet published his dissertation, McConnell published *The Increase of Faith*, a book declaring that scientific modernism was not in conflict with Christian tradition or belief in God. In 1916, Sweet published his *Circuit-Rider Days in Indiana*, a study of how the Methodist denomination spread throughout Indiana and McConnell published his *The Essentials of Methodism*, a work showing Methodism as a religion of personal conversion, sanctification, spiritual renewal, and Social-Gospel-styled public outreach. 

These three students of Borden Parker Bowne did much to keep his legacy alive and to make the philosophy of personalism the foundation for the more modern and liberal Methodist theology in the twentieth century. Although much of the focus of William Sweet’s historical works described the revivalism that followed the Revolutionary War, the settling of the American frontier and the Civil War, in 1937 he wrote an essay about Borden Parker Bowne in his *Makers of Christianity: From John Cotton to Lyman Abbott*. Bowne was included in the book’s final chapter along with William Ellery Channing, Horace Bushnell, Walter Rauschenbusch and Lyman Abbott. Sweet demonstrated his high regard for Bowne by placing him in this book of biographical essays describing the most important figures within American Christianity. Sweet also cited the May 1922 *Methodist Review* volume 38, issue 3 which was dedicated to Borden Parker Bowne. This indicated that Sweet had read and cited

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information that came from an issue of the *Methodist Review* published eight years prior to his publishing his 1930 edition of *The Story of Religions in America*. The *Methodist Review* issue contained articles about Bowne written by Albert Knudson, Francis J. McConnell, and Edger Brightman. Sweet’s essay also cites McConnell’s biography of Borden Parker Bowne.

In Sweet’s essay on Bowne, he mentioned basic information such as Bowne’s birth in New Jersey in 1847, his education at New York University, his studies with Rudolph Herrmann Lotze (1817-1881) in Germany, and his founding of the personalist school of philosophy at Boston University. He also discussed some details of Bowne’s life that were not well known. Sweet described facts about Bowne’s employment as a pastor of a small Methodist church on Long Island, his work for the editorial staff of the *Independent*, his remaining at Boston when recruited by Chicago University’s President Harper and his survival at Boston University after a heresy trial in 1904. Two important aspects of Bowne’s work that impressed Sweet the most were his attack on Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), and his development of the school of personalist philosophy. Sweet described Bowne’s refutation of Spencer as being brilliantly reasoned. Bowne attacked Spencer in two articles published in *The New Englander* in 1871. Sweet emphasized the importance of the theist Bowne successfully rebutting the agnostic Spencer who viewed empirical demonstration as the key to knowledge. Spencer’s increasingly prominent position granted to science all that was knowable and restricted to religion all that was unknowable. Bowne pointed out the flaws in Spencer’s logic and demonstrated that following Spencer’s system to its ultimate conclusion would result in the eradication of all knowledge.

For Sweet the importance of Bowne’s attack on Spencer was topped only by Bowne’s development of the philosophical school of personalism. Sweet stated that “throughout the history of religious thought in America there have only been but two schools created, the first, the Edwardian School of which Jonathan Edwards was the father, the second, the personalist school of Borden Parker Bowne.” Sweet pointed out the influence of the German philosopher Hermann Lotze (1817-1881) on Bowne’s development. Bowne credited Lotze with greatly influencing his philosophical thinking. Lotze was an anti-Hegelian objectivist philosopher who stressed the universal metaphysical relation of all reality uniting all objects in an ordered system. Bowne was captivated by Lotze’s idea of philosophical relation and began to stress the “freedom of the self” and its “relation to the unseen” as the fundamental, universal reality. According to Sweet, Bowne put so much effort into his philosophy of self and personality that he came to describe his ideas as personalism since he viewed personality as the ultimate, universal principle. Sweet noted that Harvard University philosopher William E. Hocking (1873-1966) argued that there has never been a “more powerful and convincing chapter in metaphysical writing than that of Bowne on ‘The Failure of Impersonalism.’” At the end of the day what Sweet found so impressive about Bowne and his philosophical system rested on the restored confidence in religious faith that he

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140 Sweet, *Makers*, 316.
gave to liberal Protestants in America as he was able to point the way to a belief that could “disregard the materialism of science” as well as the “skepticism of shallow culture” while still being rational.  

Sweet’s direct dialogue with Knudson, McConnell, and Brightman in describing Bowne’s life and thought indicated that he was very familiar with their writings. It would be realistic to surmise that Sweet read the issues of the *Methodist Review* in which Knudson, McConnell, and Brightman wrote about personalism and how European neo-orthodoxy related to the personalism of Bowne. Sweet’s article on Bowne utilized much material from Bowne’s essay “Present Status of the Conflict of Faith” which was published in the May 1922 issue of the *Methodist Review* some twelve years following his death. In the article Bowne wrote about the doctrine of knowledge criticizing Spencer’s view that everything religious is unknowable. The article also contained a section stating Bowne’s argument for theism and against atheism that rests largely on the rational design of the physical universe.

The influence of Bowne’s personalism was manifest in Sweet’s general historical works as well as in this 1937 essay on Bowne within his *Makers of Christianity*. In Sweet’s 1930 edition of *The Story of Religion in America*, he claimed that the most important explanation for the great variety of Protestant religious expressions in America was that colonial churches were founded by religious radical personalities. Therefore, throughout his history, Sweet stressed the importance of the individual person’s ability to shape religion within America. From the Puritan John Winthrop to the Baptist Roger Williams and the Quaker William Penn, Sweet’s history emphasized the importance of individual personalities. This personalist strain within Sweet’s thought explains to a large degree his deep affection for the frontier and the individual pioneers who were responsible for spreading Methodism westward across the American continent. Sweet wrote, “The pioneer is always an independent individualist, determined to go his own way in religion as well as in politics, and therefore the frontier was fruitful in the multiplication of new sects.” There were several other themes within Sweet’s 1930 *The Story of Religion in America* that indicated a strong affiliation to personalist ideals, topics like denominational diversity (four chapters), revivalism and personal conversion (two chapters on the Great Awakening, one on the Second Great Awakening), missions (two chapters), abolition (two chapters on slavery and one on the Civil War), and a final chapter on how the personalities of big business tried to corrupt the Church and how the personalizes of the Social Gospel attempted to resist.

Of all the dozens of articles published in the *Methodist Review* by Knudson, McConnell and Brightman during the 1920s, there are two that stand out for their theological relevance in advancing William Sweet’s understanding of Boston personalism and European neo-orthodoxy. Both articles were written by Knudson in 1928 as a review of Karl Barth’s dialectical theology since his *The Word of God and the Word of Man* had just been translated into English. In May 1928, the *Methodist Review* published the first part of Knudson’s essay entitled “The Theology of Crisis: Barth’s
Apologetic Purpose & the Barthian Dialect.” In this fifteen-page essay, Knudson described and critiqued the theology of Karl Barth by analyzing the first two editions of the Epistle to the Romans and The Word of God and the Word of Man. Knudson pointed out the vast difference between the first two editions of Barth’s Romans. The first edition (1917) strove to “revive the biblical conception of the world” by decrying modern evolutionism. In the second edition (1919), Knudson remarked, there was fundamental change. Barth in this edition focused on the relation of time to eternity and concluded that the difference between them was absolute so that a breaking through of the eternal into the temporal was impossible. The radical nature of Barth’s dualism, according to Knudson, made his doctrine of revelation not only paradoxical but nonsensical. Barth expressed his theology through a dialectical system that attempted to explain the paradoxical nature of divine revelation, but to the personalist philosopher, Barth’s attempt failed.

Knudson noted that the dialectic method in which Barth wrote about faith and the relation of time and eternity was so consistently utilized that his theology was often referred to as dialectical theology. As far as time in the dialectic, it is the end of time, the world is condemned and it “stands face to face with an eternal crisis.” Knudson stated that this was one place in Barth’s theology where the influence of Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a Danish philosophical existentialist, was made manifest since they both perceived the world as “sick unto death.” But not even Barth’s ingenious dialectic could break through to the truth; it only was able to point to a reality beyond itself since all human quests for the divine fall short. Barth’s dialectic, however, was one of religious experience, not one of logic. Thus, Knudson failed to recognize Barth’s theology was focused on the contemplation of divine revelation’s complex content rather than being interested in maintaining a rationally grounded metaphysics.

In the second essay, Knudson wrote that Barth’s theology of revelation was ground in a neo-Kantian philosophical dualism. This philosophy, however, was alien to the scriptural apostle Paul. Knudson argued that Barth, based on his own religious and cultural experiences, read the dualism of Kantianism into the biblical text. Barth did this, according to Knudson, as he developed a dialectical theology that attempted to balance an acute religious skepticism against a radically naïve Biblicism. This dialectic pointed to the eternal which is beyond time, but it only refers to it as the eternal remains unknown. Knudson pointed out that Barth’s desire was to reclaim God’s sovereignty but in this attempt Barth utilized a philosophy of agnosticism which made God wholly unknown and unknowable. Thus, Barth’s theology made any meaningful revelation of God impossible.

Knudson delivered this article as the presidential address for the American Theological Society on April 13, 1928, at Union Theological Seminary.


Knudson’s philosophy of personalist idealism directed his critique of Barth’s doctrine of revelation as irrational and impossible. As a Methodist scholar, however, Knudson overlooked several aspects of Barth’s Reformed theological tradition. Barth’s writings were fundamentally Calvinist and not Kantian and within the reformed tradition the revelation of God is hidden in the humanity of Jesus which can only be made
Knudson concluded his article with a series of formal objections while also crediting the new theology with a few strengths. The primary objection stemmed from the impossibility of explaining the ontological dualism of time and eternity, humanity and the divine, through a supposed logical dialectic. Faith and reason both fail at crossing the infinite barrier between time and eternity. Another fundamental failure Knudson perceived in Barth’s theology was its attempt to combine Reformation theology with modern positivistic philosophy. Knudson claimed that any attempt to soften their contradiction of each other was doomed to fail and to end in an unresolved paradox. Not even Karl Barth’s creative dialectic could bridge the abyss of his fundamental dualistic premise.

Knudson described his dialectic as attempting to utilize very confusing terminology in order to make modern philosophy appear compatible with the Reformed Christian tradition. In spite of Barth’s failure to overcome his categorical distinction between time and eternity, Knudson saw several important messages in his theological work. First, he liked that Barth took God seriously and his work forced others to think seriously about God. Dialectical theology was a protest against a modern secular humanism that too often superficially dismissed God. Second, Barth’s theology pointed out the sovereignty of the divine nature that should be approached with reverence. Third, Barth’s ideas provided a protest against the pride of modern historical methods that often do injustice to the mystery of the divine and the paradox of divine revelation. Knudson claimed Barth’s protest went too far in that Barth degrades humanity so much that the revelation of God cannot reach humanity either through faith or reason. Last and perhaps most importantly for Knudson, Barth’s approach served the church by making the idea of revelation the central theological interest and by encouraging a deeper study of the Word of God.  

Knudson’s personalist critique of Barth provided Sweet a better insight into both personalist philosophy and Barth’s dialectical theology and how both viewed humanity and divine revelation. The critique would have increased Sweet’s understanding of Knudson’s more positive philosophy concerning humanity in relation to God as well as how Barth’s theology attacked the objective historical methods of evaluating Christian history and the Bible. Both Knudson’s and Barth’s ideas granted Sweet with a better understanding of how to interpret the historic situation of the American Protestant church. In 1930, Sweet’s book would have a chapter on American big business that only briefly critiqued the response of the Protestant church in America to conditions prior to, during, and following the Great War. Sweet’s reevaluation of the situation changed in 1939 as his second edition contained a lengthy chapter on WWI which was quite critical of American Protestant clergies’ enthusiastic support for war and their anti-German sermonizing during the war. Perhaps his more substantial and subjective critique of American Protestant support for war against Germany stemmed from his increased knowledge of theological and philosophical critiques of scientific historical criticism and from his personal friendship with Wilhelm Pauck. Pauck was a German historical discernible through the divine gift of grace. Thus, Barth was never irrational in his theological works, he simply was pointing out that Christian faith has its own logic, based on its own unique form of scriptural rationale that differs significantly from the philosophical logic of Western culture. Barth made this scriptural logic paramount in his *The Word of God and the Word of Man.*  

theologian teaching at Chicago Divinity School when Sweet came to Chicago. Pauck, a teenager in Berlin during WWI, struggled to care for his depressed mother while his father was fighting in the German army.

Sweet’s knowledge of Knudson’s critique of Barth’s probably coincided with his exposure to Wilhelm Pauck’s critique of Barth. If Sweet read the articles by Knudson when they were published in May and July of 1928, he would have become aware of Knudson’s response to Barth at just about the same time as he became neighbors with Wilhelm Pauck who had also published an article on Barth in July of 1928. Pauck’s article was entitled “Barth’s Religious Criticism of Religion” and it was published in *The Journal of Religion*. Pauck would follow up this 1928 article with a book length critique of Barth in 1931 entitled *Karl Barth Prophet of a New Christianity*.

### 3.5 Wilhelm Pauck

In 1927, William Sweet developed a good friendship with his Chicago colleague Wilhelm Pauck who taught historical theology. Pauck was born in Germany in 1901 and was a young teenager when WWI broke out. His father was enlisted in the German army in 1914 and was separated from his family for over four years. During the war years, Wilhelm attended school in Berlin. In 1918, at the age of seventeen, he was required to enlist in the German army. When he went to the army headquarters on November 11th, he was told that the war had just ended. For the next two years he struggled in post-war Germany as the country was torn apart by political revolution, high inflation and unemployment, much of it exacerbated by the peace treaty that ended the war.

From 1920 to 1925 he attended the University of Berlin studying with three scholarly giants Harnack, Holl and Troeltsch. He also heard lectures from two younger scholars: Karl Barth and Paul Tillich. Pauck wrote his dissertation under the direction of Karl Holl who recommended Pauck for the first post-WWI fellowship granted by the University of Berlin and the Federal Council of Churches. Holl wanted Pauck to go Chicago to study Reformation theology at Chicago Theological Seminary with Henry Hammersley Walker (1871-1927). Pauck received the fellowship and came to Chicago Theological Seminary in 1925-6. In 1927 he was hired by the Chicago Theological Seminary as an instructor to replace Henry H. Walker who had passed away unexpectedly on September 1st. Pauck would teach at the Seminary, the Divinity School, and the history department at the University of Chicago for the next twenty-six years eventually joining his German friend Paul Tillich at Union Theological Seminary in 1953.

In America, Pauck was troubled by the widespread rejection of Barth’s critique of liberal Protestantism. Barth initially developed his theological attack against liberalism due to the widespread support for the war effort given by his liberal Protestant professors during the Great War. Liberal Protestant support for the war occurred in other European nations and in America following Woodrow Wilson’s call for a Congressional declaration of war. The strength of the liberal Social Gospel in America was not dashed by WWI since America entered the war late and entered on the side that would be victorious.

Pauck began his 1928 article in an attempt to explain the strength and theological ground of Barth’s theology and his critique of liberal Protestantism’s succumbing to
modernity’s subjectivity. While writing the article, however, he came to the conclusion that Barth’s theology of revelation was unbalanced. Barth’s doctrine of revelation limited God’s revelation to the Word of God as presented in the Scriptural text and this Pauck could not accept. Pauck pointed out that Barth’s theology was often explained as a reaction to German pessimism following WWI. Pauck dissented from that opinion and instead stressed Barth’s Swiss Calvinist background as a minister and the theological influences of Christoph Blumhardt’s Lutheran piety and Soren Kiekegaard’s existentialist psychology. Pauck also noted that as a minister Barth struggled with the task of speaking to his congregation concerning God, the God of the Bible, who was the eternal God of which the human documents of the Bible point. Thus, according to Pauck, Barth’s protest against liberal Protestantism was a deep-seated rejection of “the purely subjective, humanistic type of theology. It was the product of Barth’s insight into the religious weakness of modernism.”\textsuperscript{152}

Barth’s protest against modern liberalism was fundamentally an exegetical critique in which he contended that scientific and objective historical examination of the biblical text was pointless. Barth’s ‘strange new world of the Bible’ went beyond any historic, cultural or scientific evaluation of the documents as being situated in a human context. Rather, for Barth the concern for the biblical authors was the biblical object and in the biblical text the \textit{Deus absconditus}, the hidden God, revealed God self to humanity. Pauck described the crisis within Barth’s theology of revelation: it was a crisis of recognizing the situation that exists between the eternal God and time-bound humanity. It was a religious crisis stemming from humanity’s inability to perceive the hidden God. For Barth, even faith is completely negative as his theological system viewed faith as the “most negative stage of receptivity.” For Barth faith did not allow people to see God but only allowed people to see themselves the way God saw them, as sinful and limited humanity. It was concerning his dialectical description of faith that Pauck claimed that Barth deviated the most from the Reformed Christian tradition. Pauck wrote, “It furnishes the most striking example of how Barth applies his own experience to Christian tradition.”\textsuperscript{153} Whereas Barth insisted that eternity could never enter into time, Pauck countered that historically the Christian tradition has affirmed religious experience brings eternity into time, worship brings attainment of God, and faith brings certitude of salvation.

Pauck’s main criticism of Barth rested fundamentally on the same issue as Knudson’s critique of Barth. Both scholars attacked Barth’s doctrine of revelation since Barth’s theology so radically separated eternity from time and God from humanity as to make any meaningful revelation from God to humanity impossible. Knudson developed his attack from his personalist philosophy which asserted personality connected humanity to the creative, divine personality of God. Barth’s denial of this or any connection between humanity and the divine was to degrade humanity too far and to remove from God too much of what had been part of God in Christian tradition, namely God’s personhood and personality. Pauck did not share Knudson’s Methodist personalist


\textsuperscript{153} Pauck, “Barth’s Religious Criticism of Religion,” 464. Pauck earlier argued that the lack of assurance in Barth’s theology also departs from the Protestant tradition of justification which was clearly expressed by both Calvin and Luther.
philosophy but Barth’s Reformed dialectical theology was even offensive to Pauck’s understanding of the Reformed Christian tradition. Pauck could not fathom a theology that rejected faith, prayer and worship as bridges to the divine.

Both Knudson and Pauck were impressed by the depth of Barth’s dialectical gymnastics as he attempted to make the eternal God who is fundamentally hidden from a temporally limited humanity be revealed through the Word of God as recorded by human authors. While both Pauck and Knudson assert the failure of Barth’s doctrine of revelation, both scholars also show an appreciation for his critique of modernism as a scientific method that can produce objectivity and of liberal Protestantism as too often beholden to cultural and national biases. Sweet’s knowledge of their attacks on Barth’s dialectical theology as well as their praise of his attack on modernism and liberal Protestantism would have been an additional motivating factor in Sweet’s second edition of *The Story of Religion in America*, as he described Protestant America’s reaction to WWI in a more subjective and critical way. Prior to this text, all of Sweet’s earlier works utilized a scientific historical method in order to bolster his claim of writing objective history; it was an objectivity that resulted in his silence concerning Protestant settler wars against Indians. By 1930, Sweet could no longer justify the support that American Protestants gave to all previous American wars. In fact, *The Story* gave a powerful critique to both the Northern Protestant clergy and the Southern Protestant clergy for dividing the nation and for lengthening the war through their preaching pro-war propaganda and hatred for the other side.154

### 3.6 Reinhold Niebuhr

Reinhold Niebuhr’s childhood and early academic training were in many ways similar to William Warren Sweet. While Niebuhr was eleven years the junior of Sweet, they finished their formal education a mere three years apart with Niebuhr receiving his MA from Yale Divinity School in 1914 and Sweet receiving his PhD at the University of Pennsylvania in 1911. Both had fathers who were greatly respected ministers within their Protestant denominations. Sweet’s family members were devoted Methodists and Niebuhr’s family was devoted to the German Evangelical Church.155 Niebuhr was born and grew up in the small Midwestern town of Write City, Missouri and for Sweet it was the town of Baldwin City, Kansas. Niebuhr attended the denominationally affiliated schools of Elmhurst College and Eden Theological Seminary whereas Sweet attended Ohio Wesleyan and Drew University.

Both William Sweet and Reinhold Niebuhr were actively publishing scholarly articles as early as 1914 and during the 1920s and 1930s were major contributors to several publications as well as having authored several books. During their careers Sweet published at least fifteen books, edited eight books, co-authored two more and wrote

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154 In Sweet’s objective approach to American Protestant history he not only condemned the clergy in the South but he also condemned the clergy in the North (earlier Northern historians like Leonard Woolsey Bacon had only condemned the South for justifying slavery along with war). While Sweet wrote about the injustice of slavery and the important role of the Methodist Church in destroying that institution, Sweet also understood the moral failure that occurred when hate was systematically preached in Protestant churches.

155 The German Evangelical Synod of North America developed from the extensive German immigration into the Mississippi Valley during the 1830s-1860s. It was a tradition that originated during the sixteenth century German Reformation and it brought together elements of Lutheran piety and Calvinist doctrine and morality.
dozens of articles while Niebuhr published nineteen books, co-authored two books and wrote hundreds of articles and editorials, a large percentage of which were written for the *Christian Century*. One major similarity in both scholars’ early writings was the need for American Protestantism to continue to strive for racial and economic justice. Sweet focused on racial justice and the role played by the Northern Protestants (abolitionist Methodists) during the Civil War and reconstruction to bring about justice for former slaves. Niebuhr’s articles challenged the middle-class culture of white Protestantism to take a stand for economic justice for the poor, especially for the abused labor workers at industrial plants. His ministry at an inner-city church in Detroit made him well acquainted with the auto industry’s harsh working conditions and low wages.

Sweet had been publishing articles in the *Methodist Review* since 1914 but it was not until the spring of 1923 that he had an article published in the *Christian Century*. Sweet would only have two articles published by the *Christian Century* since Charles Clayton Morrison, the magazine’s editor, focused on publishing short opinion pieces addressing current religious and social issues. In 1922, only one year before Sweet’s first article appeared in the *Century*, Morrison discovered Reinhold Niebuhr, a very opinionated young pastor from Detroit who in July submitted an article for publication. Morrison did not use Niebuhr’s first submission but was so enamored by his second submission that he offered the young pastor ten dollars to use the piece as an anonymous editorial. Over the next two decades, every year Niebuhr would write for the *Century* five or six named articles, dozens of paid but nameless editorials, along with several book reviews. The fact that Niebuhr began writing for the *Century* a year prior to Sweet’s two articles make it much more likely that Sweet was aware of Niebuhr’s articles and editorials since, even if they were not named, they were far from anonymous. Niebuhr’s style was very distinctive; he was aggressive, rhetorically pointed, fiery in his social and political critiques and often embracing the paradoxical nature of religious issues and theological doctrines.

At Chicago in 1927, Sweet would have been in a perfect place to follow the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr, especially after Niebuhr joined the faculty of Union Theological Seminary in 1928. After 1928, Niebuhr’s articles for the *Christian Century* became more biting in critiquing liberal Protestants, especially Shailer Mathews the liberal Dean of Chicago’s Divinity School. Much of Reinhold Niebuhr’s attacking Mathews post-1928 resulted from Niebuhr’s employment at Union Theological Seminary where his former favorite target, Harry F. Ward taught Christian ethics. Even though Ward and Mathews basically wrote about the same liberal Social Gospel ideology that supported their theological pacifism and political isolationism, Niebuhr graciously made peace with his faculty co-worker and found in Mathews another target for his anti-liberal attacks.

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156 Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 72. He described Morrison as a “stickler for vigorous, opinionated, authoritative prose, and demanded that his writers address the full range of connections between religion, culture and society.”

157 The first submission was titled “The Church Vs. The Gospel,” the second was titled “Romanticism and Realism” which was published as “Repentance and Hope.” See Fox, 72-3.

158 Niebuhr’s writing output was maintained during the 1940s. Larry Rasmussen commented that from 1942-1952, Niebuhr wrote 767 articles, several chapters for various books, published four books, and edited the bi-weekly *Christianity and Crisis*, a publication he founded. See the introduction of Rasmussen, Larry, ed. *Reinhold Niebuhr: Theologian of Public Life*. The Making of Modern Theology Series. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

159 Much of Reinhold Niebuhr’s attacking Mathews post-1928 resulted from Niebuhr’s employment at Union Theological Seminary where his former favorite target, Harry F. Ward taught Christian ethics. Even though Ward and Mathews basically wrote about the same liberal Social Gospel ideology that supported their theological pacifism and political isolationism, Niebuhr graciously made peace with his faculty co-worker and found in Mathews another target for his anti-liberal attacks.
but by 1930 Niebuhr’s political views were evolving while Morrison remained committed to his pacifistic and socialist ideals. With the rise of Nazism in Germany in the early 1930s, Niebuhr determined that the liberal pacifism of Social Gospel idealists like Mathews and Morrison was too utopian and unrealistic to restrain the evil of unbridled nationalism. Niebuhr’s turn to realism and his embrace of the use of violent force to restrain evil made inevitable his break from Morrison and the Protestant idealism published within the *Christian Century* up until Pearl Harbor. But throughout most of the early and middle 1920s, the Methodist Sweet and the Evangelical Reformed Niebuhr would have accepted much more of the liberal Protestantism of the Disciples Morrison than they would have rejected.

Niebuhr, like Knudson and Pauck, wrote an article for the *Christian Century* that was published in December of 1928 reviewing Karl Barth and the dialectical neo-orthodox theological position he was espousing. The *Century* ran the article which was entitled “Barth—Apostle of the Absolute.”\(^{160}\) Niebuhr spent the first half of this short two-page article defending Barth against some American liberal theologians who simply dismissed Barth as a fundamentalist. Niebuhr wrote that Barth’s attack on liberal Protestantism was an attack on the “easy optimisms” of “moral evolution” and that they should not be so easily dismissed.\(^{161}\) This European attack on liberalism came from a theology professor who was for a decade a socialist pastor in the Swiss town of Safenwil (1911-21). Barth, like Niebuhr in Detroit, was a pastor who sided with the socialist workers against the factory owners. In addition, Barth accepted modern historical criticism of scripture and he was not anti-science or anti-evolution so even though his grounding in Reformed theology sounded fundamentalist to many American liberal Protestants it should not, according to Niebuhr, be mistaken for the new American fundamentalism which rejected modern science and scriptural criticism.

Niebuhr claimed that Barth’s theology was a reaction to the relativism of liberal theology. He accused Barth of focusing on the tragic plight of the human condition in order to refute “the easy optimisms into which we have been betrayed by our moral

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160 In this short two page essay, Niebuhr demonstrates his rhetorical skill in using Barth’s theology as a foil from which to foremost condemn Protestant liberalism and secondarily to critique Barth. His critique of Barth misses much of Barth’s key methodological principle. Yet Niebuhr was more interested in creating a brilliant blast against a stubborn belief in liberal moral evolution than he was in correctly evaluating every aspect of Barth’s dialectic. The place where Niebuhr misinterprets Barth was when he claimed that Barth arrived at the absolute based on his experience of moral despair following WWI since it was the only adequate solution for Barth’s new found sensitivities. Rather, Barth’s early writings made clear, especially his 1924 *The Word of God and the Word of Man* which was translated in 1928 that methodologically he started with the Biblical story (Word of God) being absolute and moved to the problems of humanity (word of man). Barth saw in the Bible the story of God’s extreme measures to redeem humanity resulting in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. It is this Christ-event, for Barth, which defined humanity as trapped in the despair of sinful, mortal, finite existence. All liberal optimistic ideals of human or social moral evolution were bankrupt in light of the Christ-event. Thus, for Barth it was the absolute of revelation that determines how a Christian theologian must view the human condition not the human experience with its moral sensitivity that leads the theologian to the absolute. Although Niebuhr got Barth’s methodological system turned around, he was still able to use Barth as a point of reference from which to attack the bankrupted moral evolutionary beliefs that still captured so many American Protestant liberals in the late 1920s. Frank Macchia, professor of theology at Vanguard University, provided insight into Karl Barth’s essential methodology that was established in many of Barth’s early works.

evolutionism.”162 Into this pessimistic human situation, where the holiness of God stands in condemnation over all human accomplishments, Barth introduced the Christ-idea. The Christ-idea was the key to Barth’s doctrine of revelation and Niebuhr critiqued Barth for making this Christ-idea his one theological absolute since Niebuhr assumed the human needs and sensitivities following WWI pushed Barth into this dogmatic absolute. Unlike Knudson and Pauck, however, Niebuhr’s critique did not condemn Barth’s conception of revelation as being impossible and paradoxical. Niebuhr’s own writings reveal that he embraced the paradoxical nature of Christian theology and his main critique of Barth was that his dogmatic absolute was motivated by a pessimistic view of human need which made it as subjective and relative as the liberal optimistic view of human achievement.

In critiquing Barth’s pessimism, Niebuhr set up his condemnation of American liberal Protestantism that failed to recognize or confront the moral evil of French retribution and the growing evil of German nationalism following World War I. Niebuhr’s conclusion to the essay made clear he had more respect for Barth’s dialectical theology, even if it was at times too dogmatic, than he had for a liberal idealism that in America stubbornly held on to pacifism and isolationism. Niebuhr stated, “There is certainly more religious vitality in such pessimism than in the easy optimism of evolutionary moralism.”163 This essay on Barth made clear that for Niebuhr the most dangerous religious position was one that failed to take evil seriously and one that limited options for restraining evil, especially evil within societies and on a national level. Thus, American liberal Protestantism with its focus on pacifism and neutrality needed to be condemned even while critiquing what he viewed as the unnecessary dogmatic absolute within the theological dialectic of Karl Barth. Sweet’s awareness of Niebuhr’s critique of Barth along with Knudson’s and Pauck’s would have made him aware of the changing scholarly opinion of the liberal attempt to use modern scientific methods to uncover the past “as it was” and to claim this past as evidence for optimism concerning human and social evolutionary advances. These developments point to some of the reasons behind the changes that Sweet made to the 1939 edition of The Story of Religions in America, as Sweet clearly questioned, critiqued, and eventually condemned Protestant support for the Spanish American War and the First World War.

During the next two years Niebuhr wrote many articles for the Century, concerning a wide variety of topics. Just about all of them, however, point back to two issues: the complacency of American capitalistic consumerism led by liberal ideology and the frightening political situation in Europe. Three articles written by Niebuhr demonstrate his passion for these two topics. First, against American consumerism, Niebuhr wrote “We are Being Driven” in May 1929. The article contrasted the life-style of middle-class Americans to the vast majority of people in India. He wrote that the people in India had less money and possessions but they also had more freedom and peace. “Sometimes they perish in poverty. But we will probably perish in war.” He concluded the essay with this statement, “Perhaps we must content ourselves with the consolation that it is more glorious to die upon the field of battle than to perish of hunger.”164 Second, one year later and about six months following the stock market crash, Niebuhr wrote an essay about how Germany was still struggling to overcome the war

162 Niebuhr, Reinhold, “Barth,” 1523.
debt and was forced to raise taxes in order to pay unemployment insurance. He compared that to how a more wealthy country like America was continuing to lower taxes while not providing unemployment benefits. Third, in August of 1930, Niebuhr wrote an editorial correspondence for the *Century* entitled “Europe’s Religious Pessimism.” It was an essay in which once again Niebuhr critiqued the pessimistic European dialectical theology produced by Karl Barth who Niebuhr saw as stuck in the Reformation. Most importantly for Niebuhr, however, was that this critique of Barth could direct a strong condemnation of the optimistic American liberal theology that Niebuhr saw as being ideologically stuck in the Enlightenment. William W. Sweet’s reading of these articles would have prepared him for his initial 1930 critique of Protestant support for war, for his 1939 critical denunciation of American Protestant zeal for WWI, and his 1950 condemnation of liberal Protestant complacency during the rise of German Nazism and the reality of the Jewish Holocaust. These were events that called for military intervention but America refused to oppose Hitler’s evil with the full force the United States’ military until after Pearl Harbor.

In his chapter on the Great War, Sweet described the post-war peace movement. He described it as “aggressive . . . rooted in a distrust of armaments, a conviction that nothing is worse than war.” Sweet also utilized the results of a survey conducted in 1931 by *The World Tomorrow*, a socialist leaning monthly journal that wanted Reinhold Niebuhr so much as an assistant editor in their New York office that they paid Niebuhr’s salary at Union. The editors of *The World Tomorrow* sent out questionnaires to 50,000 Protestant ministers, and of the over 19,000 responses, sixty-two percent stated their belief that the church should never again sanction any war. Sweet’s 1939 description of Nazi fascism’s evil impact on Europe revealed an author so knowledgeable of Niebuhr that it could have been written by Niebuhr himself. Sweet wrote, “What has taken place since Adolph Hitler’s rise to power, his ruthless treatment of the Jews and his destruction of the liberties of such peoples as the Czechs has caused many of the ministers who thought themselves out-and-out pacifists to modify their position.” The second half of this quote also revealed Sweet as an author who understood that Niebuhr went from being an out-and-out pacifist to a realist who sanctioned the use of violence to restrain systematic and nationalistic evil. In addition it demonstrated that Niebuhr was such an influential voice concerning what was taking place in Germany that he was able to convince other American ministers that pacifism was not a realistic solution to the political situation taking place there.

Sweet’s text made an example out of Methodist Bishop Francis J. McConnell as representative of a growing number of pacifists who refused to dogmatically claim a total rejection of all violence. McConnell declined to rule out the use of force or to even

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167 Liberal and pacifist Kirby Page was editor of *The World Tomorrow* from 1926-1934. Page won the battle with Charles Morrison who had wanted Niebuhr as assistant editor of the *Christian Century*. Page along with Henry Sloane Coffin, Union’s President, brought Niebuhr to New York as assistant editor of a more socialist publication than the *Century* and as an assistant professor of ethics at Union. Niebuhr was assistant editor of *The World Tomorrow* from 1927 until the publication was ended in July of 1934 so he was assistant editor of the publication during the time of the survey that William Warren Sweet mentioned in his 1939 edition of *The Story*. See Fox, R. W., *Reinhold Niebuhr*, 104-6, 112-4 and 155-8.
comment on what action he would do if a murderer was threatening his family.\textsuperscript{170} McConnell knew of and befriended Niebuhr from his early years in Detroit. According to Fox, McConnell was an early contributor to the \textit{Century} in the early 1920s, was a member with Niebuhr and Kirby Page in the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, and was considered by Niebuhr to be a socialist prophet and priest superstar.\textsuperscript{171} Yet by 1935, Niebuhr’s politics had changed to such a degree that no Protestant liberal pacifist was above his rebuke regardless of past friendship. Martin Marty pointed out that Niebuhr described McConnell’s pacifism as “the final bankruptcy of the liberal Christian approach to politics.”\textsuperscript{172} Sweet most likely was aware of Niebuhr’s attacks on the politics of liberal Protestant leaders since some of Niebuhr’s most consistent attacks were made against his colleague Shailer Mathews. Another indication that Sweet knew and read the \textit{Century} during the 1920s was his historical account of the fundamentalist/modernist controversy. Sweet noted that the controversy was thoroughly covered within the pages of the \textit{Century} which defended the modernist position, while the \textit{Christian Standard} took up the cause of fundamentalism.\textsuperscript{173}

William W. Sweet wrote about prohibition in the 1920s and its repeal in the 1930s. John Haynes Holmes, the pacifistic Unitarian preacher, was the focus of what Sweet wrote about how liberal Protestantism reacted to the repeal of prohibition. Sweet referred to three articles that Holmes had published in the \textit{Christian Century} on the first three anniversaries of the repeal. Holmes was another American Protestant socialist in the 1920s who was friends with Reinhold Niebuhr as they both traveled in the same nexus of New York socialist activists. Holmes, however, was the one academic liberal who took Niebuhr’s criticism of liberal naïve sentimentality within the pages of \textit{Moral Man, Immoral Society} (1932) extremely personally and by the middle of the 1930s their friendship was over. By the late 1930’s, they detested each other.\textsuperscript{174} As all of his former socialist academic friends attacked Niebuhr’s newly published text as being too pessimistic, defeatist and failing to represent the gospel of Jesus Christ, Niebuhr went on the offensive accusing his detractors of being “immersed in the sentimentalities of a dying culture.”\textsuperscript{175} Holmes had now surpassed Shailer Mathews as Niebuhr’s primary nemesis as the symbol of all that was wrong with liberal pacifistic sentimentality. Niebuhr accused Holmes of intellectual dishonesty as he held up Gandhi as a model of non-violent resistance by claiming Gandhi approved the use of “force” but rejected the use of “power.” Niebuhr saw in Gandhi a political realist who understood the need for force and even violence to restrain evil.\textsuperscript{176}

By 1935, Holmes’ patience with the former pacifist Niebuhr came to an end. In reviewing Niebuhr’s \textit{Reflections on the End of an Era}, he condemned Niebuhr’s “growing dogmatism of temper, his flat repudiation of idealism, his cynical contempt for the morally minded, his pessimistic abandonment of the world to its own unregenerate

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\textsuperscript{170} Sweet, \textit{The Story}, 1939, 566.  \\
\textsuperscript{171} Fox, \textit{Reinhold Niebuhr}, 72, 75-6, and 101.  \\
\textsuperscript{173} Sweet, \textit{The Story}, 1939, 570.  \\
\textsuperscript{174} Fox, R., \textit{Reinhold Niebuhr}, 116, 142-3, and 152-3.  \\
\textsuperscript{175} Niebuhr, Reinhold, \textit{Christian} Century, Letter to the Editor, March 15, 1933, 362-3.  \\
\textsuperscript{176} Fox, R., \textit{Reinhold Niebuhr}, 142-3.
\end{flushright}
devices, and his desperate flight to the unrealities of theological illusion.” Holmes, in his frustration, questioned Niebuhr’s Christianity insinuating that Niebuhr would have rejected the kind-hearted human Christ and been rather pleased with the cynical realism of Pontus Pilate. Niebuhr was outraged by such a bitter and personal attack and their earlier friendship never recovered. Whether or not Sweet was aware of all of this history between Holmes and Niebuhr, it is remarkable that his 1939 chapter on the Great War included so many references to so many people who were publishing articles in the Christian Century. Sweet made far too many references to the Century to be unaware of Niebuhr’s articles and editorials during the 1920s and 1930s or to be unaware of the theological developments within American Protestantism during those two decades.

3.7 William Warren Sweet

Sweet devoted a lengthy section of his chapter on the Great War to theological developments in America during the 1920s and 1930s. He wrote, “At no period in the history of American Christianity has there been more rapid change in the theological scene than has been witnessed within the past generation.” He stated that the main reasons for these theological changes were the tremendous social, political and economic changes that occurred throughout the world during the last two decades. In America, the 1920s events that changed the landscape of theological reflection included the end of the Great War, a great economic expansion, and stock market speculation. The 1930s brought the Great Depression in America along with growing nationalism and fascism in parts of Europe.

Sweet as a liberal scholar, demonstrated his support for liberal Protestant theology over against conservative fundamentalist theology when he wrote, “Theology is not final truth handed down from above, but grows out of man’s condition; it comes out of a human background. It is what men think about God and their relationship to Him; and it is conditioned on man’s feeling of need.” Sweet’s description of theology emphasized God’s revelation. His statement points back to the three scholarly reviews of Karl Barth since Knudson’s and Pauck’s articles criticized Barth as making revelation impossible and Niebuhr’s critiqued the one absolute within Barth’s theological formulation. Sweet’s definition of revelation even corresponded with Niebuhr’s critique of Barth. Niebuhr accused Barth of creating his one theological absolute, the Christ-idea, out of human necessity since it alone sufficed to meet the needs of humanity.

Sweet may have thought his statement was simply an affirmation of liberal theology’s starting point and embrace of human relativism while also refuting fundamentalist theology. But at the same time, he very well may have been attempting to critique the absolute dimension within Barth’s neo-orthodoxy. In the statement Sweet’s censure of fundamentalism was overt but his rebuff of Barth’s dialectical theology was merely implied. Sweet’s attack on Barth, however, would soon be made crystal clear since he wrote a section of this chapter on Barth’s European neo-orthodoxy that developed in response to the First World War. In Sweet’s section on theological developments over the last twenty years, he did not focus on the Methodist scholars at Boston University, who developed personalist idealism (Knudson, Brightman, or

177 John Hayes Holmes quoted in Fox, R., Reinhold Niebuhr, 152.
178 Sweet, The Story, 1939, 584.
179 Sweet, The Story, 1939, 584.
McConnell), his liberal colleagues at Chicago University (Mathews, Case, Morrison or Pauck), or even the theological realism of Reinhold Niebuhr. Rather, Sweet chose to describe the theology that Knudson, Pauck and Niebuhr had all written about in 1928. Eleven years following their reviews on Barth, Sweet delineated the theological position of Karl Barth.

In the hindsight of a generation, Sweet perceived the Great War as the primary cause of the many changes in theological perception as well as the catalyst for renewed interest in theological reflection. He wrote, “A rebirth of theological interest was soon noticeable as the weary length of the Great War wore on. The terrible holocaust which was drenching the battlefields of Europe with human blood seemed to presage to many the speedy end of the world.” It was ironic and sad that the words that Sweet used to describe the battlefields of WWI would come to symbolize the systematic killing of six million Jews by Nazi Germany. In the same year that Sweet’s 1939 edition was published Jews were being rounded-up and taken to concentration camps and Germany had invaded Poland. Two years following the book’s publication Hitler’s final solution was well underway as Germany invaded Russia and set up mobile killing units. Sweet’s 1939 history pointed out that during this new European crisis, the political and economic situation in Germany immediately after the First World War set the stage for apocalyptic theological and political movements in America.

Some of the new theological developments following WWI that Sweet described were the thriving premillennialism that led to the solidification of the conservative fundamentalists, the growth of Spiritualism, the new emphasis on ‘scientific religion’ within mainline Protestantism, and a new humanism that denied the supernatural. Sweet’s brief description of other theological movements set up his discussion of Barth’s theology which he described as the most important theological development following WWI. Sweet noted that Karl Barth’s theological position was established in America through an English translation of *Word of God and the Word of Man* one year prior to the stock market crash. Less than two years following this translation, Barth had devoted American disciples many of which did not come out of the Reformed theological tradition.

Sweet humbly suggested that he did not have enough space in which to give a full account of Barth’s theology even if he had the theological training to complete such a task which he doubted. Yet, Sweet thought it necessary to at least present some of the general implications of Barth’s theology. Just like Knudson and Pauck, Sweet described the transcendent God as the key feature of Barth’s dialectical theology. This transcendent God is not simply above humanity but is “wholly other” from humanity. This, according to Sweet, was Barth’s response to a liberal watered-down imminent God who was too often confused with an impersonal process of moral evolution. In order to demonstrate how influential this new Barthian theology of a transcendent God was amongst non-Calvinists, Sweet described a Methodist theologian and a Methodist historian whose latest works reflected Barth’s conception of God. The historian was George Croft Cell (1875-1937) and according to Sweet, Cell’s book *The Recovery of John Wesley* attempted to make a Barthian out of Wesley. He also mentioned Methodist

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theologian Edwin Lewis (1881-1959). Sweet claimed Lewis’ *Christian Manifesto* railed against the softness of liberal theology and condemned a conception of an imminent Father God.183

Another implication of this transcendent “wholly other” God in the Barthian theology was that, according to Sweet, God’s focus was on the redemption of people out of the world, while the world was forced to fend for itself. Sweet may not have fully understood the dialectical nature of Barth’s theological writings when he selected a small number of short quotations that reduced Barth’s message to a rather sophisticated fundamentalist attack on liberalism. In one sentence Sweet quoted Barth three times interspersed with his own commentary about Barth’s theology. Sweet wrote, “‘God alone,’ [Barth contends], ‘can transform the structure of society’; but [God] is not interested in society, his concern is to attend and assist the individual soul in its passage ‘through time into eternity,’ for the victory of God is achieved ‘not in history but beyond history.’”184 While Barth did condemn a liberal Protestant theology that equated historical, social and moral evolution with the revelation of God in time, Barth did not reject Christians striving to make society and political structures less evil. In fact, Barth was one of the most active persons in Europe struggling against the rise of Nazism in Germany. Barth just did not want Christians to equate their striving for social justice with the revelation of God in history. For Barth only the Word of God (the Christ-event) revealed God. Thus, Sweet was mistaken in accusing Barth of rejecting all Christian efforts to “correct outrageous conditions and right wrongs in human society.”185

As a long time liberal Protestant historian who strived his entire professional career to use modern and scientific historical methods in order to present the objective truth, Sweet’s description of this new European threat to Protestant liberalism sounded extremely defensive and, somewhat ironically, subjective. In another attempt to demonstrate that Barthian theology’s critique on liberalism was just another fundamentalist critique, Sweet pointed out that the strongest base of support for Barth in America was the fundamentalist institution of Princeton Theological Seminary. Sweet’s description of what the American fundamentalists at Princeton have been declaring came close to being a lament. He wrote that they have been “proclaiming that the Social Gospel has been completely discredited and has already been largely abandoned. Even such a strong propagandist of the Social emphasis as the editor of the *Christian Century* seems to have lost a good share of his fervor.”186 Here Sweet sounded quite incredulous that Charles Clayton Morrison, who was always a bulwark for pacifism and the Social Gospel, could lose his enthusiasm in publishing articles that stressed liberal Protestant’s historic connection to the Social Gospel. Sweet wrapped up this section on Barth by bragging about five “unrepentant liberals” who were still writing and publishing articles expressing their faith in the Social Gospel. The five liberals he mentioned were Shailer Mathews, John C. Bennett, Ernest F. Tittle, Georgia Harkness, and Edward Scribner Ames. Although Sweet did not mention Reinhold Niebuhr’s name, Niebuhr’s political realism forced his separation from the *Christian Century* and his breaking away from his former friend and mentor Charles Morrison. It was also in the face of Niebuhr’s

increasingly harsh criticisms against Shailer Mathews’ naïve liberalism that Mathews was able to stay, in Sweet’s opinion, “unapologetically liberal.”

In writing this section on theological developments during the last twenty years, Sweet demonstrated his awareness of the fundamentalist/modernist controversy and he placed his description of Barth within this historic framework. Sweet, as a modernist scholar, saw the controversy in a relatively simplistic fashion where the modernists were optimistic and optimism was a positive thing that should be supported and the fundamentalists were pessimistic and pessimism was a negative thing that should be rejected by American Protestantism. In to this context he viewed Barth as pessimistic and thus he interpreted Barth’s attacks on modernism and liberalism as fundamentalist attacks on liberal Christians who were struggling for social justice. Where in actuality Barth was one of those Christians struggling for social justice, he just did not want Christians to mistake social justice for the Kingdom of God or for the revelation of God in history.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated William Warren Sweet’s connection to several theological movements and developing schools of thought during the 1920s and 1930s. Some of these theological developments he wrote about making his knowledge of them explicit and making their potential influence on his writing of American religious history easier to document. The two explicit developments he addressed in the 1939 edition of The Story of Religion in America were the fundamentalist/modernist controversy and Karl Barth’s European neo-orthodoxy. Some of the theological developments connected to Sweet were more implicit and had to be uncovered through historical examination apart from his historical text. This chapter examined four implicit theological developments that were connected to the explicit theological issues addressed by Sweet. The first two implicit theological schools of thought were actually connected to two universities’ faculty: the Chicago Divinity School modernist liberals (Mathews, Foster, and Smith) and Boston University Methodist liberals (Knudson, McConnell, and Brightman). The final two implicit theological developments examined in this chapter were individuals: Wilhelm Pauck and Reinhold Niebuhr two scholars who wrote reviews of Barth. Pauck was a co-worker, friend and neighbor of Sweet at Chicago. While Sweet most likely never met Niebuhr, he viewed him in the 1920s as an ally of Protestant liberal causes. By the mid-1930s, however, Sweet understood Niebuhr to be a harsh critic of the liberalism expressed by Shailer Mathews and Charles Clayton Morrison, two scholars he greatly respected.

Dean Shailer Mathews was one of the most important faculty members at Chicago on the career of William Sweet. Much of his significance for Sweet related to his bringing Sweet to Chicago and was made manifest when Sweet described him as one of the few scholars that, in 1939, remained “unapologetically liberal.” Mathews remained proudly liberal even when faced with increasing attacks by fundamentalist who rejected the Social Gospel and by Reinhold Niebuhr’s theological realism whose critique at least hoped to redefine the Social Gospel. The “unapologetically liberal” writings by Mathews, however, provided fodder for attacks by Reinhold Niebuhr the liberal turned realist. The primary figure I examined in relation to Sweet from the Methodist liberals at Boston University was Albert Knudson. While Sweet no doubt read and was well aware of all three Methodist scholars as well as their mentor Borden Parker Bowne, Knudson
received special consideration since he wrote a two-part examination of Karl Barth’s neo-orthodox theology which was published in May and July of 1928. Of the three reviews of Karl Barth’s theology examined in this chapter, Knudson’s was written the earliest and his two articles gave a good indication of how both Methodist personalism and how American interpretations of Karl Barth’s theology would be connected to Sweet’s future descriptions of theological developments in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1927, Sweet became friends with Wilhelm Pauck, a colleague from Chicago, and in early 1928 Sweet moved his family into the same apartment complex across the hall from where Pauck and his wife lived. Pauck wrote his own critique of Barth. Both Knudson’s and Pauck’s critique of Barth centered on the role of revelation in Barth’s theology and the difficulty of Barth’s dialectic to overcoming his own focus on the transcendent God being revealed to an imminent humanity. Although these theological abstractions may not have resonated with the liberal historian William Sweet, the two reviews of Barth’s theology would have exposed Sweet to an “unapologetic Calvinism” as well as to the historical situation in Germany during the First World War and during the time period following the war. This was the time when Barth formulated his early theological position in opposition to liberalism. Sweet also would have learned much about the Great War from Pauck. Pauck’s father fought in the war and he was a young teenager in Berlin during the war. In addition, he studied at the University of Berlin during the post-war years of 1920-1925.

In spite of all the other influences on William Warren Sweet’s historical writing about war, perhaps the most poignant figure on Sweet was Reinhold Niebuhr. This would be rather ironic since Sweet did not mention Reinhold Niebuhr in either his 1930 edition or his 1939 edition of The Story of Religion in America. In Sweet’s 1950 edition, he mentioned Niebuhr’s interventionist position on WWII long before Pearl Harbor and his break with the pacifist leaning Christian Century to start his own periodical Christianity and Crisis. But in 1939, Niebuhr’s increasingly harsh attacks on liberal scholars that Sweet respected appear to have alienated Niebuhr from the pages of Sweet’s text. As a traditional Protestant liberal, Sweet saw Methodists in particular and Protestants in general as champions of the Social Gospel, an inheritance they gained from the social activism of their liberal abolitionist forbearers. Therefore, Sweet interpreted Niebuhr’s attack against liberalism as being quite personal. Attacks by conservative fundamentalist were bad enough, for Sweet, even though for the most part liberals who accepted scientific empiricism and modern historical criticism felt somewhat superior to their backward fundamentalist opponents who decried evolution along with biblical criticism.

In this way, Sweet was able to brush off Barth’s attacks on liberal Protestantism and modern culture by focusing on Barth’s theological doctrines of a transcendent God and individual salvation. This allowed Sweet to classify Barth as a fundamentalist in spite of the inaccuracy of his claim. But Reinhold Niebuhr was different. Sweet did not know about Barth’s days as a socialist pastor in a small Swiss village but he was well aware of the 1920s liberal socialist Niebuhr since both Sweet and Niebuhr were publishing articles in the Christian Century. Most likely that was what made Niebuhr’s critique of the religious sentimentality and political naïveté of his former liberal Protestant associates so difficult to bear. Just as Niebuhr was hurt by his liberal associates describing his 1932 Moral Man and Immoral Society as cynical and defeatist, so to did his liberal friends feel betrayed that one of their own would attack the liberal worldview that produced the
Social Gospel. While the animosity which developed between the Unitarian John Holmes and Niebuhr did not manifest itself amongst all of Niebuhr’s liberal friends and colleagues, still Shailer Mathews and Charles Clayton Morrison were deeply hurt by Niebuhr’s sharp witted and often sarcastic condemnation. Sweet’s 1939 description of the theological developments in America was his attempt to defend Protestant liberalism and honor those liberal scholars who stayed true to the liberal theological inheritance of Northern abolition. In so doing, Sweet provided a critique of Niebuhr without ever mentioning his name.

Sweet might not have mentioned the name of Reinhold Niebuhr, and he may have disagreed with his theological and political attacks on liberalism. Yet the writings of Niebuhr undoubtedly moved Sweet to a much more critical stance toward the unbridled support liberal Protestantism gave to the American war effort. In his 1939 edition, Sweet condemned the Protestant churches for becoming another government agency in order to mobilize the whole country against the Germans. This critique by Sweet was reminiscent of attacks by Reinhold Niebuhr against Protestant churches’ unethical alliances with capitalistic interests and their nationalistic impulses. It was also analogous to attacks made by Karl Barth whose main critique against liberalism was its tendency toward idolatry as it too often claimed its own struggle for social improvements as bringing into being the kingdom of God or actualizing the revelation of God in history.

As a liberal Methodist, William Warren Sweet was definitely not a Niebuhrian or a Barthian but his 1939 chapter on the Great War revealed their remarkable inspiration on his historical account. Even though Sweet did not write about Protestant settler wars against Native Indians, one of the most important and lasting contributions of his central critique of Protestant support for war was that it changed the way future American church and religious historians would describe the systematic destruction of Native tribal environment and culture. The 1960 historical work of Clifton Olmstead initiated placing the same type of critique that Sweet used against Protestant support for the Civil War and World War I against Protestants support for settler wars against Native Indians. This condemnation of Protestant support for settler wars and for the wars of westward expansion against Native groups flourished in the 1970s historical works of Martin Marty and Sydney Ahlstrom.
CHAPTER FOUR
WILLIAM WARREN SWEET'S CENTRAL PLACE IN CRITICIZING AMERICAN PROTESTANT SUPPORT FOR WAR, 1930-1950

William Sweet endeavored to write an iconoclastic comprehensive American religious history that eliminated moral judgments. In his writing of his 1930 consensus history, *The Story of Religions in America*, he provided a unique critique of enthusiastic Protestant support that justified Northern and Southern soldiers going to war and killing each other. His text took the first critical look at Protestant support for war in both the North and South and blamed both sides for exacerbating a political nightmare that resulted in a war that was longer and deadlier than necessary. His 1930 historical account also provided the first significant critique of American Protestant churches’ and clergies’ role in embracing the First World War and preaching hatred against the German people.187 Sweet’s second edition provided a stronger critique of Protestant clergies’ role during the Spanish American War and the First World War, especially their preaching hatred toward America’s enemies. While teaching at the University of Chicago, Sweet had contact with scholars who wrote about European theological trends that were critical of liberal Protestant ideals supporting World War I and the ideology of Reinhold Niebuhr who embraced theological realism as he wrote about his trips to Germany and the injustice of the Versailles Treaty in the mid-1920s. While Sweet’s *The Story of Religions in America* (1930) cited only one text by the Niebuhr brothers, H. Richard Niebuhr’s *Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929), Sweet had access to many sources that questioned and critiqued Protestant liberalism after World War I.

This chapter will explore William W. Sweet’s significant and detailed historical description of American wars and the Protestant support for those wars. Sweet has come to be recognized as the “father” of American church history because of his appointment at the University of Chicago. This appointment was the first-ever-professorship in the history of American Christianity. His employment at the University of Chicago led to his research for the Chicago University Sources Project providing first-hand source material for the future study of main-line Protestant denominations in America. Sweet’s important career spanned some of the most significant developments within American religious history as an academic field. His career began at a time when American religious history was not recognized as a legitimate academic field. By the time of his retirement the vast majority of universities, divinity schools and seminaries held professorships in this area of study or, at the very least, taught courses in this subject area. During Sweet’s career he wrote and edited twenty-five books on American religious history, most focusing on

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187 Ray Abrams well-known critique of Protestant clergy and the role they played in mobilizing America to participate in World War I was not published until 1933. In Sweet’s increasing condemnation for Protestant support for WWI in his second edition published in 1939, he utilized Abrams book *Preachers Present Arms* but it is remarkable that Sweet’s first critique of Protestant support for WWI preceded Abrams text by three years.
Methodism, and directed over thirty dissertations. His most recognized work was *The Story of Religions in America*, published in 1930; it went through three editions and was in print for over forty years.

William Sweet’s interest in the denominational growth of Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians following the Revolutionary War limited his descriptions of early settlers to their theological beliefs and doctrinal differences. Consequently, he described only one historical event of Protestant settlers at war with Natives within the Virginia settlement in 1622. He neglected every war with Natives in colonial New England. Yet his comprehensive historical account of the spread of Protestantism in America was revolutionary in its critique of American Protestant support for war.

### 3.1 Biographical Background (1881-1959)

William Warren Sweet published a general religious history of the American people in 1930 just seven years following Mode’s publication of *The Frontier Spirit in American Christianity*. At the beginning of Sweet’s teaching and research career at the University of Chicago, he was offered the first professorship in the field of American church history. Sweet joined the faculty at the University of Chicago in 1927, leaving DePauw University after eleven years. His general religious history of America was originally published in 1930; it was entitled *The Story of Religions in America*. His historical text displayed trends that would be employed by both his later writings and by future American church historians. All three editions (1930, 1939 and 1950) of *The Story of Religion(s) in America* revealed a church historian fascinated with the religious history of westward expansion following the Revolutionary War. His interest in early national formation and identity created a focus within his work which led him to abandon descriptions of war between Protestant settlers and Native Indians, specifically New England Puritan wars against Indians. Sweet’s research provided a counter weight to the lengthy descriptions of war between settlers and Natives found in earlier church histories and it also provided the first significant critique to Protestant support for war within American history. His historical text also furthered the development of American church history as he employed modern and professional methods in composing his history. Sweet demonstrated this by completely rejecting the language of supernatural and divine explanations for historical events. His biographical information will help provide insight into how and why these changes occurred within his historical work.

On February 15th, 1881 William W. Sweet was born in Baldwin City, Kansas a small town forty miles southwest of Kansas City. He was the third of six children born to William Henry Sweet and Rose Sweet. In 1879, his father William Henry Sweet became the twelfth President of Baker College, a Methodist institution in Baldwin.\(^{188}\) Baker College formed the social center around which the small but growing Kansas town developed. The Methodist College provided a sense of moral stability based on Christian values that was often lacking in Midwestern frontier towns. The town, after its incorporation in the late 1850s, actively publicized the college as it sought to enlarge its population.\(^{189}\) This Methodist dominated town provided the backdrop for the early

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childhood of William Sweet as he developed his sense of identity, a Midwestern identity that would influence him throughout his academic career.

In the middle to late 1880s, William H. Sweet became the pastor of various Methodist churches, and in 1892 he was assigned to be the presiding elder (district superintendent) of the local Methodist district in Kansas. It was a position he maintained until 1897 when William Warren Sweet left home to attend college. One of the books that was used to help teach William to read and which would leave an impression upon his childhood and teenage years was the *Lance, Cross and Canoe* by William H. Milburn. This popular book was published in 1857 by a circuit riding Methodist preacher and told the story of how America’s wild frontier was settled. William Sweet read this book to his children as they were learning to read, and he even quoted it in his 1920 book, *The Rise of Methodism in the West*.

In 1895, William was sent to the Preparatory Division of Kansas Wesleyan University. He graduated in 1898 and remained at Kansas Wesleyan University for his freshman year of college. The next year he applied and was accepted at his parents’ alma mater, Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio. He graduated in the spring of 1902 and in the fall of 1904 attended Drew Theological Seminary because he had decided to enter the Methodist ministry like his father. At Drew, he met Louise Neill, and they were married in 1906. Robert W. Rogers, Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament, was the professor at Drew who most influenced Sweet’s academic development. Rogers was well trained in the most current historical methods of scholarship as he received his PhD from the German University at Leipzig. In addition to Rodgers influence, Sweet was also impacted by a decision he made during his senior year at Drew to enroll in a history class at Columbia University. The class was “The United States since 1850 with a special emphasis on the Civil War” taught by William A. Dunning.

Dunning was an expert on the Reconstruction Era and his training in historical methods focused on the elimination of all moral judgments in the pursuit of an impartial and objective “scientific history.” Dunning stressed the need for objectivity within the young professional discipline of history. Sweet was attracted to this “scientific history” which set objectivity as its main criterion, and when he wrote his dissertation on the Methodist Church and the Civil War his historical account made similar claims to objectivity and scientific neutrality. He claimed in the preface of his dissertation that his study “deals with facts alone.”

After graduating from seminary in 1906, Sweet became minister of a Methodist church in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania that was just outside Philadelphia. He served as

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193 The prevalent racism within American society during this time period allowed Dunning to claim “impartiality and objectivity” while writing racism into American history. He wrote that blacks “had no aspirations or ideals save to be like the whites” and he described Reconstruction as an “unspeakable disaster” not because the South was able to stifle Northern attempts to aid the freed slaves but because it fostered Northern atrocities against Southerners such as “the hideous crime against white womanhood which now assumed new meaning in the annals of outrage.” See Novick, Peter. *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the Historical Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
pastor of that Methodist congregation for two years. Even while employed as a full-time pastor, Sweet enrolled as a graduate student at Crozer Theological Seminary, earning his ThM degree in one year and graduating in 1907. While studying at Crozier, Sweet enrolled in a class at the University of Pennsylvania with the American Constitutional historian, Dr. Herman Ames. Sweet relished this course so much that after graduating from Crozer he enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Pennsylvania.

In pursuing his PhD, Dr. Sweet’s primary professor was Herman Ames. He also registered for a class with the well-known American social historian, John Bach McMaster. Both professors focused on their own discrete subject area within American history and both were strong advocates for the increasingly popular “scientific” objective history. Both taught that it was the historians’ task to utilize documentary evidence, to present facts logically and chronologically, while avoiding all moral judgments so as to limit any interpretive bias. McMaster wrote an eight volume American history entitled History of the People of the United States in which he demonstrated the “scientific” historic method as he presented fact after fact with little meaningful commentary. Herman Ames’ historical method paralleled McMaster’s in that it recorded chronological data throughout each section as evidenced in his Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of the United States during the First Century of Its History. Sweet’s dissertation on the Methodist Episcopal Church during the Civil War was published in 1912 and it contained the same data-driven scientific factual underpinnings as his mentors’ historical works.195

Following his graduation from the University of Pennsylvania, William Warren Sweet was recruited by his alma mater, Ohio Wesleyan University, to be a history instructor. He taught at Ohio Wesleyan from 1911-1916, moving on to a professorship in history at DePauw University from 1916-1927, and culminating his prestigious career at the University of Chicago where he taught until 1946. Sweet published The Story of Religions in America in 1930. In 1939, he released a second edition of the volume in which he changed its name slightly to The Story of Religion in America.196 This was a change that reflected the fact that the book chronicles the story of Protestantism in America utilizing over four hundred fifty pages while only thirty-two pages address Catholicism, eight pages describe Judaism, one page mentions Hinduism and there was no mention of Islam or Buddhism.

The title was not the only thing he updated as he rewrote what had been the book’s last chapter on big business and added three more chapters, including a long chapter on World War I. This chapter condemned, to a large degree, the universal Protestant support for the Spanish American War and the Great War as he attempted to be more historically accurate and pertinent in describing America post-1880. In 1942, he wrote Religion in Colonial America, and in 1944 he published Revivalism in America. In 1947, he published The American Churches: An Interpretation. In addition, he edited volume three and four of the series Religion on the American Frontier during this time.

195 Ash, Protestantism, 27.
196 There were very few changes in the main body of Sweet’s text to indicate why he made the change from “Religions” to “Religion.” Perhaps the change stemmed from his thinking that all the various “religious” Protestant denominations he described in 1930 could best be described as forming one general “religion” in their cultural worldview or perhaps he was just acknowledging that he primarily focused on the one Protestant American religion and his text did not represent other “religious” voices.
span. Volume three provided source material for the Congregationalists during the years 1783 through 1850 and was published in 1939. Volume four, published in 1946, contained the source material for the Methodist denomination from 1783 through 1840. Thus for Sweet, the eleven-year period from 1939 through 1950 was a time of academic productivity which included writing several books and editing two volumes of source material documents. He also updated and expanded two editions of his general religious history of the American people.

4.2 Lone Account of Settler War against Indians

In all of Sweet’s writings during this eleven-year period, he addressed and focused on American colonial struggles for independence and the settling of the West following the Revolutionary War by various Protestant denominations. His writings did so, to such an extent, that when they are compared to earlier American church histories, they significantly neglected to describe colonial Protestants at war, especially the early Puritan settlers and their military activity against Native Indians. In Sweet’s first edition, he wrote about one Native attack against settlers in Virginia and he referred to it twice. Accordingly, he either considered this episode very important for the Protestant settlers or else it was the only military event between settlers and Natives for which he could find historical evidence—or perhaps it was both reasons.

He described the attack on the Virginia settlement as follows, on the “morning of March 22, 1622 when the Natives were no longer held in check by Chief Powhotan, they fell upon the settlements on the upper James and within a few hours 347 settlers had been killed in cold blood without respect for age or sex. In this remote region the settlements were almost completely wiped out, among the slain being John Rolfe.” Sweet purported this attack again as “the great massacre of 1622.” His description revealed the objective and data driven historic method that would dominate his historic account. This passage reported very detailed factual data; not only does Sweet describe the year but also the month and day of the attack, the attack’s location, the reason for the Native attack, the approximate duration of the attack, and the exact number of Protestant settlers killed during the attack. One possible reason for Sweet’s failure to describe other Protestant settler and Native wars was that he was not able to locate any objective and historically verifiable sources to corroborate this depth of detail. Sweet described how the Protestant settlers organized a party of men to hunt the Natives in an attempt to punish them for their surprise attack. The settlers chased the Indians deep into the wilderness but they were unable to kill more than a few of them. Sweet wrote that the worst result of the

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197 Sweet grew up in a Methodist family and his writings focused on the importance of the Methodist Church in settling the West after the Revolutionary War. Sweet’s pro-Methodist bias has been viewed by critics (e.g. L.J. Trinterud and Robert H. Nichols, mentioned in Mead’s article) as hindering his objectivity; however, his bias might have accurately captured the American religious situation. Sydney Mead argued, “Considered thus in the light of second thought, Professor Sweet’s personal Methodist bias may be seen to reflect to a remarkable degree the objective realities of the situation he described.” Here Mead is not arguing that Sweet’s bias did not affect the history he wrote but simply that Sweet was fortunate to have a Methodist bias at a time when Methodist growth and importance in America would have been hard to overemphasize. See page 44-46 of Mead, Sidney E., “Prof. Sweet’s Religion and Culture in America” Church History, 1953, 22(1), 33-49.


199 Sweet, The Story, 58.
attack was the destruction of trust between the colonists and the Indians since this eroded the missionary efforts by Virginia church leaders and the English clergy. The attack also ended the planned missionary schools and the churches King James I had pledged to support financially.  

The Revolutionary conflict dominated a large portion of Sweet’s historical plot pertaining to religion in America. His history of the settlement of the New England colonies focused on the founding of the Congregationalist denomination to such an extent that his text did not include any record of military attacks between Natives and Puritan settlers. In the four earlier historical accounts that Baird, Bacon, L. W. Bacon, and Mode wrote a large percentage of their descriptions of Protestant support for war referred to settlers at war against Native Indians. Sweet differed from these earlier historians as he limited his description of Protestant settler wars with Indians to one surprise attack on the Virginia colony. Sweet wrote nothing else about war again until he began to describe the various ways in which each of the Protestant denominations supported the Revolutionary War effort against England.

4.3 Revolutionary War

According to Sweet’s account, from the very start of the struggle for independence, Protestant Congregationalism in the New England colonies made the greatest impact in influencing the colonies toward independence from England. Sweet explained that colonial opposition and resistance to Great Britain became major themes of Congregational sermons during the years between the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 and the outbreak of hostilities in 1775. Capturing the passion of the New England clergies’ rhetoric, Sweet described the biblical imagery that they used for turning independence and war into a “holy cause.” It was a cause so just that many ministers became “fighting parsons” where they would not only preach about volunteering but quite often they would march off with the young men in their congregations to serve in George Washington’s army. Sweet described examples of ministers turned soldiers when he wrote about the Reverend Joseph Willard and the Reverend John Cleaveland. Both ministers marched off to join the war, encouraged their congregations to do likewise, and recruited every man they encountered along the way. This kind of first-hand documentary evidence coming from personal writings was quite common throughout Sweet’s historical account. Here the pulpit rhetoric and the patriotic actions of Protestant ministers were described as solidifying support for the Revolutionary War. Sweet, in his 1930 text, never critiqued the rhetorical preaching of the protestant clergy leading up to the Revolutionary War. This same type of Protestant support for war, however, would be criticized by Sweet for lengthening a bloody Civil War in which the churches granted both sides theological justification to do whatever was necessary to defeat the other side. By the time of his 1939 edition Sweet condemned the Protestant preaching in opposition to enemies that paralleled the occasions for war during the Civil War, the Spanish American War and the First World War.

Sweet’s account of the Revolutionary War reported that the colonial Presbyterians were comprised primarily of Scotch-Irish who had much remaining hostility towards the

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200 Sweet, The Story, 50-1.
201 Sweet, The Story, 256.
202 Sweet, The Story, 258.
English for the sufferings that had led to their migration to America. During the fighting in 1779, Sweet noted, fifty percent of Washington’s soldiers were Irish immigrants who were hoping for a chance to kill English soldiers and help defeat the British army. John Witherspoon was a Presbyterian minister who wielded great political influence which was reflected in the fact that he was the only minister chosen to sign the Declaration of Independence. In 1776, he was chosen from the New Jersey colony to help frame the Constitution and in so doing he dedicated himself to influencing the new nation towards Presbyterian themes of republicanism.  

The Dutch Church put itself at risk by supporting the Revolutionary effort with as much dedication as the Presbyterian Church. Many of the Dutch congregations were destroyed for their support as their location was near the British stronghold along the Hudson River Valley. The two largest German churches, the German Reformed Church and the Lutheran Church, both strongly supported the independence effort. Sweet mentioned that Baptists were some of the first Protestants to support the fight for independence since they felt very much oppressed by the state control of the Church of England, and they hoped for greater freedoms in an independent country. While individual Methodists may have supported the cause of independence Sweet stated, “Unfortunately for the Methodist in America during the Revolution, John Wesley, their great founder, was a stanch Tory and a loyal supporter of the policies of George III and his ministers.” Soon after the outbreak of fighting, the majority of Methodist ministers returned to England. In addition, Sweet noted that Catholics in Pennsylvania and Maryland fully supported the struggle for independence against the English since Bishop Carroll was such a strong supporter of liberty.

Although Sweet used two chapters to discuss the various Protestant denominations’ support of the Revolutionary War effort, he never mentioned the violence of any battles between the British army and the overwhelmingly Protestant colonial army. Like the wars between the settlers and the Natives in New England which were left out of Sweet’s text, the increasingly violent battles and the injuries and death that came with each battle during the Revolutionary War were also absent from this historical text. Instead, Sweet wrote a positive account of Protestant ministers’ and congregations’ support for the war. The Moravian Indian converts persuaded Native war parties to leave American troops alone simply out of humanitarian and Christian ideals. During the first winter of the Revolutionary War, the Indians became entrapped behind British lines with almost no food supplies. In time they eventually found a way out and were returning home to Tuscarawas Ohio. While they approached home they were intercepted by an American militia, whom the Indians thought would provide help and food, but instead, the militia ambushed them. Sweet’s description of this event neither provided a justification for the mass killing of the innocent Moravian Indians, nor a condemnation for the actions of the Protestant militia. Sweet wrote about this event in a way similar to how he wrote about other historical data using as little moral judgment as possible in an attempt to be

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204 Sweet, The Story, 263.
207 Sweet, The Story, 273.
unbiased and professionally objective. In describing the Moravian Indians as innocent, however, he provided an indirect critique of the Protestant militia’s actions since the killing of innocent people is considered an immoral action tantamount to murder. Sweet’s attempt to maintain professional objectivity, even when describing the slaughter of converted Indians characterized his historical works, beginning with his dissertation from the University of Pennsylvania. Sweet’s striving for scientific objectivity makes very astonishing his 1930 critique of Protestant preachers during the Civil War and his 1939 condemnation of Protestant support for America’s war effort during the Spanish American War and the World War I.

Sweet reported that Protestant support for independence rapidly increased, as clergy and lay members clamored for the separation of church and state during the entire length of the war, especially among churches in New England and Virginia. But by the end of the war, Sweet contended that no Protestant denomination was as well suited to handle the challenges of an independent America as the Presbyterians since they had been the most united at the outset of the war effort. Presbyterian churches had the most educated clergy in the colonies, and they had growth that was unmatched by any other denomination. While in New England, according to Sweet, the success of the new nation did not hurt the Congregational churches since the New England leaders emphasized the democratic principles within Congregationalism.

William Sweet’s history turned from the Revolutionary conflict and the rise of nationalism to address the rise of sectionalism during the 1830s and the conflict between the states over slavery. In dealing with slavery and regional schisms, Sweet described the Protestant justification of Indian slavery based on war repercussions and on an extreme Calvinistic ideology of election. Sweet maintained that “the sanctioning of Indian slavery led to a ready sanctioning of Negro slavery. The New England Calvinist considered that he was God’s elect and that to him God had given the heathen for an inheritance.” It was not until New England Calvinism waned that the North’s opposition to slavery began to solidify. Sweet wrote about the history of English slavery beginning with John Hawkins’ voyage in 1562. He also included statistics about the vast profits the Northern colonies and states gained from the slave trade.

4.4 Sweet’s Critique of the Civil War

Before discussing the North’s increasingly active anti-slave movement following the 1830s, Sweet described some of New England’s finest Protestant ministers who owned slaves. He mentioned Providence, Rhode Island, as the financial center for the slave trade during the eighteenth century. Much had changed by the mid-1830s, Sweet explained, and in 1837 the New England anti-slavery society voted on a regulation requiring all members to excommunicate anyone owning or transporting slaves. The anti-slavery rhetoric produced by this society in New England was returned by just as much pro-slavery propaganda in the South. Southern clergy rigorously defended slavery, as the

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208 Sweet, The Story, 274-5.
209 Sweet, The Story, 288-9
210 Sweet, The Story, 412.
211 Sweet, The Story, 412.
Southern economy by the middle of the 1830s had an increased dependence upon slave labor and cotton production.\textsuperscript{212}

Sweet’s description of the Civil War paved the way for academically-trained religious historians to write about abolition issues contributing to the war rather than writing about the war itself. Sweet utilized historic facts and data on Northern abolition and Southern slavery which allowed him to focus on an objectively-verifiable narrative. This would have been much harder to achieve if he wrote about the pain and suffering of soldiers, the killing of civilians, the destruction of cities, and the horrific scenes of death that occurred on the battlefields of the Civil War. His work prepared the way for future descriptions of war and for other historians to critique, and increasingly, to criticize Protestant support for war and Protestant rhetoric that demonized enemies and glorified death in battle.

Sweet called attention to the year 1818, when the Presbyterian Church passed one of the strongest anti-slavery resolutions encouraging their members to do everything in their power to counteract the sin of slavery. The resolution strived for the abolition of slavery throughout the entire world.\textsuperscript{213} This type of anti-slavery movement was similar within all three major Protestant denominations since the Methodist and Baptist in the Northern states passed ordinances encouraging the releasing of slaves and the ending of the slave trade. Northern anti-slavery religious idealism was described by Sweet as occurring at the same time as the South greatly began to increase their financial dependence on slavery. Sweet backed up his conclusions with export statistics. In 1820, only twenty-two percent of the nation’s exports were cotton. By 1860, however, cotton had become fifty-seven percent of the nation’s exports.\textsuperscript{214} These statistics point to the data-driven nature of Sweet’s account and to his striving to implement as much objectivity as possible within his text.

Sweet commented that the slowly simmering conflict between the Northern and Southern Protestant denominations regarding slavery reached a boiling point during the 1850s. Northern anti-slavery Protestants and Southern pro-slavery Protestants were both motivated to give their full support in raising capital and in placing a call-to-arms for their respective sides once the war began. Sweet described how all the Protestant denominations competed to be the most supportive of the Union cause in the North or the Confederate cause in the South. He purported that of the mainstream Protestant denominations, only the Episcopal Church and the Old School Presbyterian Church had minority elements that protested against the war effort.\textsuperscript{215} In addition he claimed that no American war, not even the Great War, received as much support from the Protestant churches as did the respective sides during the Civil War. Here Sweet’s description of Protestant support for each side during the Civil War provided a critique in which financial support for the war and the motivation for so many volunteer soldiers rested squarely with the Protestant churches thus enabling the nation to enter into such a long and deadly war.

Sweet next addressed the issue of war chaplains. Each of the Northern Protestant denominations provided the Union Army and Navy with chaplains; the Methodist

\textsuperscript{212} Sweet, The Story, 424.
\textsuperscript{213} Sweet, The Story, 423.
\textsuperscript{214} Sweet, The Story, 424.
\textsuperscript{215} Sweet, The Story, 454-5.
denomination alone provided around five hundred. Sweet described how evangelical chaplains led many revivals both in the campground and on the battlefield. During one revival service, a New York regiment held a meeting that lasted over thirty days, and resulted in over one hundred soldiers being won to Christ.\footnote{Sweet, The Story, 456.} Revivals were not limited to the Northern troops, and Sweet described General Lee and Stonewall Jackson as strongly encouraging religious services among the Confederate ranks. Sweet incorporated statistics into his account that revealed the number of Northern chaplains and revival conversions, making his text appear as rational and as objective as possible.

Sweet quoted a Confederate officer who stated that he very rarely heard swearing in the Confederate Army camps and that almost every night he would hear the soldiers singing hymns and spirituals. Sweet also mentioned the spiritual revival that occurred in the Army of Northern Virginia during 1863-1864 which reportedly converted over a thousand soldiers. According to Sweet’s sources, all the major Protestant denominations cooperated and supplied more than their quota of chaplains for the Confederate Army, and all encouraged active religious service among the troops.\footnote{Sweet, The Story, 456.} Statistics pointing to numbers of chaplains and conversions during revival services were more attractive to Sweet than determining the ways Protestants dealt with suffering and death. Sweet here critiqued the Protestant clergy and military officers who utilized religious rhetoric and revival services in order to support and justify an increasingly-deadly war.

One of the few times Sweet described the death and destruction caused by war was when he wrote about a Confederate Presbyterian chaplain who ministered to battlefield casualties after the battle of Chickamauga. He wrote that the chaplain nursed “the sick and wounded . . . [and that] they lay thick all around, shot in every possible manner, and the wounded [were] dying every day.”\footnote{Sweet, The Story, 457.} Sweet also quoted from the Harper’s Weekly periodical a patriotic article from October 1864 written by Bishop Mathew Simpson from Pittsburgh who spoke “of the battlefields where they had been baptized in blood, and described their beauty as some patch of shore, filled with stars, that an angel has snatched from the heavenly canopy to set the stripes in blood.”\footnote{Sweet, The Story, 466.} Sweet employed this quote to criticize the Protestant clergy’s glorifying the war and his assurance of a divine plan behind the war since these ideas led to an increasingly brutal reality of Protestant soldiers killing each other and justifying their actions in the name of a higher purpose. Sweet’s critique against the clergy who held up false claims of glory in battle and assurances of heavenly rewards was stronger than his critique of Protestant military commanders’ and chaplains’ use of religious rhetoric.

The war took its toll on all the Protestant churches, and Sweet commented that the sound of the drums daily calling out for volunteers for four long years devastated the local congregations. During the next decade Sweet remarked that the deaths and injuries to so many young men, resulted in a dramatic increase in vice and corruption within the nation.\footnote{Sweet, The Story, 468-9.} In addition, the lack of ministers resulted in canceled Protestant church services throughout the Confederacy which Sweet described as a “naturally occurring”
consequence of the war since so many Southern chaplains were killed when they were ministering to the Confederate troops.\footnote{Sweet, The Story, 460.}

In the North, Sweet reported that the Northern Methodists bragged about their fidelity to the Union cause and about how many soldiers they supplied to the Union Army.\footnote{Sweet, The Story, 450.} Sweet also described how the Ohio Baptist Convention in 1862 passed many partisan motions that granted unconditional support to the federal government. This church fidelity to the federal government was typical of Northern churches, especially the larger Protestant ones, since the three largest Northern Protestant denominations supplied the majority of the soldiers for the Union Army. Sweet noted the same Protestant church fidelity in the South. The Southern Baptist Convention in 1861 passed numerous declarations on the condition of the nation in which the South initially sought justice. But after being insulted by the aggression of the Northern troops, the Baptist denomination in the South decided to support the formation of the Confederacy.

According to Sweet, the Protestant denomination that dealt with their division over slavery the best was the Episcopalians. His history confirmed that even though the Episcopal Church had both dedicated supporters of abolition and slavery, yet there occurred very few bitter or personal attacks made in public following Southern secession. After the war the Episcopal denomination division was quickly united. One example of this took place during the 1865 Episcopal Convention when the Southern bishops were treated fairly and as equals. Thus, this one divided denomination was more easily restored to unity than many other Protestant fellowships that suffered bitter divisions. In writing this story of reunion, Sweet critiqued the inability of other Protestant denominations to reconcile due to the fact that their support for the war effort was radical enough to continue even after the war had ended.

In describing the reconstruction period immediately following the Civil War, Sweet described various Northern Protestant churches and government organizations working to convert and educate the recently freed slaves. Sweet reported that the education given to the freed slaves by the Northern churches was political in nature and was often taught during religious services by “unscrupulous politicians.” One Northern politician who preached in black churches in Florida was reported by Sweet to have been kissing babies while proclaiming that Jesus Christ was a Republican.\footnote{Sweet, The Story, 475.} This behavior led to the election of unqualified ministers and corrupt Northern politicians during the first five years after the Civil War. Sweet referred to census data to demonstrate the growth of the black church following the Civil War. This was another example of Sweet’s reliance on documented factual information to produce a historical account.

During the Reconstruction era (1865-1877), a general reduction in moral conduct occurred in both public and private behavior. Sweet commented, “The country’s wealth was increasing with an alarming rapidity in the midst of political and social confusion while the war brought to prominence a class of rough, unscrupulous men, with low standards of personal conduct, who too frequently were permitted to gain leadership in both business and politics.”\footnote{Sweet, The Story, 477.} While national corruption was a concern of the Protestant
churches in the post-war years, so too was the rapid growth of the cities and the large increase in foreign immigration.

Sweet emphasized that the new challenges for the Protestant churches resulted from the growth of cities, and the efforts at interdenominational cooperation attempting to meet the needs of the urban population. The most successful of these efforts included organizations such as the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). Sweet mentioned that the organization was founded in London in 1844. By the start of the Civil War, however, there were over two hundred offices established in the United States, and in the Northern cities the YMCA was known for missionary outreach to soldiers and sailors. The most effective big city evangelist during this time was Dwight L. Moody, who began his outreach in the growing urban center of Chicago, Illinois. Sweet described how Moody came to Chicago in 1856, and in less than four years he had abandoned his business to devote himself to inner-city-ministry. During the Civil War, Moody ministered to the Union soldiers and served as president of the Chicago YMCA. After the Civil War, Moody was constantly engaged in evangelical campaigns that made him internationally known. He also went on revival tours of England and Scotland on three separate occasions.  

Sweet focused his history on the facts surrounding the YMCA and Moody’s ministry following the Civil War, and in writing it, he pointed to the growing development in the field of religious history towards writing intellectual biography.

In Sweet’s discussion of westward expansion upon the frontier during and following the Civil War, he described the Protestant denominations’ attempt to keep missionary churches located and growing within the newly populated United States territories. During the 1860s and 1870s a great increase in population was brought into the Rocky Mountain region because of the large mining boom. Protestant denominations fully embraced the full-scale changes brought on by the westward migration into the trans-Missouri territories, and they looked forward to converting the frontier settlers. Baptists and Methodists were both described by Sweet as determined to win the West for Christ.

Sweet reported that there were twenty-five thousand federal troops at the end of the Civil War. Most of them were located on the western frontier for the purpose of maintaining the peace between the incoming settlers and the Indians already living there. This situation proved to be dangerous for the missionaries who were attempting to convert the Indians. As Indians were forced off the frontier, missionaries were often fortunate to escape without getting shot in the crossfire of Indian wars. Sweet recounted how conditions among the Indians were deteriorating as an influx of settlers arrived which prompted missionary demands for help from the Federal government. In 1869, congress set aside two million dollars for what they named “The Peace Policy.” It was a fund that granted the Secretary of the Interior resources to provide aid to the Indians. The policy produced some tangible good; however, according to Sweet, the Indian wars continued for a few more years after this policy was put in place. Both government and Protestant denominations worked together to provide educational and religious instruction to the Indians in the West. Because of these efforts, the Indian had been able to quickly progress from what Sweet described as a “barbarian to a civilized man.”

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226 Sweet, The Story, 482-4.
improvements were the result of the educational training offered to Indians by Protestant
churches and they had only occurred during the last fifty years.227

Sweet named the time period in the United States following the Civil War as the
age of big business, and he detailed how economically and politically the institutions of
big business influenced and benefited Protestant denominations. Capitalists started to
give generous sums of money to Protestant educational institutions that led college
presidents to spend more time finding wealthy donors than educating students. Protestant
dernations began to grow in wealth and to build extravagant churches. Even the
Baptists and the Methodists who had been proud to be known as the poor people’s church
had become associated and controlled by big business models and with people of wealth
within the two decades following the Civil War.228

4.5 The Great War

By the time of the twentieth century, war was considered a thing of the past for
majority of American Protestants. Sweet described the social outreach of most liberal
Protestant denominations as having a large impact on American idealism. By 1914 most
Protestants in America believed that a major world war was unfeasible due to economic
reasons alone. They thought modern warfare was so expensive that not even the richest
nations could afford to stay at war for more than a few months before their resources
would be worn out. Sweet added that many Protestants became overly optimistic about
the potential of the international peace movement due to some initial successes when the
international court of arbitration was established.229

No matter how much Protestant Americans thought peace was inevitable and how
often Protestant clergy preached about peace in 1914, by the time the United States
joined the war in 1917, the churches were united in declaring holy the cause of those
fighting against the German Kaiser. The great majority of Protestant pastors fully
supported the United States government as it sent soldiers off to war in Europe. In
describing the Great War, Sweet provided his strongest critique of the Protestant
dernations, as they went from preaching the necessity of peace for the first sixteen
years of the twentieth century, and then suddenly discerned that war with Germany was
necessary. Sweet described the Protestant clergy as preaching rhetoric in support of the
United States foreign policy. Thus, they proclaimed the need for neutrality in times of
peace and spread propaganda backing the Christian call-to-arms in times of war.

Sweet mentioned that the Protestant clergy worked very diligently for the war
effort in America as they supported each new government policy created to advance the
war cause. He stated, “They urged men to join the armed forces of the United States;
opened their churches to the Red Cross and other war-time organizations; helped gather
contributions to the numerous funds; preached sermons from outlines sent them by the
government propaganda agencies, and too often believed and circulated the stories of
eady atrocities.”230 During the war years, Americans in general and Protestants in
particular, believed the United States military was fighting a just war and they hoped this
war would make all future war unnecessary. This optimistic liberal ideology led the vast

227 Sweet, The Story, 484-6.
228 Sweet, The Story, 499.
majority of Protestants to unquestioningly support the war. Yet, according to Sweet, some Protestants held firm in their belief that it was never acceptable for a Christian to engage in war or even to support war in any way. Sweet argued, however, that the vast majority of all Protestants agreed that Christianity required the defense of country and that loyalty to God and nation included the utilization of military force.\(^{231}\)

Sweet stated that the post-WWI period brought heightened emotions to American Protestants, including an intense frustration at the carnage of trench warfare in Europe, a disappointment with the failed peace treaty, a rejection of internationalism, and an overzealous nationalism. These were all issues that Reinhold Niebuhr was writing about in the *Christian Century* in the 1920s and they were factors that Sweet characterized as contributing to the rise of Protestant extremely conservative organizations like the Ku Klux Klan.\(^{232}\) Protestant fundamentalism also grew during this nationalistic emotional period of time. The fundamentalist movement was initiated during the last half of the nineteenth century and it received a dramatic boost in 1910 with the publication of a book series entitled *The Fundamentals*. The growth of this type of conservative Protestantism, including racist movements like the Ku Klux Klan, was portrayed by Sweet as being stimulated by religious and political ideologies of national isolationism. The confusing cultural and economic circumstances happening around the nation following World War I included the expansion of the industrial productivity which enriched some while impoverishing many while the expansion of immigration threatened the identity of many Protestants who were struggling financially. Fundamentalism was a movement that responded to all these economic forces and it led the opposition to the growth of scientific modernism within the more liberal Protestant churches. The dispute between these two streams of Protestantism became increasingly volatile during the 1920s, influencing just about every Protestant church.\(^{233}\)

### 4.6 Sweet’s Later Editions

In 1939 Sweet published a second edition of his history and in 1950 he revised this second edition. These newer editions made major revisions to the second half of his historical text, rewriting the chapter on big business and adding three chapters: one on urbanization, one on the First World War, and one on the tumultuous post-war decade. In the rewritten chapter on the changing economic order, Sweet began by summarizing the history of revivalism on frontier Protestantism from the 1870s through WWI. Here he developed a section on the Spanish American War and the Protestant churches’ reaction to the war. With the war came an increase of interest in foreign missionary activity that correlated to an increasingly imperialistic American foreign policy.\(^{234}\)

Sweet quoted a passage from the *Christian Advocate* published in April of 1898 as an example of the general American Protestant belief concerning war and patriotism at that time. One Protestant patriot was adamant, “As long as the war was not declared, any citizen, without exposing himself to just imputation upon his patriotism, could oppose it . . . But war having been resolved upon . . . loyalty to the country now requires every

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\(^{231}\) Sweet, *The Story*, 509.


\(^{233}\) Sweet, *The Story*, 512.

citizen to support ‘the powers that be.’” Even after the horrors of the Civil War, Protestants in large numbers maintained a belief that loyalty to country was a Christian duty even if it meant supporting a war that they believed might not be necessary. Thus, Sweet provided a critique of strong Protestant nationalism that supported American wars and for the Protestant idea that American patriotism was a Christian duty.

Sweet’s 1950 historical account asserted that during the Spanish American War the vast majority of American Protestant clergy accepted the overwhelming success of American troops at the battle of Manila Bay as a sign that God led the nation into war and was blessing the nation. The war lasted only one hundred days but it sparked an outpouring of Protestant sermons about the war, which ranged from a select few questioning the war as a mistake or even as being sinful, to the majority who strongly promoted the war as righteous and blessed in God’s sight. Many American Protestant churches, according to Sweet, having just become more missions oriented, were elated by the news that the American government was taking over the Philippines and Puerto Rico following the United States victory. Sweet’s critical description of this time period labeled it as an “Imperialism of Righteousness” in which the largest three Protestant American churches dominated the missionary field abroad and the new United States territory was considered providential in nature. These American Protestant churches, Sweet pointed out, were especially passionate about developing missionary outposts on these traditionally Catholic territories. This revised chapter also suggested that as the three largest Protestant denominations were setting up foreign missionary outposts in former Spanish territories, they were able to put aside denominational differences and join forces in order to work together.

William Sweet next mentioned war to indicate a historical development within a Protestant denomination. War became a type of historical location marker for when the Eastern Orthodox churches enlarged their presence in America by taking on an independent religious identity following WWII. While that war was being fought in Europe, Sweet described the Eastern Orthodox as fully advancing the American war cause and fighting against German fascism. In concluding his chapter, Sweet wrote a new section on Jewish immigration to America in which he employed the Civil War, WWI and WWII as historical place markers. This way of utilizing war as a historical marker of events occurring before or after the war would become more common as future historians wrote less about the effects of war on Protestant soldiers and more about Protestant clergies’ support for warfare within American history. Following Sweet, future American church historians chose to write about denominational growth and national trends that occurred before, during and after particular wars.

In another new chapter entitled “The Church and the Rise of the City,” Sweet did not mention war. Sweet utilized this chapter to describe some trends in urbanization not mentioned in his earlier 1930 edition, in anticipation of his long chapter on “World War I: Prosperity and Depression.” Sweet began this chapter with a brief mention of the close of the Spanish American War and the great dedication Protestant churches had made to foreign missions. The chapter also addressed the growing number of American Protestant expressions of pacifism that began at the close of WWI, due to what Sweet termed a

remembrance of the “definite pacifism of Jesus.”

The movement drew inspiration based on three influential passages located in first gospel: Matthew 4:8-10, 5:38-41 and 24:15-22. This was the first time an American church historian described the rational and scriptural justification for American Protestant churches pacifistic belief. Sweet also traced how the idea of passivity and war evolved from the first followers of Christ through Saint Augustine and the Reformation theologians.

In discussing the Reformation, Sweet explained Calvin’s idea of the Christian in partnership with both the church and state so that the kingdom of God could be established through both institutions. Thus, even though Calvin disapproved of aggressive wars, defensive wars in order to preserve the state were necessary and could be justified as preserving the kingdom of God. Sweet described Reformation pacifists, like the Quakers and Anabaptists together, even though they had differing views on the state. All of these various Reformation views on warfare and forms of government came to America during the colonial period. Calvinist ideology dominated, especially in New England, since the Anabaptist avoided involvement in affairs of the state and there were relatively few Quakers in very limited locations.

Based on their Calvinistic theology, Sweet purported that the New England colonial clergy was united in its hostility towards Indians and supported military action in order to safeguard settlers. Because of this Calvinistic worldview, Sweet explained, Indians were generally considered to be “children of the devil and, therefore, predestined to be damned.” Accordingly, the colonel Protestant missionary agenda had more to do with justifying settlements than with legitimate attempts to Christianize the heathen Indians. Indians were viewed by the New England Congregationalist as a trial to be overcome like the harsh weather, and killing the Natives was the only sure option to ensure their own survival. Sweet reported that Congregationalist ministers supported the colonial militia because their enemies were God’s enemies. Sweet described Protestant clergy support for war against Indians as an attempt to safely secure Native lands for agricultural purposes and justified these actions based on their dualistic perception that Indians were the devil’s offspring.

Sweet’s historical text described how the popularity of American peace movements’ ebbed and flowed. During times of war, Protestant churches generated the most support for war and during the cessation of war Protestant churches led the surge of support for peace. The 1830s, until just prior to the start of the Civil War, was a high time of the peace movement, and, once again, according to Sweet, Lee’s surrender ending the Civil War brought a particularly strong revival of the peace movement. The historical period in America with the most Protestant activity in striving for peace was the close of the Spanish American War (August 1898) to the beginning of United States’ entrance into the First World War (April 1917). Sweet reported that the Women’s Temperance Christian Union decreed that in 1905 more peace sermons were preached in Protestant churches then in any other year and that these sermons were becoming increasingly bold in their proclamations and predictions about world peace. As another indicator of the

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peacemovement in America at this time, Sweet stated that in 1909 the Peace society of America doubled its membership.\textsuperscript{243} The statistics provided in this section indicate that Sweet utilized modern historical methods in order to write a religious history in America that was objective and without moral bias. While at the same time, Sweet delivered a significant critique into the nature of how Protestant churches have historically supported peace in times of peace and war in times of war.

This golden-age of the peace movement occurred a generation before World War I; it was described by Sweet as a time when Protestants believed world peace was possible and the vast majority of Protestant denominations were willing to work together. Justice and democracy became more widespread in America and abroad, and American Protestants became so optimistic that they were oblivious to the social and economic injustices in America and the impending military disaster in Europe. Once war started in Europe, Sweet wrote that the vast majority of American Protestants supported President Wilson’s decision to keep America out of the war. That decision was, of course, short lived. Sweet’s religious history stated that the propaganda machine of the Allies, along with the hawks of the Security League, led by ex-Presidents Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) and William Howard Taft (1857-1930), eventually convinced Protestant America of the need to fight a war in Europe.

American Protestants, Sweet explained, interpreted the war in Europe through the message of the Social Gospel and the peace movement. The war became a means to save civilization and democracy; it was the “war to end all wars.” To make this point pungent, Sweet quoted from H. G. Wells who proclaimed that “Every sword that is drawn against Germany is a sword drawn for peace . . . the defeat of Germany may open up the way to disarmament and peace throughout the earth.”\textsuperscript{244} Sweet contended that for many American Protestants, even before America had officially entered the war, the war had taken on a spiritual and supernatural dimension in the sense that America’s new military cause was a divinely ordained and righteous cause in much the same way as the Civil War and the Revolutionary War.

Sweet’s chapter on the First World War described the Protestant churches in America as becoming another hard-working federal agency striving to mobilize as many people as possible for the war effort. Protestant churches worked diligently as behind the scene centers for the war effort. The churches also served as meeting centers for the Red Cross, as places to recruit soldiers, and even as sellers of war bonds that financed the war. Furthermore, Protestant clergy publicly proclaimed support for the war from their pulpits as they declared the awfulness of the Germans, the justness of the Allied cause and the great need for more wartime volunteers. Sweet’s criticism of the Protestant clergy continued and became more severe as expressed in the last few chapters of his 1950 edition. His text clearly sounded a protest against Protestant clergy who were preaching to advance the United States foreign policy.

The cooperation between Protestant denominations and the federal government was so strong that Sweet characterized it as suspending the separation of church and state provision within the Constitution. This newfound Protestant devotion for war was so strong that the Protestant clergy of just about every denomination took extreme measures


\textsuperscript{244} Sweet, The Story, 1973, 400.
to awaken hatred for the German enemy.\textsuperscript{245} The Protestant contempt and hatred of the German people was soon directed toward pacifistic traditions that refused to take up arms against the Germans. Sweet described some of the Protestant sermons that lashed out at Quakers, conscientious objectors and German American denominations—labeling them all as traitors to America. Protestant ministers who refused to spread war propaganda were often threatened with violence or arrested. Sweet delineated how pacifist pastors were forced to resign, fined large sums of money, sentenced to long terms in prison, whipped, tarred and feathered, and, occasionally, even had their houses painted yellow.\textsuperscript{246}

Following this discussion, Sweet critiqued Protestant support and justification of the war by concluding that war never has benefited a nation’s religious culture.\textsuperscript{247} Rather, religion always has suffered in the atmosphere of hate, death and killing that war creates. His general critique included all wars throughout American history. Sweet also indicated that following WWI, the vast majority of Protestant clergy recognizing this problem of preaching propaganda and they sought repentance for the role they played in rushing the country toward war. Thus, they swore off all support for any future war. A very large and broad-based peace movement grew out of this American post-WWI Protestant repentance which had sprung up out of the disappointments of the great hope for an enduring peace that never materialized. Sweet cited a 1931 survey in support of his conclusions about Protestant clergy and the lessons they learned by their support for America’s entrance into WWI. The survey was produced by the publication, \textit{The World Tomorrow}, which sent out questionnaires to over 50,000 American clergy, and out of the respondents over sixty-two percent stated that the church should never support any future war.

Sweet reported in this chapter on World War I that following the war there was a tangible reduction in foreign missions by Protestant denominations which indicated the liberal protestant inclination toward political isolationism that endured until America’s entrance into World War II. This decline in foreign missions was also connected to an uptick in nationalism both in America and in other nations which reduced financial support for foreign missions, lessened the willingness of Americans to volunteer as missionaries and even diminished the openness of foreign nations to American Protestant missionaries.\textsuperscript{248}

The horror of the millions of soldiers killed in WWI brought to the forefront two conflicting approaches to Protestant theology: premillennialism and a modernist scientific approach. The theological idea of the rapture of the church from an increasingly wicked and evil world had always had a following in American Protestant sects, especially those emphasizing apocalyptic prophecy, like the Millerites in the 1830s and 1840s. But now, following WWI, Sweet reported that premillennialism began to significantly influence mainline Protestant denominations, particularly Presbyterians and Baptists. Scientific modernism along with liberal idealism, however, influenced far more Protestant churches in America following WWI than did fundamentalist theology which was inspired by a premillennialist ideology. Sweet characterized this new scientific humanism, which not only denied the existence of the supernatural but also replaced God with an ideal of the

\textsuperscript{245} Sweet, \textit{The Story}, 1973, 402.
\textsuperscript{246} Sweet, \textit{The Story}, 1973, 403
\textsuperscript{247} Sweet, \textit{The Story}, 1973, 404.
\textsuperscript{248} Sweet, \textit{The Story}, 1973, 415-17.
“human-will-to-goodness.” This theological reaction sprang out of the depths of suffering and that could not condone belief in a righteous God of love who would allow the horrors of trench warfare during World War I.

The enduring inspiration of Protestant liberalism upon the writings of Sweet could be detected in the last chapter of his 1950 edition of *The Story of Religion in America*, entitled “Through a Decade of Storm to the Mid-Century.” In this chapter, Sweet contended that blaming the liberal idealism of the war-years for the disillusionment that followed the war was misplaced. Rather, he described a lack of leadership as being to blame for the failures of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. National leaders following WWI, in Sweet’s opinion, should have used optimism and creativity to channel the Allied victory into a lasting peace. American Protestant support for pacifism after WWI led to American political leadership that favored a stronger isolationist foreign policy. Not even Hitler’s ascendency to power in 1933, his anti-Semitism, and Germany’s invasion of Poland in 1939 could change many American Protestant pacifists’ minds about the necessity of war. Sweet documented the large degree of pacifism among American Protestants from September 1939 through December 1941 through various polls which indicated the largest percentage of pacifists remained stanchly entrenched within the Methodists, Baptist, Disciples of Christ and Congregationalists denominations. These polls provided Sweet with tangible and verifiable evidence to indicate that his history was professionally objective as he presented unbiased data that demonstrated the degree to which the majority of liberal Protestants responded to the hopes for peace following the First World War and how they maintained their belief that America should avoid getting involved in the Second World War.

Sweet reported it was only the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that was able to motivate the majority of American Protestant pacifists to hesitantly support the American entrance into World War II. Their support for this war would be much more restrained than it was for World War I. Protestant churches during WWI often preached about the war itself being glorified and holy; however, in this new military endeavor, according to Sweet, the Protestant clergy refused to call the war just or even hint as to its holy or righteous nature. Sweet reported that the Protestant churches as a whole learned a lesson from WWI in that they understood that the Axis nations had to be defeated militarily for there to be peace in Europe but that the war itself was a terrible but necessary evil. This brief discussion of eventual support for WWII was the last mention in Sweet’s history about war and Protestant churches support for war.

As the first church historian to publish a general religious history of the American people between 1923 and 1960, William Warren Sweet’s text provided an account that revealed trends that would be repeated by his later works and by other church historians. His 1930, and especially, his 1939 edition of *The Story of Religion(s) in America* both revealed a church historian who maintained a lasting fascination with the religious history of the American Revolutionary War and the westward expansion of the nation after independence had been won and the Union had been reunited. This increased focus on early national formation and identity created a trend in his work to abandon just about every description of war between Protestant settlers and Native Indians. These were the

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descriptions which had dominated earlier church historical accounts that described Protestant support for war. Sweet’s historical text, however, continued the trend for church historians to employ modern historical methods in composing their historical texts. Sweet, in his attempt to be objective and morally neutral, wrote a text filled with verified historical data, surveys and denominational statistics. In addition, Sweet’s text, especially in his 1939 edition, provided the first serious condemnation of Protestant support and justification for war. His critique was primarily focused on the Spanish American War and World War I but there was an initial critique of Protestant clergy and military commanders during the Civil War and of the clergy who supported the enslavement and mass killings of Indians.
CHAPTER FIVE

A CONTINUING CRITIQUE OF AMERICAN PROTESTANT SUPPORT FOR WAR DURING THE 1960S BY RELIGIOUS HISTORIANS FOLLOWING SWEET

This chapter will examine the literary descriptions of Protestant support for war written by three religious historians who wrote overarching American religious histories between 1960 and 1966. The three historians examined will be Clifton E. Olmstead, Winthrop S. Hudson, and Edwin S. Gaustad. This evaluation will compare these historians’ descriptions of Protestant support for war with the historical descriptions of William Warren Sweet. The historians in this section are the first professional historians who were academically trained in the field of American religious history, and all had been exposed to the critiques of liberalism presented in the fundamentalist/modernist controversy, the works of European dialectical theologians led by Karl Barth, and by the realism of Reinhold Niebuhr who in the 1920s was a liberal socialist but by the early 1930s was beginning to doubt liberalism’s ability to restrain evil. All three church historians attempted to gather and present objective historical evidence as they strove to write non-biased religious histories of the American people. William Sweet, who was the focus of Chapter Three, made a conscious attempt to write an objective historical account and all three historians in this chapter followed his example.

All three American religious historians wrote significantly different historical accounts of Protestant support for war compared to the historians who came before William Warren Sweet. This was specifically true concerning both the radically reduced narrative that justified Protestant support for war against Native Indians and concerning the nature of descriptions that justified Protestant support for war. Both of these trends correspond to and, most likely were shaped by attacks on liberal Protestants from diverse theological developments in America during the 1920s and 1930s. Some of the most important developments during this time period were the fundamentalist/modernist controversy, the theological introduction and translation of European dialectical theology developed by Karl Barth, and the early socialist writings of Reinhold Niebuhr which would morph into a theological realism. Niebuhr’s theological and political realism produced a sharp critique challenging the liberal Protestant support for unregulated American capitalism and for unrestrained nationalism following the aftermath of World War I.

The three historians represented in this chapter strove to produce objective histories based in intellectual history by focusing their work on theological developments within denominations. For example, in 1965 Winthrop Hudson wrote Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life. His text

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252 Dialectical theology is also referred to as crisis theology and the dialectical theology represented by Karl Barth eventually became known as neo-orthodoxy in America. For more on the foundations of this theological tradition see footnote six. Some of the most influential theologians in this tradition were Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Rudolph Bultmann, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
did not describe any military encounters between Protestant settlers and Native groups. Hudson’s comprehensive American religious history was styled after the intellectual biography that he wrote for his dissertation at the University of Chicago in 1942 entitled *John Ponet (1516?-1556) Advocate of Limited Monarchy*. It was styled similarly to the historical works of William Sweet in its quest for objectivity; Sweet was his mentor at the University of Chicago and guided Hudson’s dissertation.

While this chapter’s three historians wrote significantly expanded biographical and institutional historical accounts of American religious history, the changes they made concerning Protestant support for war were attributable to various theological developments in the 1920s and 1930s which were continued into the 1940s and 1950s. These theological trends provided a powerful critique to liberal Protestantism’s support for war in Germany during WWI and all three authors expanded their descriptions of the theological developments within European neo-orthodox and Reinhold Niebuhr’s realism. In addition, they eventually manifested themselves in American historical narratives that refused to justify American Protestant support for war. This refusal to justify Protestant support for war was demonstrated in two ways: first, by some church historians minimizing all discussion of American wars, especially wars against Indians and second by historians increasingly rebutting the way American Protestant churches historically supported every war.

All three historians published consensus historical accounts of religion in America that focused on the success of Protestantism. The first historian presented in this chapter is Clifton Olmstead who published the *History of Religion in the United States* in 1960. His general American religious history was the first to provide a detailed account of the historical theology and ethics of the Niebuhr brothers and the impact of European neo-orthodoxy on the development of the American theological critique of Protestant liberalism. Whereas Sweet’s 1930 text was the first to list H. Richard Niebuhr’s *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* as a reference in two of his chapters, Olmstead claimed that Reinhold Niebuhr best expressed the ideological sentiments of an American theology that was attempting to salvage the Social Gospel by separating it from the uncritical optimism of liberal theology. This was a theme that will be continued in the next chapter by Martin Marty.


These three historians mark an important continuation of American church history being written by a professional academically trained group that had knowledge of the
theological developments of the 1920s and 1930s. Two additional professional American Church historians who were influenced by William Sweet and the Chicago School of objective historical research were two students of Sweet: Sidney Mead (1904-1999) and Robert Handy (1918-2009). Their works during this time, however, were so centered on intellectual and biographical history that their writings completely ignored war as a historical topic.\(^{253}\)

Olmstead, Hudson, and Gaustad wrote about war as trained historians utilizing the most recent scholarly methods in writing their books on American religious history. These historians largely abandoned descriptions of Protestant settlers at war with Natives for a variety of reasons which included: having other primary interests apart from war, having an inability to justify American wars against Natives, and focusing their histories on the post-Revolutionary era. Thus, these historians focused their historical descriptions of Protestants at war towards the later conflicts of the Revolutionary War, Civil War and World War I, in much the same way as Sweet. They also mark an increased focus on the historical and theological ideas of Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, H. Richard Niebuhr and his brother Reinhold Niebuhr. Barth provided the initial condemnation of liberal Protestantism as being idolatrous in its belief that history revealed God or that the world would evolutionarily transform into the Kingdom of God. Reinhold Niebuhr, in the 1930s, sharpened his critique of liberal Protestantism and developed a realistic reinterpretation of the Social Gospel and the need for war to constrain the evil aggression of nationalism.

Olmstead’s and Gaustad’s general histories proved to be more inclusive of all wars when compared to Hudson since Hudson’s history did not include settler wars while Olmstead’s and Gaustad’s texts documented every major outbreak of war in America. Gaustad’s work, however, contained very concise descriptions and some brief critiques of Protestants’ support for war, even when describing war against Native Indians. Thus all three historians had major interests and pursued high levels of professional objectivity so that their works reflected a significant disappearance of settler wars with Native Indians and provided an initial critique of the wholesale Protestant support for various American wars.

5.1 Clifton E. Olmstead (1922-1962)

In 1960, Clifton Olmstead published *A History of Religion in the United States* making him the first scholar since Sweet to publish a general American religious history. At the time Olmstead wrote his historical account of religion in America he was a professor of religion at George Washington University and an associate pastor at Tokoma Park Presbyterian Church. His general religious history of America differed from Sweet’s in that he described Protestant settler wars with Indians. He like Sweet, however, centered his discussion of war around the impact American wars had on various denominations, and he also provided the first clear critique of Protestant settler wars against Indians. Olmstead’s work provided the sharpest critique of Protestant support for war. He was the first consensus American religious historian to provide a description of how the European existential thought of Sören Kierkegaard influenced European

\(^{253}\) Sidney Mead’s and Robert Handy’s work will be referred to in this chapter, especially when comparing Winthrop Hudson’s work to their work. In the conclusion to this chapter, I briefly discuss their academic careers and a few of their well-known works.
theology and how Karl Barth’s dialectical theology traveled to America. This was particularly stressed in his historical narrative that described the era following the Second World War when the American public faced one crisis after another including the threat of nuclear annihilation. He also provided a description of the theology of the Niebuhr brothers, a historical review of pacifist churches, and their critique of American war.

Olmstead first referred to settler wars with Natives when he described the ‘peril’ of life in a new place. He mentioned that by 1610, only one hundred and fifty of the more than nine hundred settlers were still alive. His narrative, however, made a fundamental change in the description of the settlers’ ‘peril’ when compared to the historians who wrote prior to 1930. Whereas the earlier historians described the primary peril facing the settlers as Indian attacks, Olmstead described the main hazard as starvation and fever which killed the majority of settlers. He mentioned that some settlers were killed by Indian attacks but he did not make the settlers’ fear of Indian attack a justification for future settler wars against Natives or for settlers’ military acquisition of Native land. Like Sweet, Olmstead described the 1622 Indian massacre in the context of its ending the settlers’ missionary endeavors, which had included the building of a missionary school. Olmstead also described the change in settler attitudes toward the Natives from one of “humanitarian purposes on the part of the colonist, and, henceforth, they devoted themselves to the destruction of the Indian settlements.”

He described the settlers’ determination to remove the Natives as stemming from the “distrust and resentment” caused by the 1622 massacre, yet his account stopped short of giving the settlers a justification for their new found devotion to war against Indians. In fact, his account communicated a sense of lament over the settlers’ reaction to the Indian attack, even though he described the Indian actions as murder and the results as a massacre—terms that would indicate a strong negative reaction would be warranted.

While Sweet only mentioned the 1622 massacre in his description of Protestants at war with Natives, Olmstead’s account included Puritan settlers’ wars against Natives. The Puritans, according to Olmstead, believed that the Indians were ignorant, shiftless and depraved savages who should be despised; however, in a contradiction, they also considered them to be ideal candidates for mass conversion as they saw themselves as the Indians’ saviors. The Puritan’s missionary hopes met disappointment, and in 1636 the Pequot war broke out. When the war ended in 1637, settlers enslaved some of their Indian prisoners, sold others to the Narragansett tribe, or sold them into slavery to West Indies traders. Olmstead remarked that the Puritan clergy, who often also owned slaves, overwhelmingly approved and supported these settler actions. While the settler militia acted in a way towards their enemy that was common in times of war, Olmstead indicated that the clergy might have been better able to protest against those cruel practices had they not also been slave owners.

While Olmstead indicated that the 1622 Indian attack in the Virginia colony ended missionary activities, in New England the Pequot war had the dual effect of making some Puritans call for the extermination of the Indians and for others, like Thomas Mayhew, Jr. (1618-1657) and John Eliot (1604-1690), to call for more intense missionary efforts. In spite of their heroic efforts and limited success, they were never able to convince enough colonists or the English to support their missionary endeavors.

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and eventually another war broke out in 1675. Olmstead described the King Philips War as the beginning of a large Indian uprising that inflicted significant damage on the settlers before the New England militia was successful in defeating the Native Indians. He also commented that the converted Native remained at peace but settler anger and bitterness damaged the weak missionary efforts that were underway prior to the war. The next large effort to convert Native tribes would not take place until the Great Awakening.

Olmstead reported that Indian attacks against settlers were not inevitable just because the Virginia and New England colonies both endured attacks from Native tribes. William Penn in the Pennsylvania colony organized a treaty with the Natives in 1683. The majority Quaker settlement never violated that treaty, and Pennsylvania in the words of Olmstead, “was not plagued by Indian wars.” By mentioning the primary peaceful settlement of Pennsylvania, Olmstead provided a critique of the militancy of the Protestant settlers in Virginia and New England. In each of the three examples of Protestants at war with Natives, the Natives began by attacking settlements; however, these Native attacks that led to warfare might have been avoided if the settlers would have arranged treaties with the Natives and then honored the treaties.

He next mentioned war during his discussion of the Revolutionary Era. Accordingly he claimed that Protestant preaching was the most influential of all the factors that helped to unite the colonists and prepare the way for independence from England. The colonial pastor’s sermons had considerable authority throughout the colonies even when preaching about political theory and ideology. Preachers maintained a high level of influence over their congregations when declaring the need for independence from England and for resistance to English authority. A sense of divine calling also motivated the colonists into a patriotic zeal that made war a necessity.

Olmstead continued the American church historian tradition, beginning with Robert Baird, of describing each Protestant denomination’s contribution to the Revolutionary War effort. Olmstead began with the Congregationalist whose contributions to the war effort were unrivaled. New England clergy raised the largest number of volunteer troops; in fact, Olmstead commented that clergymen quite often served as officers over soldiers commissioned from their churches. While the Anglican Church had many who remained loyal to the English, that denomination also produced some outstanding patriots. Olmstead pointed out that Anglicans provide the third largest number of chaplains, and two thirds of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Anglican. He next wrote that the Presbyterian Church was the first to accept the Declaration of Independence and the Hanover Presbytery in Virginia as the first to officially support the war effort. Olmstead also briefly discussed Dutch Reformed, German Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist and Quaker contributions to the war effort. The last two churches were considered unpatriotic since the Methodist founder remained loyal to the English King and because too many Quakers, although anti-English, refused to fight in the military. He also briefly mentioned the anti-war Mennonites and Moravians.

Olmstead quickly turned from his descriptions of denominational support for war against the British to write about the reorganization of the churches following war. Olmstead wrote about how various Protestant denominations supported the war and then

255 Olmstead, 117.
256 Olmstead, 196.
how they were restructured in order to survive in a newly independent nation, skipping unhappily Protestant colonists at war with the British actually won the war. During the postwar period, Olmstead wrote that churches had to adjust to disestablishment and decline in membership. He wrote about each denomination as he had when documenting their support for the war, beginning with the Episcopalians and ending with the pacifist churches. He mentioned that the Episcopal Church was still trying to overcome the losses they sustained during the Revolutionary war at the conclusion of the War of 1812. 257 His discussion of how churches were coping with declining membership and state support led him to write about the Second Great Awakening. Following his discussion of the Revolutionary War, American wars were often referred to as markers on a timeline to indicate when certain events took place. This was a practice begun by Sweet and it was utilized by most consensus historical accounts that were written after Sweet.

In writing about Indian missions, Olmstead also wrote about Indian removal from their land. He wrote about many tribes that were peacefully relocated from the time of the end of the Revolutionary War until 1831. Olmstead noted, however, that in 1838 the Cherokees in Georgia resisted removal only to be forcefully relocated by state authorities, and this policy of forced Indian removal was supported by almost all Protestant ministers “who were seemingly unmoved by its obvious injustice.” 258 This critique of the Protestant support for forced Indian removal was similar to his criticism of Puritan clergy supporting the selling of Indians into slavery following Indian wars. Interestingly, this event of Indian removal has been written about by many church historians who wrote general histories beginning with Leonard W. Bacon. Bacon’s criticism stemmed from the fact that missionaries had converted the Cherokees, and their forced removal destroyed years of successful missionary efforts. Olmstead’s account never mentioned the conversion of the Cherokees; his critique was simply a judgment against the Protestant leaders who supported an unjust action against a people who could not defend themselves.

Olmstead described the American peace movement in greater detail than any previous history of religion in America. He wrote that the peace movement prior to the Revolutionary war was primarily comprised of the Quakers and other traditional peace churches but after the War of 1812 a wide variety of Protestant churches showed their support for the peace movement. During the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) the peace movement gained a flood of interest. But during the 1850s, the peace movement declined rapidly because of increased regional conflict over slavery.

His discussion of the Civil War Era began by stating how far apart both sides were, even by the mid-1840s. He wrote, “Southern Christians had not the slightest intention of terminating slavery and the Northern churchmen who thought otherwise were only fooling themselves.” 259 He mentioned that in 1845 the Methodist split, the Southern Baptist convention was organized, and in 1857 the Presbyterian Southern commissioners prepared to withdraw from the general body. Olmstead remarked that ministers in the North responded to Lincoln’s request for volunteers to defend the Union with unbridled support. They preached sermons extolling the virtues of joining the army, and they prayed with devotion that God would bless the Union army’s efforts. “It was fitting,” he

257 Olmstead, 247.
258 Olmstead, 274.
259 Olmstead, 373.
wrote, “that the churches should have backed the government with such enthusiasm in as much as they had admittedly been responsible for the secession.”\textsuperscript{260} Northern Protestant denominations gave soldiers plenty of support. Olmstead detailed the fact that in the North chaplains were supplied to every regiment, and it was common for chaplains to organize regimental churches and to hold revival services.

In the South, the religious support given to the Confederacy by Protestant churches was at least as strong as in the North. Olmstead stated, “Perhaps no military organization fought with greater assurance that God was on its side than did the Confederate armies. Their most beloved commanders, Episcopalian Robert E. Lee and Presbyterian Thomas J. Stonewall Jackson, believed fervently that their victories were the Lord’s doing.”\textsuperscript{261} He also wrote that the churches in the South were the primary source of morale during the war. Southern pulpits preached a message of hope based in righteousness that was required to bring divine assistance. While Olmstead’s historical account did not outright condemn Protestant support for the Civil War, it did provide a strong critique for the enthusiasm of Protestant ministers and leaders on both sides who preached and prayed for the destruction of their enemy. He also strongly criticized religious leaders on both sides for equating military victory with divine intervention and justification of their cause.

The end of the Civil War, Olmstead wrote, inaugurated an era that gave rise to modern America. Many of the changes were brought about by a generation that was driven by an unquenchable desire for money and power along with a conceited sense of their own virtue following the Civil War. In addition, the immediate aftermath of the war brought the assassination of Lincoln, and his death brought an end to any chance of the Republican congress treating the south with anything but contempt.\textsuperscript{262} How that contempt played out in reality was ignored by Olmstead as he was silent about how Northern spiteful treatment of Southerners resulted in Southerners turning to violence to keep political power away from Northerners and to intimidate freed slaves. In the next eighty-six pages, Olmstead would write about missionaries on the frontier, immigrant faiths, Christian idealism, revivalism, the gospel of wealth and the Social Gospel. In covering these subjects, he referred to WWI three times and the Civil War fourteen times, thus, indicating that Olmstead thought that during the decades of religious change between 1865 and 1919, the Civil War was better able to provide a reference point for national events and movements.\textsuperscript{263}

Following his section on the Social Gospel, Olmstead began his discussion of the Spanish American War. He indicated that Protestants who had been on several crusades since the abolitionist crusade of the 1850s were ready for another crusade by 1898. This next crusade would center, for Protestants at least, on Spanish Cuba and Catholic Spain. American business people wanted closer economic ties to Cuba, and religious humanitarians wanted to see Cuba freed because of the political oppression of Spanish colonialism. Both of these causes were furthered by sensationalist propaganda which flowed from journalists like William Randolph Hearst who published outrageous stories

\textsuperscript{260} Olmstead, 388.
\textsuperscript{261} Olmstead, 392.
\textsuperscript{262} Olmstead, 400.
\textsuperscript{263} Olmstead, 411-497.
of Spanish atrocities.\textsuperscript{264} On February 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1889, the U.S. Battleship \textit{Maine} sank in Havana harbor, and by April 21\textsuperscript{st} America was at war with Spain with the full blessings of the Protestant churches.\textsuperscript{265} For Protestants the war became a divine means of saving Cubans from an evil Spanish influence as well as to end Spanish despotism and Catholic authoritarianism in the Philippines and Puerto Rico. In this section, Olmstead wrote critically about how rapidly Protestants embraced war and a belief that God would use war simply to allow Protestant missionaries’ access to Catholic populations. This criticism was part of Olmstead’s historical account of the Civil War, and it will be repeated in his section on WWI.

In introducing the First World War, Olmstead wrote about the enthusiastic but naïve Protestant push for pacifism. For well over a decade following the Spanish American War, Protestant peace activists had been convinced of the success of their movement in spite of the obvious posturing for war that was taking place in Europe. Olmstead stated that by early spring of 1917, most Protestants were convinced of Woodrow Wilson’s agreement that “the world must be made safe for democracy,” and that the war was a justified fight of good against evil.\textsuperscript{266}

Olmstead reported that the United States effort in WWI enjoyed an unprecedented and passionate support from the American people. No organization was more fervent in supporting the war cause than Protestantism. Protestant denominations competed to prove that they were the most loyal and active in supporting the war. Once again, Olmstead brought a critique to the Protestant clergy who used the pulpit to drum up support for war and for the troops who might die a glorious death. He indicated that Protestant preachers stressed the righteousness of the war and bid their congregations to make every effort so that a speedy victory might be divinely assured. During the war years, many Protestant clergy refused to preach about the Sermon on the Mount or describe the meek Christ who turned the other cheek. Olmstead quoted a Congregationalist minister who encouraged his congregation to see American troops as God’s troops. He wrote, “That battlefield yonder in France today is sending earth’s richest souls upward to heaven as the seas exhale their whitest mists, their purest clouds. In this great hour, therefore, look toward your son and say, ‘My son he is, God’s soldier let him be.’ I could not wish him a fairer death.”\textsuperscript{267} These words of Olmstead paint a critical picture of the Protestant clergy staunchly resolute in an effort to prove their patriotism as they preached their sermons, regardless of the degree to which they would have to distort the gospel.

Olmstead made a point of describing Protestant denominations as determined to support a war that was depleting local congregations of their most capable members and best workers. But for the vast majority of Protestant clergy, the Kingdom of God was available through their own personal efforts, and never before had personal efforts been more strenuous than during this time of war.\textsuperscript{268} When the end of the war came, Olmstead critiqued Protestant America’s failure to fully comprehend the depth of the sacrifice required of its soldiers or the full horror of the war. When the war was over, Olmstead

\textsuperscript{264} Olmstead, 502.
\textsuperscript{265} Olmstead did not mention the official investigation reported that the explosion that sank the \textit{Maine} came from an accident inside the ship and not from an outside attack.
\textsuperscript{266} Olmstead, 509.
\textsuperscript{267} Olmstead, 510-11.
\textsuperscript{268} Olmstead, 513.
wrote, “A heavy silence lay over the battlefields where men had poured out their life’s blood in the service of their country. Yet few in America paused to take careful measure of the sacrifice. Only the bereaved and the survivors of battle knew the awful cost of the Great War.” Even without understanding the horrors of WWI, once the war ended, Protestant clergy were quick to embrace pacifism, and many pushed in the 1920s to outlaw war. By the end of the 1920s, most Protestant denominations had adopted anti-war resolutions as they slowly began to realize the terrible cost of the war. Here, Olmstead criticizes the extremism of the Protestant churches and clergy, since during the war they were militant in their support for the war and after the war they were radical in their pacifistic ideals that condemned any war for any reason.

In pointing out some historical irony, Olmstead critiqued Protestants during the 1930s since that time period corresponded to both the rise of Adolph Hitler in Germany and the most strenuous opposition to war by American Protestant denominations. Olmstead also noted that the 1930s brought about a theological reaction against American liberal Protestant pacifistic ideals. This criticism was led by theological, ethical, and historical realists who saw the liberal focus on anti-war, at any price, as being misguided and based in the false guilt concerning the role played by Protestant churches in supporting WWI. Olmstead stated that this position was best expressed by Reinhold Niebuhr’s 1932 text, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, which claimed that “the fundamental error of the time was the attempt to sanctify the social order and conceive it as an absolute good pitted against an absolute evil.” Olmstead set up this statement made by Niebuhr by characterizing the Protestant churches during the Civil War, the Spanish-American War and WWI as committed to the war effort—an absolute good while viewing the enemy as an absolute evil—and once the wars were over, being committed to war as an absolute evil with peace and nonintervention granted the value of absolute good.

Olmstead presented Niebuhr’s continuing argument against absolutes in the social order, only relative judgments that were often very difficult to decide upon. So according to Niebuhr the decision to go to war was a choice between relative evils and, under certain circumstances, it could be more moral to go to war than to remain pacifist. This was Niebuhr’s main criticism of the liberal Protestants, that they were stubbornly anti-war regardless of the circumstances. In 1941, Reinhold Niebuhr and a group of respected Protestants founded *Christianity and Crisis*, a journal designed to counterbalance the pacifistic leaning *Christian Century*. The new journal’s focus was to communicate the reality that despite the sinfulness of America and England, the Axis countries were committing evil deeds on behalf of totalitarian leaders, and opposing these nations was essential for peace and order in the international community. The arguments for and against military action to resist the Axis nations were short lived and decided by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. After Pearl Harbor, Olmstead described the remaining Protestant pacifists as admitting the need for America’s participation in the war, and the vast majority of the Protestant churches accepted the new conflict with a sense of resignation. The Second World War would not be embraced as a crusade or holy war but

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269 Olmstead, 541.
270 Olmstead, 542.
271 Olmstead, 565-6.
272 Olmstead, 566.
simply as a duty to be performed so that the current wars of aggression in Europe and in Asia might be halted.

The Sunday after Pearl Harbor, Olmstead noted, Protestant clergy did not resort to condemning the Japanese or Germans, but, rather, for the most part, focused on themes like “Love of Enemies,” the “Task of Christianity,” and the “Church in the present Crisis.” In large measure Protestant denominations granted their blessings to conscientious objectors. It was, however, extremely rare for recruits (only about one percent) to seek that classification. The churches in America were also concerned with political and humanitarian refugees and strove to assist them. Olmstead listed three Protestant agencies that performed lots of humanitarian relief: the American Committee for Christian Refugees, the National Refugee Service and the American Friends Service Committee. He mentioned that this last group even assisted the Japanese Americans “who had been evacuated by the army from the Pacific Coast to resettle.”

While a three-year stay in an internment camp was closer to an imprisonment than a ‘resettling,’ Olmstead at least noted that a Quaker organization strove to assist them in the camps. In striving to present the churches’ reaction to WWII in as sharp a contrast as possible to their unbridled support for WWI, Olmstead brushed aside an incredibly cruel United States government policy that harkened back to the Cherokee Indian removal almost one hundred years earlier. While Olmstead wrote about the support of the American Friends Service Committee for the Japanese Americans, he did not critique the vast majority of Protestant clergy and churches who failed to protest this cruel treatment of American citizens.

During the entire time that the United States was engaged in WWII, Protestant churches attempted to build a foundation for a lasting peace. In March of 1942, the Federal Council of Churches’ Commission to Study the Basis of a Just and Durable Peace introduced Six Pillars of Peace. Olmstead commented that the fifth and sixth pillars addressed limiting all military forces and the right of people everywhere to religious and political liberty. Olmstead then stated that when the war came to a close in 1945, Protestants took an even more active role in international affairs and fully supported the creation of the United Nations. Germany’s surrender failed to usher in an era of international peace and Olmstead addressed the series of international crises that followed WWII.

Two of the most serious crises of the post-WWII period were the Cold War between the communist Soviet Union and the capitalist free world and the Korean War. Concerning the 1950 Korean War, Olmstead blamed North Korean aggression for the conflict. He assessed the situation and concluded that most Americans were unconvinced about the need for this war. Americans by and large, he wrote, “were appalled by the magnitude of the sacrifice and the indecisive nature of the conflict, which dragged to its formal close in 1953.” The Protestant churches, as well as most organized religion in America, strengthened their resolve to achieve world peace, especially, Olmstead noted, through the enhancement of community building. Optimism, however, was not always possible even when granting that historically Americans, especially liberal Protestants, had been quite optimistic in the past. Now, Olmstead recounted the conditions that made

273 Olmstead, 570.
274 Olmstead, 570.
275 Olmstead, 572.
optimism rather scarce in America: “the failure of the League of Nations, the collapse of church ‘world movements,’ the Depression, WWII, the Korean War, and the mounting threat of Communist aggression.” After listing these misfortunes, Olmstead turned to the rising American theology of realism that sprang out of European existentialism and the theology of crisis.

Olmstead characterized European existentialism, represented in the work of Sören Kierkegaard, as being the most important addition to Protestant religious ideology during this generation of crisis following WWII. Existentialism attacked liberal idealism due to its despair stemming from its focus on humanity’s estrangement from God; it directed Protestant theology to place a more substantive stress on humanity’s sinful condition, humanity’s total reliance on God’s grace, humanity’s encounter with the living God, and God’s salvation. Olmstead followed this up by pointing out that “the first significant manifestation of theological existentialism in America came through the crisis theology of the Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth.” Here Olmstead indicated that Barth’s crisis theology was not related to the global crisis created during the First World War but rather was connected to the universal human crisis created by being alienated from God.

He described how Karl Barth wrote his Epistle to the Romans in 1919 to both edify a German population that had become cynical of war and to criticize the liberal Protestant support for war. He also detailed the theological premises behind Barth’s commentary, which shocked just about everyone who read it, since the text presented a God who confronted humanity with a choice to either accept or reject the divine will. Barth claimed that this God was “wholly other,” was transcendent and only spoke to humanity through Jesus Christ. This communication, Barth argued, took place in a crisis moment, a moment of existential despair, when each individual’s sin became exposed and each person had to choose to respond to God’s will in a humble act of absolute obedience. Additionally, according to Barth, God was not revealed to humanity by means of human intellect, national culture or natural theology but only through Jesus Christ as presented in scripture, and this Christ who revealed God was encountered only through God’s gift of faith.

Olmstead followed up this summary description of Barth’s theology with a detailed account of how Barth’s theology spread to America. He noted that Barth’s The Word of God and the Word of Man was translated and published in English in 1928. After its publication, Barth’s theology started to gain a following among American scholars. During the Great depression, Barth’s ideas began to spread widely throughout American academia. A considerable number of American scholars who had been trained in Protestant liberalism began to be critical of liberalism’s theological and political naïveté. Olmstead listed four scholars who wrote books in the early 1930s that were critical of liberalism and reacted positively to the theological nuances of Barth whose theology had become known as neo-orthodoxy. Olmstead pointed out that between 1932 and 1934 several examples of American theologians wrestling with the neo-

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276 Olmstead, 572.
277 Olmstead, 573.
279 Olmstead, 573.
280 Prior to this time, Barth’s theology was known as dialectical theology or theology of crisis. Barth was never comfortable with the ‘neo-orthodox’ label put on his theological system.
orthodox critique of liberalism: Walter Lowrie published his *Our Concern with the Theology of Crisis*, Edwin Lewis’ wrote his *Christian Manifesto*, George W. Richards’ book was entitled *Beyond Fundamentalism and Modernism*, and Walter Marshall Horton penned his *Realistic Theology*.\(^{281}\)

The best American representative of the theological turn to existentialism, according to Olmstead, was Reinhold Niebuhr, the long-time professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Olmstead described him as “John the Baptist of the new theological movement.”\(^{282}\) Olmstead pointed out Niebuhr was raised in the Lutheran and Reformed theological tradition, and he became attracted to the Social Gospel’s ethical ideals as a pastor in Detroit. In Detroit from 1915-1928, Niebuhr witnessed the destructive force that capitalism had on the factory workers in his congregation. In 1928, Niebuhr went to teach at Union Theological Seminary. While he was at Union, Niebuhr wrote *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, a text that Olmstead described as a brilliant critique of liberalism. Olmstead stated, “His keen analysis of social problems and his criticism of the liberal effort to achieve the Kingdom of God through human efforts in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932) constituted a clarion call for theological and social reconstruction.”\(^{283}\) Olmstead pointed out that this book demonstrated the way Niebuhr envisioned a renewed Social Gospel freed from its liberal foundations and ground in a foundation of theological realism rather than philosophical utopia.

Olmstead placed the center of Niebuhr’s theology as his redefining the doctrine of original sin. Niebuhr viewed original sin as humanity’s tendency toward pride and selfishness, not as the traditional inheritance of sin from Adam. Niebuhr, like Barth, saw humanity’s only salvation from sin as attainable by God’s grace through an encounter with the divine wherein humanity accepts God’s salvation and rejects the pride and sinful trust in humanity’s own self-sufficiency.\(^{284}\) Niebuhr, however, argued that the gift of salvation would not completely free people from the effects of sin and that societies would continue to struggle with institutionalized evil. Due to these conditions, Christians are often forced to choose between the lesser of two evils rather than choosing between an absolute good or an absolute evil. For Niebuhr, there were no absolute certainties but only relative choices.

Olmstead noted that Niebuhr’s New Testament study and his understanding of the violent power struggles within social structures resulted in his perception that Jesus’ ethic required perfection which was impossible for humans to achieve. Thus, Jesus’ ethic stood in judgment over every social situation, requiring Christians to face up to their moral failures and to repent. Niebuhr’s theology provided an alternative to the pessimism of Barth who understood the kingdom of God as a future hope and to the unbridled optimism of Protestant liberals who equated the kingdom of God with human progress. Christians should, according to Niebuhr, work diligently for social reform; however, because of the difficulty and uncertainty of moral progress, they must trust God so that their works done in faith might further the divine plan.\(^{285}\) Olmstead noted that Reinhold

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\(^{281}\) Olmstead 574.

\(^{282}\) Olmstead, 574.

\(^{283}\) Olmstead, 574-5.

\(^{284}\) Olmstead, 575.

\(^{285}\) Olmstead, 575.
Niebuhr’s work, along with the work of other scholars had taken its toll on Protestant liberalism and that by the middle of the 1930s it was clear that theological liberalism was in rapid decline in America and that a new theological system was being developed. Olmstead described three well-known American theologians who were influenced by both liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. He started with H. Richard Niebuhr, moved on to Robert L. Calhoun, and finished with Walter M. Horton. Olmstead explained that Reinhold’s younger brother, H. Richard, who taught at Yale Divinity School from 1931 until 1962, was a theologian and ethicist whose writings often reflected an American historical theology. According to Olmstead H. Richard’s work addressed the church’s place in a secular society, focusing on the conflict that develops between church conservation of Christianity and church involvement in secular society.\(^\text{286}\) In his historical writings, Olmstead explained, Niebuhr offered a negative image of American Protestantism in his *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929). His *The Kingdom of God in America* (1937), however, presented a more positive and optimistic history of American Christianity. His theology, Olmstead stated, was fairly similar to his brother’s religious realism, in that it emphasized the need for both God’s sovereignty and grace in the redemption of society, and the need for the Christian church to be innovative and vibrant in worshiping God and in working in the world.

Olmstead noted that Robert Calhoun, who taught at Yale Divinity School with H. Richard Niebuhr, shared Niebuhr’s theological middle ground, a theology based in a philosophical outlook that navigated between optimistic liberalism and pessimistic existentialism. Olmstead affirmed that Walter Horton graduated from Harvard University in 1917, received a STM from Union Theological Seminary in 1923, and a PhD in philosophy from Columbia University in 1926. He taught at Oberlin College from 1925 until 1962. Olmstead recounted that Horton dismissed liberalism as a theological system and embraced an ecumenical evangelicalism that postulated a personal yet transcendent God, atonement through religion, tragedy as part of human history, and yet God’s purposes are revealed through history.\(^\text{287}\)

In 1943, Reinhold Niebuhr finished writing his two volume work entitled *The Nature and Destiny of Man* and Olmstead suggested this two-volume work initiated a new period of American theological development. Paul Tillich contributed to this new theological development based in realism and existentialism that avoided the radical optimism of Protestant liberalism and total pessimism of European neo-orthodoxy. Olmstead commented that Tillich had the potential of developing into a present-day Thomas Aquinas. Tillich published several theological works in the 1940s and 1950s. Some of his more prominent works include: *The Shaking of the Foundations* (1948), *The Protestant Era* (1948), *Love, Power and Justice* (1954), and *Theology of Culture* (1959) as well as his two volume *Systematic Theology* (1951, 1957), all of these works demonstrated Tillich’s theological passion for a variety of theological concepts.\(^\text{288}\) Olmstead commented that it was very difficult to summarize Tillich’s work and to place him into any theological category.

Olmstead suggested that Tillich could best be seen as combining liberalism and neo-orthodoxy. The starting point for Tillich, Olmstead explained, was fallen humanity.

\(^{286}\) Olmstead, 576.

\(^{287}\) Olmstead, 576.

\(^{288}\) Olmstead, 577.
whose ultimate concern was to establish their being or non-being in an encounter with God who is pure “Being.” Humanity has to discover the “courage to be,” in order to be in a relationship with the ultimate power of Being. For Tillich, Christianity addressed humanity’s problem with the Christ who is the center of history and the way for humanity to escape its self-estrangement and give its “ultimate concern” to God, embracing God as pure Being. Christians commit idolatry whenever they turn their ultimate concern toward anything other than God. While Olmstead briefly mentioned a few other scholars who aided the theological reconstruction away from traditional Protestant liberalism, his focus clearly was on the Niebuhr brothers and on Paul Tillich.

The importance of Continental existentialism upon the writings Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich was clearly pointed out by Olmstead. The emphasis in his text on existentialism highlighted the subjective realities of human existence including sin, alienation from God and the nature of human suffering within the works of Barth, Niebuhr and Tillich. The difficult time of the Great Depression, Olmstead noted, magnified the existential strain within American theological developments. These theological developments allowed Olmstead to better evaluate American society and conclude that during the 1930s-1950s the single greatest problem facing America was race. Here Olmstead described the failure of ‘separate but equal’ and the increasing struggle of African Americans for integration, equal rights, and equal opportunity within the larger American society. In spite of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling that segregation was unconstitutional, Olmstead described an America still beset with racial oppression. Olmstead’s knowledge of existentialism’s influence on modern theology aided his critique of American society’s struggle with racism just like it made more poignant his critique of Protestant support for the wars that cleared Native Indians off the land. He was the first American religious historian to incorporate Sweet’s critique of Protestant clergy during the Civil War on the Protestant clergy during the settler’s wars. He noted that not only did the clergy support the wars but even justified the Native Indians’ enslavement as they considered the Natives to be racially inferior.

Olmstead was one of the only American religious historians to disregard the trend started by William W. Sweet of using American wars as a reference point or a timeline to discuss other significant religious events or developments that occurred in America. Instead of wars, Olmstead used decades to locate religious events and developments that occurred during that particular decade. In an eight-page section of his text, Olmstead referred to the decades between the 1920s and the 1950s ten times and once referred to the period of the Great Depression; however, in this section he did not refer to American wars to indicate religious events or trends in American history.

Olmstead concluded his text with a section on the “Dawn of the Atomic Age” in which he discussed the effects of America dropping two atomic bombs on Japan. In the decade after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there were continual conflicts which disturbed the peace of the American people. Trapped in a conflict with the USSR, Americans’ safety was shaken since they were consistently concerned about Russian military power that was in flux between red-hot aggression and cooler diplomatic approaches. Yet, in the 1950s, Americans could not be totally free from anxiety about Russian leaders pushing the button that would result in a world-wide nuclear holocaust.289

289 Olmstead, 589.
Olmstead’s text demonstrated a clear contrast with William Warren Sweet in that he wrote about and critiqued Protestant support for settlers’ wars against Native Indians. In comparison to Sweet, he also had a more critical approach to writing about just about every American war and he had a very detailed section more accurately describing European neo-orthodoxy, the Niebuhr brothers and Paul Tillich. Olmstead’s text lacked Sweet’s prejudicial grudge against those theologians who criticized liberalism. In fact, Olmstead’s discussion these theological issues went far beyond Winthrop Hudson and Edwin Gaustad. In fact in many ways it foreshadowed the larger critiques of Martin Marty and Sydney Ahlstrom. While Sweet cited H. Richard Niebuhr in his 1930 text, Sweet did not write about other American theologians or scholars who had been influenced by European neo-orthodox ideas. After expanding his work in the 1950 edition, however, Sweet addressed the Barth’s neo-orthodox critique of Protestant liberalism and he even discussed Reinhold Niebuhr’s break from the isolationist position of the Christian Century. Yet Olmstead’s 1960 text went beyond Sweet’s 1950 text as he detailed the European neo-orthodox theology as expressed in Karl Barth as well as the American reassessment of liberalism as represented in the works of the Niebuhr bothers and Paul Tillich. The parallel between Olmstead’s increase in writing about neo-orthodoxy and the increase in his critique of American wars, especially wars against Native Americans, will be continued and expanded upon by Martin Marty and Sydney Ahlstrom.

5.2 Winthrop Still Hudson (1911-1999)

It was only three years following the 1950 edition of The Story of Religion in America that one of William Sweet’s doctoral students, Winthrop Still Hudson, began publishing books about American church history. During the next twelve years, Hudson published his own version of “the story” entitled simply Religion in America, and his general religious history was written in much the same scientific, socio-historical style as that of William W. Sweet. As a graduate student at the University of Chicago, Hudson was well versed in the methods of modern historical criticism, and he wrote in an attempt to make his works as objective and unbiased as possible. Hudson would show a preference for American Baptist history, similar to Sweet’s preference for Methodist history, but this focus on intellectual religious history that described denominational theological beliefs and doctrines produced relatively little content or critique concerning Protestant support for American wars.

In 1953, Winthrop S. Hudson published The Great Tradition of the American Churches, and eight years later he published American Protestantism. Both of these histories did not describe Protestants at war. They did not even describe Protestant support for American wars and they continued Sweet’s neglect of Protestant support for war against Native Indians. Hudson’s first book was quite similar to Sweet’s The American Churches which was published five years prior to Hudson’s text. In Sweet’s book, he argued that religious freedom was the most important contribution America has made to religion, and this was the same theme argued by Hudson. In the first two books written by Hudson, American war functioned as a location marker within the historical setting. This was the same kind of function that Sweet designated for war in much of the second half of his The Story of Religion in America.

290 Sweet, The American Churches, 7.
Hudson described the close of the War for Independence as the high-watermark for the growth of a new generation of free-thinking New England Deists who were “gaining adherents among the emancipated intellectuals.” The War of 1812 was mentioned by Hudson simply as a place to mark when migration to the West dramatically increased. Much of this increase resulted from Americans no longer having to worry about war with Great Britain. In addition, Hudson noted that the city had become the new frontier and the new mission for the Protestant American churches following the aftermath of the Civil War. Thus, the major themes in Hudson’s historical text often were described as pre- or post-war.

In 1965 Winthrop S. Hudson published his longer and more general religious history of the American people entitled Religion in America. This work traced the developments of the European settlers from the sixteenth century through the twentieth century ecumenical movement. Hudson organized his history into four sections: “The Formative Years, 1607-1789;” “The New Nation, 1789-1860;” Years of Mid-Passage, 1860-1914;” and “Modern America, 1914-Present.” These four sections were grounded in historical wars fought by the United States. The first section ends with the closing of the Revolutionary War Era as the Constitution was ratified, the second section ended with the start of the Civil War, the third section ended with the start of WWI and the fourth section began with WWI and traced developments through the close of WWII up through the early 1960s. In a similar way to Sweet, Hudson did not write about wars between Protestant settlers and Native Indians.

Hudson referred to Sidney Mead, a contemporary American religious historian who was interested in intellectual and biographical religious history, as an indication that the new American coastline offered plenty of space for everyone. Even when a place like New England began to banish folks, Hudson noted that there was “ample room elsewhere” for those unwanted groups of people to find a home. Hudson reported that European people settled in various locations along the Atlantic coast but he never wrote about their encounter with Native groups, let alone the settlers’ wars against Native tribes. Protestant settlers battling the Native inhabitants for land did not fit into his theme of “plenty of space for all.”

In addressing the War of Independence, Hudson described the important role of the colonial ministers on Sundays as they sermonized against the British and the evils of the English monarchy. Hudson stated that, for the colonial Protestants, the preacher’s call to “repentance and humiliation was at the same time a summons to battle” against the British. He utilized very little textual space in describing colonial Protestants at war, moving rapidly to the fact that independence was won and the implications of that victory for Protestant denominations. According to Hudson, “The war had left the former colonies exhausted, impoverished and disorganized . . . churchmen were further sobered when they considered the present plight and future prospect of the churches. Church life

293 Hudson, The Great Tradition, 137.
294 Hudson, Religion, 18.
295 Hudson, Religion, 28.
297 Hudson, Religion, 98.
had been disrupted by the war. Pastors had marched off with troops, congregations had been scattered, [and] meeting houses had been requisitioned as barracks.” Hudson’s description neglected Protestant soldiers fighting in the Revolutionary War, examples of Protestant sermons in support of the war effort, or Protestant family members’ grief when loved ones were killed after leaving home to join the army. Though, he did provide a brief description of the war’s general demoralizing effects on various Protestant denominations.

Hudson emphasized the fact that every Protestant denomination was hurt by the Revolutionary War. Yet some churches endured the war with England with greater poise and efficiency than others. Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists positioned themselves for growth at the conclusion of the war. Hudson included Mennonites, Quakers, and Moravians as representing the traditional peace churches who opposed war in general principle and because of this they substantially declined in membership during the war years. Yet, the Anglican Church suffered worse losses than the peace churches as most Protestant colonists perceived them as loyal to Britain. In addition, all Protestant denominations had to work diligently to reestablish their day-to-day operations which were greatly disrupted by the war.

The discussion of the Civil War within Hudson’s Religion in America began with the topic of slavery. It was a topic Hudson described as splintering Protestant denominations prior to dividing the nation into pro-slavery and abolitionist movements. Hudson indicated that up until the 1830s the abolitionist movement in the North and South tended to push gently and mildly, yet, he noted that the Northern patience could not last forever and that no matter how long the freeing of the slaves might take, there would come a time when moral indignation would fail and legislative action would be needed to end slavery. This moral and political anti-slavery position became more and more incendiary to the politicians in the South who were well aware of just how much financial wealth the South was accumulating through the practice of slavery, specifically due to the production of cotton after the 1830s.

By the mid-1840s, the two largest Protestant denominations splintered over the slavery issue: the Methodist and the Baptist. As Hudson noted, the “Methodist General Conference of 1844 adopted a strengthened antislavery rule which preserved the unity of the Northern section of the church at the expense of the Southern portion who had departed the following year to form the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The Baptist foreign and home mission societies also were forced to take a firmer stand, which resulted in the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.” This fracturing of Protestant denominations into pro-slavery and abolitionist coalitions provided a fifteen-year foreshadowing of the violent political rupture that would engulf the nation.

Compared to his lack of earlier discussion of American wars, Winthrop Hudson devoted much of his text to the description of the pre-Civil War years and the post-Civil War years as well as to the national leaders during that time of national crisis. He did not overstate the situation when he described the Civil War as a military struggle that would damage just about every family in America, and disrupt and divide even local Protestant denominations.

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298 Hudson, Religion, 110.  
299 Hudson, Religion, 111.  
300 Hudson, Religion, 200.  
301 Hudson, Religion, 203.
churches. Hudson claimed that for the vast majority of United States’ citizens prior to 1860, it was unthinkable that the country would divide into a terrible war in which Northern Protestants and Southern Protestants would kill each other. Hudson observed that prior to the war in both sections of the country there was an almost frantic exhortation, “There must be no war!”302 Eventually war came, however, destroying the Protestant illusion of an exceptional nation divinely sanctioned and especially blessed. Thus, Hudson concluded that “the great ‘experiment’ had gone wrong.”303 God’s protective hand had now been removed and Protestants could no longer see themselves as an example to the rest of the world. While Hudson’s history was written utilizing modern and scientific historical methods, his text also expressed the deep-seated idealism within American Protestantism during the nineteenth century about their nation being divinely chosen to fulfill John Winthrop’s vision of America as a “city set on a hill.”

During the war years, Abraham Lincoln attempted to place the war in a deeper theological context of God’s providence including the ever increasing length and severity of the war. Hudson quoted a letter Lincoln wrote to John Hay in 1862, reinforcing this point: “It is quite possible that God’s purpose is something different from the purpose of either party; and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do are of the best adoption to effect his purpose. I am almost ready to say that . . . God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet.”304 Hudson used this statement from Lincoln to critique the Northern and Southern Protestants who claimed that God was on their side and who utilized religious rhetoric to intensify the war. Although Lincoln wrote about God willing the war, the war was punishment against both sides for failing to find a political solution to slavery.

Hudson mentioned that along with President Abraham Lincoln, Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) and Philip Schaff (1819-1893) were two theologians who suggested God’s anger was at work in punishing a guilty nation by prolonging a bloody and violent war so that through the war the nation could be purged of its sin and live up to its divine calling. Hudson reported that for Bushnell and Schaff the idea of divine judgment was one aspect of the war that went hand in hand with “redemption and renewal.” His text recorded that for those two Protestant theologians, “The ‘Baptism of Blood’ was to be seen as an act of divine mercy through which the nation could be reborn, purged of its sin and recalled to its proper vocation.”305 Hudson continued to write about how those two theologians perceived the war. He wrote, “Upon the anvil of suffering and under the hammer of a providential God, it was to be hoped that what had been only a federation, made up by a temporary surrender of power, would be forged into a true nationhood.”306 Thus for Bushnell and Schaff, the loss of blood by the nation during the Civil War held a similar redemptive significance as Christ’s shedding of blood on the cross. Hudson cited these theologians in order to once again critique the Northern and Southern condemnation of each other during the war since both theologians viewed the war as a judgment against the whole nation and as bringing the possibility of redemption for the whole nation.

304 Hudson, *Religion*, 211.
Winthrop Hudson next mentioned war when he indicated that World War I was an event from which to measure the length of time that New England had been the national bastion for Protestant liberalism. He claimed New England had been the most liberal section of the country both politically and religiously decades prior to the nation’s entrance into WWI. As the preceding statement indicated, Hudson’s text began to utilize the First World War as a location marker in describing events within the history of the United States. The year WWI began—1914—was the year Hudson claimed as the start of “modern America.” This was the same title William W. Sweet gave to this time period in his 1950 edition of *The Story of Religion in America*. Prior to the war, there were numerous ecumenical Christian organizations striving for peace. The First World War, however, quickly brought to an end these church-led movements for peace due to the American government’s ability to direct one big campaign to permanently end the war by making the world “safe for democracy” through America’s military might.

Hudson reported that the frontier within the continental United States was coming to a close as Arizona and New Mexico achieved statehood in 1912. He wrote that as the German troops pounded Belgium on their way to invading France in 1914, the greatest increase in American immigration was about to be ended. Two other major influences the war had on America, according to Hudson, were the dramatic growth of industrial production and the vast migration of rural Americans into large urban centers. Thus, Hudson’s description of American Protestants at war during WWI neglected the trench military warfare of Europe and, instead, made use of the war as a marker for the statistical data that demonstrated the dramatic expansion of American cities and manufacturing centers. Hudson demonstrated his desire to write an objective history by focusing to a large degree on dates and statistics about national growth in this section of his history dealing with WWI.

Hudson noted that when the United States joined the First World War, the majority of American Protestants strongly believed that the Allied victory was assured and that that victory would end all future wars. Unfortunately, the war’s trench battlefields resulted in such horrific warfare that American Protestants’ expectations were left unfulfilled. The Allied victory which followed the war even failed to bring any meaningful peace to the European nations at the center of the conflict. In America, just about every Protestant denominational leader was disgraced by the large influence the church played in promoting the war and in preaching hatred towards the enemies of the Allies. American Protestant clergy, Hudson declared, were so sickened by the unprecedented death and destruction caused by the warfare in WWI that many swore off war and embraced pacifism in an attempt to keep Protestant churches from ever again endorsing war. Since Hudson did not write about the Protestant clergies’ support and justification for the war, his description of their reactions following the war provided his critique of their enthusiastic support for war with Germany.

A 1950s Protestant religious awakening was described by Hudson as unstructured, unplanned, and encompassing all Protestant faiths. It was also a revival of Protestant faith that could not be explained apart from the human drama caused by the historical events of the 1930s and 40s which included the Great Depression, Pearl

Harbor, the Nazi Holocaust, the European battlefields, the naval battles of the South Pacific, two Atomic bombs, and the start of the Cold War. All of these uncertainties raised the anxiety of all Americans and led many back to their parents’ Protestant faith in order to lay claim to a sense of security. Protestant religious ideas, Hudson concluded, were present in the conflict between the atheism in Soviet Communist power and the Protestantism in capitalist United States power.

Hudson maintained that some of the main Protestant theological voices at this troubled but exciting time of renewal were the Niebuhr brothers. He mentioned H. Richard Niebuhr’s *Kingdom of God in America*, and he described Reinhold’s *Moral Man, Immoral Society* as providing an even more stirring and devastating polemic against Protestant liberalism. Hudson stated that this theological reassessment was not embraced by most American Protestant preachers. Yet some of the new European theological voices, even non-Protestant ones, made an impact on American Protestantism. While the European voices were diverse, he stated that they could best be explained as the mingling of neo-Reformation theology with existentialism, which can be summarized in the theological position of three theologians: Karl Barth, Emil Brunner and Paul Tillich. Barth and Brunner represented the neo-Reformation impulse of what would become known as neo-orthodoxy. Tillich, who came to America in 1933, represented the existentialism of the movement as he was a primary mediator of Sören Kierkegaard’s work. While Barth led the theological attack on the liberals through his claim that God’s word addresses humanity through Jesus Christ alone, it was Brunner who was initially more influential in America.

Most American religious scholars found that Brunner’s critique of natural theology was not as uncompromisingly absolute as Barth’s. They also appreciated his focus on humanity’s knowing God through a deeply personal “I-thou” encounter compared to Barth’s complete rejection of natural theology. Although Barth and Brunner were both influenced by Kierkegaard, it was Paul Tillich who placed human existentialism at the center of his theological work. It was the human problem of the “agonized conscience” which Tillich placed front and center in his theological work. And the eventual human “self-acceptance” was established through justification by faith alone as witnessed to by scripture. American scholarly interest in Niebuhr, Barth, Brunner and Tillich brought a much needed discussion concerning biblical faith’s impact upon contemporary ethics and social morality.

Hudson’s two earlier historical texts continued the trends and tradition began by William Warren Sweet when he wrote *The Story of Religion in America*. All three of Hudson’s historical works mentioned in this chapter demonstrated his dedicated approach to American religious history from an intellectual and biographical perspective. In discussing Protestants at war, Hudson avoided the settlers’ military adventures against Natives and began with the Revolutionary conflict against the British. He described the

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310 Hudson, *Religion*, 380. He named the Jewish theologian Martin Buber, the Russian Orthodox theologian Nichollai Berdyaev, the Spanish existentialist Miguel Unamuno, the French neo-Thomist Jacques Maritain, and the Swedish Lutheran theologians Anders Nygren and Gustaf Aulen.

311 Hudson, *Religion*, 381. Hudson also commented that Rudolf Bultmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer both displayed Kierkegaardian existentialism in their works.

Civil War Era using intellectual biographies that theologically critiqued America and saw the war’s social destruction resulting from social sin of slavery. Yet, his history did not include the Protestant soldier’s perspective as the one who had to fight and die in the bloody conflict. Hudson only discussed to a small degree some of the religious and redemptive symbolism that the Civil War came to represent on a national level as the bloody contest dragged on. In his presentation, however, the individual religious experience of the soldier or the soldier’s family was absent from Hudson’s text in the same way as it was from William Sweet’s text.

Hudson produced a scientifically objective intellectual history as he described the Civil War by focusing on an analysis of both Protestant theologians and national leaders. The religious and political leaders, according to Hudson, framed the war as a judgment upon the America people by a sovereign God for the sin of slavery. This intellectual religious history contained descriptions of Protestant support for WWI and WWII but the focus of his work was on denominational growth and urban growth within America. This provided the framework for his discussion of America’s new mission field and new challenges for the Protestant theologians during the 1930s through the 1950s. They were theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr and Paul Tillich and they responded to the crises of faith in America and the crisis of an approaching war against Germany and Japan. Hudson primarily wrote about the American crisis of faith in his section on WWII rather than about the American soldiers struggling with questions of life and death on the battlefields of Europe. His descriptions of these theologians provided a critique of Protestant liberal participation in WWI, stressed the sovereignty of God, and the sinfulness of human culture that Protestant liberals had mistakenly equated with the kingdom of God.

5.3 Edwin Scott Gaustad (1923-2011)

Edwin S. Gaustad was best known as a religious historian of colonial America who explored the religious ideas of national leaders, church and state issues, and religious liberty. He grew up in Houston Texas and served in the Army Air Corps during World War II, after which he earned his doctorate at Brown University in 1951 studying with Edmund S. Morgan. Only one year separated Sweet’s 1950 edition of The Story of Religion in America from the writing of Gaustad’s dissertation entitled The Great Awakening in New England.313 In the 1960s, Guastad published two general works on religion in America: A Historical Atlas of Religion in America in 1962 and A Religious History of America in 1966. Thus, his most general religious history of America was published one year after Hudson’s Religion in America.

In writing The Great Awakening in New England, Gaustad provided an intellectual religious history that investigated the theological controversies produced during the colonial revivals of the 1740s in New England. This local history, as such, did not discuss any war, Protestants at war, or clergy in support of war. The history could have described the Indian wars occurring at that time or the fight for independence which would arrive in less than forty years; however, Gaustad, wrote an intellectual history that left out military concerns. Gaustad, in this history, only mentioned Indians in order to

313 The dissertation was not published until 1955.
briefly describe how the revivals of the Great Awakening brought increased missions to the Native tribes in the New England region.\footnote{Gaustad, \textit{The Great Awakening}, 105.}

Gaustad’s general religious history of the United States mentioned American wars and Protestants’ support for war in a more systematically thorough way than either Sweet’s or Hudson’s, but his history was less detailed in its description than Olmstead’s history. Gaustad’s descriptions were concise, and his discussions of wars against Native Indians provided few details when compared to the earlier histories of Baird, the Bacons, and Mode or even the more recent history of Olmstead. Descriptions of Native tribal attacks were first provided by Gaustad when he wrote about the Jamestown settlement. Pointing back to the fear of the earliest settlers, his narrative included descriptions of settlers afraid of Native Indian attacks which were similar to those found in the historians of the first chapter. Gaustad stated, “Terrors and tragedies filled these early years at Jamestown of little more than 100 settlers in May, half were dead by September. Indians attacked even before the fort was finished.”\footnote{Gaustad, \textit{A Religious}, 38.} His history recounted the fear experienced by the Protestant settlers toward the Natives as they attempted to establish communities in a new and hostile environment.

Gaustad’s description of settlers’ fear that accompanied Indian attacks was based in the report of a fifty percent mortality rate of the settlement’s population within five months of their arrival rather than as a strategy to justify the Protestant settlers’ call-to-war against the Natives. Protestant settler fear was often described as a strategy to justify war within the religious histories of the first four authors. He next wrote about the settlement at Plymouth in 1620. The Protestant settler’s interaction with Natives was quite different from the experience of the settlers at Jamestown. His description was reminiscent of Cotton Mather as he described the Indian Squanto as “the special instrument of God for their good” since he saved the settlers from starvation by showing them how to cultivate and fertilize corn.\footnote{Gaustad, \textit{A Religious}, 49.} By the fall of 1621, the Protestant settlers and Natives did not attack each other but rather celebrated their mutual survival with a thanksgiving feast. This initial peaceful coexistence would not last, and by the mid-1670s, growth of settlements strained relations between Protestant settlers and the Native population. In describing the situation that would eventually culminate in the King Philips War, Gaustad was critical of the settler’s treatment of Native groups when he wrote, “Indian lands were invaded, Indian rights were ignored . . . racial and cultural tensions violently erupted in 1675-76. A devastating Indian attack, the King Philips War, took hundreds of lives, ransacked and ruined forty towns and left memories so bitter that trust on both sides was permanently shaken.”\footnote{Gaustad, \textit{A Religious}, 52.}

In contrast to Mode’s, the Bacons’, and Baird’s descriptions of Protestants at war with Natives, Gaustad’s description lists Indian grievances that led to the outbreak of warfare rather than simply mentioning the Protestant fear and need for self-defense. While more concise, Gaustad was very similar to Olmstead in his critique of Protestant settlers’ unfair treatment of Native tribes. Both stand in contrast to the way Sweet’s text only mentioned one Native attack, and Hudson’s historical texts failed to describe any war with Natives. Gaustad’s and Olmstead’s historical account of settler abuse of Natives
was radically different from the pre-1930 historical accounts which justified settler actions against Native populations. Gaustad’s religious history devoted several pages to a critique of settler encroachments upon Native lands in his description of various military encounters between Protestant settlers and Native Indians.

While the most dramatic of Gaustad’s accounts described the King Philips War, his text contained three additional descriptions of Natives’ aggression toward Protestant settlers. One was an account of missionary Father White whose outreach to the Indians in Maryland was short-lived because the Natives’ aggression forced his retreat back into the church of Saint Mary.\textsuperscript{318} On another occasion, he described the Natives as hostile which was his favorite way of describing the Indians who were at war against the Protestant settlers during this colonial time period. In his final description of Natives at war against settlers, he described a 1715 Native attack in South Carolina that burnt down every town except for Charlestown.\textsuperscript{319} Gaustad’s description here presented historical evidence in an attempt to be concise and did not mention Protestant settlers’ attempts at revenge. Occasionally, he wrote that the Native Indian attacks were justified based on loss of land, and as being provoked, based on Protestant settler behavior. Although once he described the hostile Indian attack and warfare, he failed to follow up the historical narrative with the Protestant settlers’ military reaction to the Native attack.

Like those of Sweet, Olmstead, and Hudson, Gaustad’s section describing the Revolutionary War was longer than his account of war against the Native Indians. In the same way that his description of Native wars emphasized the fear that Protestant settlers experienced in Jamestown, so too, his description of the Revolutionary Era began with an account of two fears that gripped colonial Protestants. The fear of the Episcopal Church and the fear of the Pope were the two fears that gave rise to the deepest mistrust of England, a mistrust that was felt in every aspect of spiritual and civil life.\textsuperscript{320}

Gaustad recorded the time and place of the very first gun shot fired at Lexington in the Revolutionary War on April 19, 1775. Although it eventually became known as the “shot heard round the world,” he purported to his readers that the sound of the gun shot reverberated first of all throughout the New England colony churches, through the church pulpits in the Mid-Atlantic colonies, down to the sermons being preached in the churches of the Southern colonies. Pastors and ministers of every Protestant denomination joined in the struggle for independence along with Catholics, Jews and a rather unusual regiment of formerly pacifist Quakers.\textsuperscript{321} The pastor of the Christ Church of Philadelphia, Jacob Duche, opened the First Continental Congress with prayer on September 7, 1774. It was during this initial session that the members asserted that every colonist had four rights: life, liberty, ownership of property, and to never relinquish these rights to any foreign nation. Gaustad next described the Second Continental Congress meeting on May 19, 1775, which was when congress formed an army and organized the revolution against Britain.\textsuperscript{322} The many dates and detailed information that Gaustad provided about the war effort against Britain pointed to his attempt to be objective. Gaustad, like each historian in this chapter, described the Protestant churches’ support for the Revolutionary War as a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{318} Gaustad, A Religious, 72.
\item \textsuperscript{319} Gaustad, A Religious, 101.
\item \textsuperscript{320} Gaustad, A Religious, 112.
\item \textsuperscript{321} Gaustad, A Religious, 118.
\item \textsuperscript{322} Gaustad, A Religious, 123.
\end{itemize}
positive and justified event. However, his description of Protestant support for the Civil War and WWI turned critical and was similar to Sweet’s and Olmstead’s critique of Protestant support for those wars.

Gaustad mentioned nothing else about the lead up to the war or about Protestants fighting in the Revolutionary War. He next described Jason Lee, a Methodist, who in 1834 organized a western mission to serve both the white migrating frontiersmen and the Indians living in the Willamette Valley which would become part of the state of Oregon in about twenty-five years. Gaustad briefly described the Native attack on a Protestant mission in the northwest territory of Oregon in 1847. It was an attack that killed a missionary and his wife and virtually brought to an end the Protestant missionary work in that territory.

Gaustad wrote about the outbreak of war with Mexico in 1846 when congress declared war. He primarily focused on the quick end of the war and the massive land gain for the United States and did not include any battlefield descriptions or clergy sermons in response to the war. Mexico City was captured in September of 1847 by Generals Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott, and the peace treaty added to the United States the territories of New Mexico, Arizona, and Upper California. In his brief description of the Mexican War, Gaustad maintained his focus on dates and documentary evidence that could be objectively presented without moral bias.

The next section of Gaustad’s text began by describing the increasingly bitter dispute between the North and the South in the run up to the Civil War. Slavery was at the center of the national dispute, and while it caused, according to Gaustad, a great conflict within every religious body in America, it completely severed three of the largest Protestant denominations. In 1844, the Methodist Church was the first to split over the slavery issue, the Baptist divided into Northern and Southern camps the very next year, and the Presbyterians divorced over the slavery issue at the relatively late date of 1857. In presenting these details, he critiqued the Protestant churches’ role in causing the Civil War.

After briefly describing the Protestant churches division over slavery, Gaustad used one paragraph to describe the Civil War. The war which began on April 12, 1861, when a South Carolina militia fired on Fort Sumter, was four months shy of being two-years-old when President Lincoln delivered his Emancipation Proclamation. This placed the slavery issue as the moral cause that divided the nation and pitted Protestant Southerners against Protestant Northerners. In March of 1865, Lincoln delivered his second inauguration address, and by this time the entire nation had come to a tragic knowledge of just how deadly the war was for both the Union and the Confederacy. As Gaustad asserted, both sides suffered horrifying losses as the battlefields and diseases of the Civil War destroyed young men’s lives in unprecedented numbers. Gaustad, however, never described any battlefield scenes of Protestants at war, the despair of Protestant churches as young men left local congregations, or even how Protestant clergy ministered to those left behind. Gaustad concluded the section on the Civil War by stating that the Protestant nation was ready for a prolonged time of healing, productivity and

324 Gaustad, A Religious, 161.
325 Gaustad, A Religious, 188.
326 Gaustad, A Religious, 194.
increased immigration. Unlike Olmstead and Hudson, Gaustad did not quote Lincoln or other Protestant theologians in critiquing the Protestant churches’ role in motivating the North and South to go to war against each other. Instead, he let the division of the churches provide the critique as he wrote about the churches leading the way for the nation to go to war.

Gaustad’s religious account utilized World War I and II as place markers for telling the religious history of the American people and does not even begin to describe American Protestants at war on foreign soil. He stated that World War I made more prevalent the “social fissures that could in calmer days be ignored.” He next wrote about war in the context of a series of national crises which included the stock market crash, the Great Depression and World War II, all of which combined to leave the “nation reeling off center, uncertain of its purpose and unsure of its judgment.” His use of the First and Second World Wars as location signposts for other American events further demonstrated his commitment to create an objective historical account with unbiased data and facts that could be documented apart from moral commentary. This was a common practice instituted by Sweet and utilized by Hudson.

The next section in Gaustad’s religious history addressed post-WWII intellectual and theological biography. One of the first theologians described was Reinhold Niebuhr, a native of Missouri who was raised in the American heartland full of “evangelical piety.” In 1915, one year after the start of World War I, he became an inner city pastor in Detroit, Michigan, where he served for thirteen years. In 1928, he became Professor of Christian ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Gaustad described the major shift that occurred in Niebuhr’s thinking, writing and ethics as a turn from Christian optimistic idealism to a much more complex and cynical realism which occurred sometime in the early 1930s.

Reinhold Niebuhr’s Christian realism came to be expressed in response to what Gaustad called “Protestantism’s unrealistic liberalism and Wall Street’s unrestrained capitalism.” Gaustad wrote that according to Niebuhr, “Neither pietism nor pacifism squarely meet the unavoidable facts of war, greed, exploitation, prejudice, poverty, cruelty, injustice, and lust. . . . Rarely is the choice before us a clear one between good and evil, but, rather, it is an ambiguous one between lesser evils, between degrees of violence to an ethic of love.” In backing up this description of Niebuhr’s Christian realism, Gaustad followed this statement by quoting from Niebuhr’s The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (1944) and his Christianity in Crisis (1955). Earlier in the section when he described Niebuhr as a pastor in Detroit, he quoted from Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic (1929). Gaustad pointed out that following World War II, Niebuhr was mindful not to be deceived since he recognized that humanity’s ability to judge itself was only matched by humanity’s ability to deceive itself.

Gaustad described Niebuhr as being acutely aware of America’s national agenda that was historically hidden behind an irresistible idealistic American triumphalism.

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327 Gaustad, A Religious, 214.
328 Gaustad, A Religious, 217.
329 Gaustad, A Religious, 257.
330 Gaustad, A Religious, 277.
331 Gaustad, A Religious, 278.
332 Gaustad, A Religious, 278.
American ideals were shaped by what Niebuhr called the “messianic nation” that saw itself as the best example of democratic self-governance and Christian values. Americans saw their country as a model for other nations of the world to follow. The historic heritage, stemming from both New England’s Puritanism and Virginia’s Jeffersonianism, allowed American Protestants to insist that America represented a special moral and spiritual place in the world. Protestants, Niebuhr reasoned, likened America to a “city set on a hill,” as John Winthrop claimed back at the beginning of the Massachusetts Bay colony. Gaustad described Niebuhr as a post-Second World War theologian who provided Americans with practical warnings of the danger of self-righteous pride of past accomplishments and missions while being forced to live under the present threat of nuclear annihilation.

Past accomplishments as well as present dangers should provoke a national humility concerning the future. Gaustad wrote in summing up Niebuhr’s thought, “The religious heritage of America does not make the nation infallible; it ought to make the nation humble. Pride, the original and persisting sin of mankind, is most corrupting when it disguises itself as religion.”333 In this post-WWII section, Gaustad described the intellectual biographies of several religious thinkers outside of Protestantism, including the Catholic theologian Gustave Weigel (1906-1964) and the Jewish theologian Abraham Heschel (1907-1972). This intellectual-biographical section in which Gaustad described the ideas of famous American theologians was a popular trend within religious histories. It was utilized by Winthrop Hudson as he wrote his section on the Civil War and the post-WWI theologians and by Sidney Mead as he wrote his dissertation in the 1940s: Nathanael William Taylor, 1786-1858, a Connecticut Liberal. Often, however, these intellectual biographies lacked any discussion about American wars or the Protestant support for war. Mead’s intellectual biography of Taylor did not mention war. Even though Taylor was born immediately following the Revolutionary Era, he was pastor of the First Church of New Haven during the War of 1812, and he preached during some of the most overwrought times during the escalation of tensions between the North and the South prior to the Civil War.

5.4 Conclusion

Clifton Olmstead, Winthrop S. Hudson, and Edwin S. Gaustad wrote versions of comprehensive American religious histories ground within the newly established academic field of American religious history. All of these American religious historians had contact with the post-WWI European dialectical theology of Karl Barth as well as the new American theological realism as expressed by the Niebuhr brothers. As professional scholars, these historians sought to be professionally objective in their historical writings and they all took an interest in intellectual biography especially during the Civil War Era and pre-World War II time period. Under the influence of the call to existential realism in dialectical theology, each of these historians began to take an increasingly critical approach to Protestant support for American wars. They were most critical of the support for two wars: the Civil War and the First World War, particularly critical of how the Protestant clergy motivated their congregations to kill their enemies. Olmstead initiated

333 Gaustad, A Religious, 280.
the first critique, by an American religious historian, of Protestant support for wars against Indians.

Clifton Olmstead was the first historian in this chapter to write significantly about Protestant settlers at war against Indians, and his account provided the first significant critique of settler treatment of Indians. Olmstead wrote the least about the Civil War Era and focused his history on World War I, World War II and the theological developments in Europe and America from the 1930s until 1960. Hudson and Gaustad wrote general histories that focused on the time periods following the Revolutionary War, and that provided intellectual biographies and theological ideas in much the same way as contemporary American religious historians Sidney E. Mead and Robert T. Handy. Mead and Handy had long and distinguished teaching careers: Mead at the University of Chicago and Handy at Union Theological Seminary. Both earned their doctorates at the University of Chicago in the 1940s, and both dedicated so much of their writing to intellectual and biographical religious history that they relegated the topic of war to other scholars. Some of their historical writings were published in the 1960s and early 1970s.\(^{334}\)

Prior to these three historians, William Warren Sweet wrote a consensus history that contained more critical descriptions of Protestant support for war. He updated his history in 1939 and 1950 with increasingly harsh criticisms of Protestant support for war. In all these editions, he did not write about Puritan settlers’ wars with Native Indians in New England. His 1950 edition, however, did offer a brief critique of Protestant clergy justifying the enslavement of Indians and the taking of Indian lands. This lack of detail about colonial-settler wars against Indians was a trend some church historians would follow in spite of Olmstead’s and Gaustad’s gallant effort to include every American military conflict, even several wars between Protestant settlers and Native Indians. Both these historians also sought to include a critique of Protestant settler treatment of Native peoples, especially concerning the settlers’ unjust procurement of the Native population’s land.

Olmstead, Hudson, and Gaustad, to a large degree, followed Sweet in focusing so much of their historical writing on the development of denominations and the nation following American independence. Therefore, a comparison of how each author wrote about the Civil War can identify distinctions and clarify the moral thrust of each writer’s narrative when addressing war and Protestant support for war. All four historians opened their discussion of the Civil War with the topic of slavery, and each historian’s approach to slavery revealed much about his narrative on the Civil War.

Sweet began with an objective historical account of the Calvinistic ideological dualism within the doctrine of election that provided the justification for Indian slavery and, eventually, for African slavery. The North, especially New England, did not fully object to slavery until the influence of Calvinism diminished greatly, which corresponded to the Southern economy’s increasing dependence on slave labor. Sweet even offered an initial critique of Protestant clergy’s role in justifying and prolonging the Civil War. Olmstead wrote about the radically different positions that had developed between the North and South over slavery by the 1840s. The divisions within the major Protestant

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denominations demonstrated this, and Olmstead strongly critiqued the role the Protestant churches played in dividing the nation and leading the nation into a bloody Civil War.

Winthrop Hudson limited his description of slavery to the growth of abolitionists among Northern Protestants and pro-slavery Southern Protestants in the 1830s through 1860 which led to the Methodist and Baptist division in the middle of the 1840s. Gaustad wrote that at the beginning of the nineteenth century it was hard to imagine any great religious divide over slavery as anti-slavery societies were as numerous in the South as they were in the North but that changed quickly in the 1830s. Gaustad’s data-rich narrative stated that from 1830 to 1860 abolitionist Protestants saw slavery as an undeniable sin and called for its immediate repeal. Pro-slave Protestants defended slavery on three grounds: it was morally neutral, it was biblically supported, and it was an economic necessity. Accordingly, these three defenses were so entrenched by 1860 that war between the North and South was inevitable as it was foreshadowed by slavery’s role in dividing the three major Protestant denominations.

Olmstead, Hudson and Gaustad wrote narratives describing the division between the Northern and Southern denominations; however, Sweet did not write about the splintering of the three major Protestant denominations over slavery in the mid-1840s. Instead, Sweet criticized how each denomination strove to prove itself the most loyal to either the Union or the Confederate cause in 1861. Sweet reported that no other war in American history, not even WWI, generated the Protestant support for turning young congregants into soldiers and pastors into chaplains. Sweet wrote an entire section on chaplains and the role they played during campground revivals and battleground efforts to console the wounded and dying soldiers. In fact, this was one of the few places in which any of these three professionally trained academic historians wrote about the suffering and human toil that war inflicted upon soldiers and, in this case, primarily Protestant soldiers.

Unlike Sweet’s history, Hudson’s and Gaustad’s histories did not include discussions about loyalty to causes and battleground suffering and death rather they wrote about intellectual causes, theological ideas, and the major figures who were often utilized to provide a critique of Protestant support and justification for the Civil War. After discussing the division of the Protestant church bodies, Hudson wrote about the way the Civil War broke apart the ideal of America as an especially blessed and Christian nation which could be an example to the rest of the world. Hudson also used the words of Abraham Lincoln in critiquing the Protestant claim of divine support for war since Lincoln suggested that God willed for the war to take place and that God willed for the war to endure until both sides had suffered enough to atone for the national sin of slavery. In closing his section on the Civil War, Hudson turned to the intellectually renowned theologians Bushnell and Schaft to reiterate that many Protestants during the time of the Civil War interpreted the war as God’s anger being poured out upon the nation in judgment in order to redeem it.

Gaustad’s history did not turn to the ideological and theological quotes that Hudson’s history utilized; instead he utilized the iconic personality of Abraham Lincoln to reference three historic dates within the Civil War. The first was on April 12, 1861, when the South attacked Fort Sumter. The second date was when President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1st 1863, which brought the Civil War directly to bear on the slavery issue. Gaustad used the third date to conclude his section
on the Civil War, stating that when Lincoln gave his second inauguration address on March 4th, 1865, the nation recognized the horrible loss of life suffered on both sides as well as that the Union would be preserved.

Sweet’s history briefly addressed two Reconstruction Era topics: first, the North’s attempt to convert and educate the freed slaves and, second, the success of one Protestant denomination to reunite immediately after the Civil War. Sweet wrote that the North had good intentions in striving to convert and educate freed slaves; however, unscrupulous white politicians often cared more about their own careers than the long-term success of former slaves. Sweet also described the Protestant Episcopal Church, the one Protestant denomination which was able to reunite quickly once the fighting ended. Sweet described the Northern bishops’ acceptance of the Southern bishops during a national conference in 1865. This reconciliation by a relatively small Protestant denomination revealed the importance that Sweet gave to denominational unity. Sweet’s Methodism in American History which he published in 1933, proved to be influential in helping reunite the Northern and Southern Methodists in 1939. Olmstead, Hudson and Gaustad did not write about the time of Reconstruction following the Civil War or the decades of failure for most Protestant denominations to reconcile.

Sweet’s description of the Civil War revealed that the thrust of his narrative was engrossed in historic details and in doctrinal issues like the connection between Calvinism and slavery. He provided many historical details that were interpreted as professionally objective and they became grounds for a critique of Northern and Southern Protestant support for the war. His section on war chaplains demonstrated his reliance on documented firsthand accounts which opened up his history to battleground reports of soldiers’ suffering and death and the chaplains’ attempts to comfort the wounded. War scenes depicting suffering and death did not occur earlier in Sweet’s text and were a result of his source material. Overall, these four historians provided a critique of the Civil War that put blame on the Protestant churches for their role in dividing the nation, and the justification they provided served to intensify and lengthen the war. Thus, Sweet’s great influence can be seen directly in the Civil War accounts of Olmstead, Hudson and Gaustad as well as mediated in the next generation’s historical works that critiqued Protestant support for war against Native tribes written by Martin Marty and Sydney Ahlstrom.

Sweet’s historical account of the Civil War was the longest while Olmstead’s Civil War narrative was the shortest. Both Hudson and Gaustad utilized intellectual biography in their critique of the Civil War. Hudson’s section on the Civil War revealed a narrative focus on the tragedy the war brought to America’s founding ideals about liberty and freedom. Hudson also pointed out the irony that the war forced the world’s most Christian nation to ponder the reality of God’s wrath against the nation. All three historians shared Sweet’s professional objectivity and strove to create data-driven historical narratives. They also continued Sweet’s critique of Protestant support and justification for the Civil War. Sweet’s critique of the Civil War was extended in Olmstead’s account to a criticism of Protestant support for every American war except for the Revolutionary War. In fact, none of the historians provided a critique of the Revolutionary War. While their historical accounts, often in impressive detail, documented Protestant support for the Revolutionary War, each author presented
Protestant congregational and pastoral support for the war against Britain in a positive light.

In addition this chapter pointed out that Olmstead’s history was the first American religious history to extend William Warren Sweet’s critique to Protestant support for war against Native tribes. This increasing criticism of Protestant support for the killing of Native Indians in order to deprive them of their ancestral land would become a major theme in the first two historians in the next chapter, especially in the work of Martin Marty who will become the first American religious historian to condemn Protestant support for a century of warfare against the Native population, even describing the treatment of Native peoples within the United States as genocide.
CHAPTER SIX

AN INTENSIFYING CRITIQUE OF WAR: HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS THAT CRITICIZE PROTESTANT SUPPORT FOR WAR, 1970-1992

This chapter will evaluate the descriptions of Protestant support for American wars written by four religious historians who wrote general American religious histories between 1970 and 1992. These historians are Martin Marty, Sydney Ahlstrom, Catherine Albanese, and Mark Noll. This evaluation will compare these four historians’ descriptions of Protestant support for wars to each other as well as to earlier accounts of American religious history. Since the 1930s, American religious historians wrote about Protestants and war in three specific ways that can be categorized as essentially different from the enthusiastic support for Protestants at war described by the historians who wrote prior to 1930s. These categories become much clearer in the context of those historians who wrote after 1970.

Some of the historians who wrote about Protestants and war used more than one category when describing Protestants and war. First, some historians were simply silent about specific American wars, especially choosing to omit Protestant settler wars against Indians (Sweet, Hudson, and Albanese). Second, several historians were very brief in only writing about historical facts related to American wars, at least of the wars they did choose to describe (Sweet, Hudson, Gaustad, and Albanese). Third, one historian in the 1930s, one in the 1960s and two historians in the 1970s became much more critical of Protestant support for American wars, condemning unquestioning and naïve Protestant support for American wars (Sweet, Olmstead, Marty, and Ahlstron). William Warren Sweet is the only historian to be included in each category which points to his great influence upon the historians that came after him.

Olmstead was the first to write critically of the support Protestants gave to the military conquest of Indian lands, and he continued this critique in his discussion of the Civil War and WWI. His initial criticism of Protestant support for settler wars against Indians afforded passage after ten years to Martin Marty’s condemnation of Protestant support for those wars and for the Protestant rhetoric used to justify the destruction of Native Indian lands and culture. Marty also presented a stronger critique than Olmstead of the American Protestant claim that God was on their side during other American wars, especially the Civil War, as American Protestants killed each other while claiming divine justification. Marty also provided a critique of the Protestant support for the United States policies during the Vietnam War and the struggle for Civil Rights. All of Marty’s critiques had deep similarities to the European neo-orthodox critique of liberal Protestantism and Reinhold Niebuhr’s ideological realism that critiqued Protestant liberal support of unrestrained nationalism and unrestricted capitalism.

Ahlstrom was not as pronounced in his denunciation of the Protestant support for wars against Native tribes as Marty. His descriptions, however, of other American wars and his sharp critique of the Protestant rhetoric behind the American public support for
those wars, approached Marty’s critique. Catherine Albanese provided a more pluralistic approach to American religious history and in doing so she only discussed the Revolutionary War in one of her last chapters on American civil religion. Despite beginning her text with a description of Native Indian religion, she did not write about Protestant settler conquest of Indian lands or describe any settler wars with Indians. In addition, her description of Protestants at war during the Civil War, WWI and WWII was cursory at best.

Mark Noll rounds out the American religious historians presented in this chapter. His description of Protestant support for war was similar to church historians who wrote prior to Martin Marty. Noll’s discussion of Protestants at war with Indian Natives was limited to two examples, both of which were intended to highlight the failure of missionary efforts among the Natives. Noll, like Sweet and Hudson, focused his descriptions about war on the Revolutionary War and Civil War, although, he did include sections on WWI, WWII, and the Vietnam Era. Noll’s descriptions of these later wars, however, fell short of the analysis and critique that Marty and Ahlstrom provided.

### 6.1 Martin E. Marty (1928-Present)

Martin Marty received his PhD from The University of Chicago in 1956 and was a student of Sidney Mead. Mead, himself, was a doctoral student of William Warren Sweet. Although Marty and Mead differed greatly from Sweet in many important aspects, specifically in regards to the ability to achieve objectivity, Marty was a third generation professional scholar who learned his trade within the Chicago school tradition of objective historical research. Martin Marty made a name for himself shortly after coming back to the University of Chicago to teach. Currently, Marty is the Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus at the University of Chicago. In 1970, he received the National Book Award for his *Righteous Empire*, a book he was asked to write for a series entitled “Two Centuries of American Life: A Bicentennial History.” Marty’s research and insights in this text culminated in the clearest critique by an American religious historian of Protestant support for the killing of Indians, the Civil War, the First World War and the war in Vietnam. Marty presented his critique of the Protestant support for all these American conflicts in the light of post-WWI theological critiques of liberalism by European dialectical theologians like Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, American theological realism as expressed by the Niebuhr brothers, and in the existential philosophy of Paul Tillich.

Martin Marty was born in West Point, Nebraska, on February 5, 1928. He was a descendent of Swiss potato farmers who immigrated to America in 1869 and settled on the Nebraskan prairie in a small town named West Point. West Point is located on the Elkhorn River and was founded by Pennsylvania Dutch settlers in 1857. As a child in the 1930s, Marty was old enough to remember the droughts, the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and the effects these events had upon his family and upon much of his extended family who also lived in Nebraska. In 1939, his family moved to Battle Creek, another small Nebraskan town named after an Indian battle which did not take place because the

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335 Dialectical theology was also referred to as crisis theology and eventually became known as neo-orthodoxy.
Pawnee chief Pita Lesharu wrapped an American flag around himself in order to surrender and avoid conflict. In his childhood, Marty thought this small town would be more exciting if, indeed, the battle had been fought there. The Nebraskan Poet Laureate, John G. Neihardt, the author of *Black Elk Speaks*, also made a significant impression on Marty as he developed an appetite for poetry along with an appreciation for the historical suffering of Native Americans.\(^338\) Marty’s exposure to these Native Indian influences in his childhood contributed to his balanced and insightful treatment of Protestant support for war against Native Indians in his first general historical account of Protestants in America entitled *Righteous Empire*. Marty was the first American church historian who wrote substantially about conflicts between Native tribes and Protestant settlers and who, in addition, suggested that the military actions of the Protestant settlers could not be justified based on fear and self-defense.

In 1970, Marty published *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America*. Marty’s consensus religious history on Protestants was published a mere four years after Gaustad’s consensus history and only five years after that of Hudson’s history. Marty’s *Righteous Empire*, however, departed significantly from the historical works of those earlier two authors. Marty described in detail the Protestant settlers’ conflict with and military conquest of Native Indians and provided a critique that went far beyond Olmstead’s critique of settler’s treatment of Indians. The first chapter of Marty’s text was “Clearing Space: The Removal of the Native American.” The title of this chapter stood in sharp contrast to Sidney Mead’s idea of “plenty of space for all” which Winthrop Hudson adopted in his general religious history. Marty’s first sentence expressed a clear Protestant colonial call for more land since, as he put it, “Empires occupy space.”\(^339\) In their fight to occupy the American landscape, Marty made it clear that the Native peoples were killed through disease and war in ways that were cruel and unfair.

Marty did not limit his discussion of Protestants militarily confronting Natives to the time period of colonization. In fact, he wrote more about the conquest that occurred following the founding of the American nation. He stated that following independence from Great Britain, “Citizens of the United States spent a century completing the conquest of their land and of the people who had been there before them. The Protestants who produced the religious impulse for the conquest seldom raised questions about the rights of those Native Americans.”\(^340\) This type of historical critique of Protestant conquest of the Natives’ land and the religious motivation used to justify that conquest was new to general works within the field of American religious history. American religious historians from Baird to Mode used their texts to justify conquest of the Natives. Sweet and Hudson largely ignored wars with Natives while Gaustad concisely retold historical details of various battles against Natives without any significant critique of the conquest as it unfolded within American history and Olmstead regulated most of his critique to the initial settler conquest of tribal territory.

Marty connected the religious motivation for removing Natives from their land with the Protestant citizens’ widespread use of imperialistic language.\(^341\) Protestants, both

\(^{338}\) Marty, Martin, Interview by Robert Britt-Mills, November 2010.


\(^{340}\) Marty, *Righteous Empire*, 5.

\(^{341}\) Marty, *Righteous Empire*, 5
before and after independence, understood that Native peoples occupied the space that was needed to expand settlements and to develop an industrial and prosperous nation. He asserted that the rapidly growing nation should have expected resistance and retaliation from the Natives as they struggled to defend their land, a struggle that would last for over a century. He described some of the places where the Natives fought for their land following the founding of the nation. Protestants fought Native Indians “from Fallen Timbers in Ohio in 1794 through the Seminole Wars of 1816-1818 to the last stand east of the Mississippi, the Black Hawk war of 1832, and then through fifty more years of mopping-up operations in the west.”

Too often these wars served as rationale for state programs and federal policies that caused widespread destruction to Native tribal lands and cultures.

One of the most ominous federal policies was enacted in 1830 and it officially sanctioned the systematic removal of Indians to reservations. It was named the Indian Removal Bill and Marty noted that only a marginal percentage of religious leaders objected to this cruel piece of legislation. He also stated that by 1846, while the United States was involved in the Mexican War, the removal and reservation policies of the federal government often resulted in a torturous death forced upon tribal people. American Protestant leaders, in general, were convinced of their individual morality and their country’s virtue, as Marty stated ‘men who carry concepts of empire ordinarily believe that their values are superior to those of others.”

As an example of this Marty quoted the Reverend William H. Milburn who in 1860 stated, “The Indian must perish.” Despite unprecedented Protestant missionary efforts, the Indian as an object of evangelism remained a fruitless project. The difficulty of converting Native Indians caused many Protestant leaders to call for Indian removal or death as the most efficient way to deal with the Indian problem.

Martin Marty, in describing the military actions of the federal government against the Native Indians, did not mince words about what happened including the Protestant support for those military actions. He declared, “There was extermination. The young nation and its churches did not lack advocates of what today would be called genocide. Using instruments of war, disease, and degradation, the conquerors cut into the Native population.” In order to make his point, Marty turned to population estimates to demonstrate the depletion of Native Americans within the United States’ territory. Around the arrival of Columbus there were likely estimates of at least 900,000 Natives but by a decade following the Civil War only around 280,000 Natives had survived. According to Marty, Protestant ideals were ingrained in the Protestant conscience by Protestant laymen and leaders who insisted that both the laws of nature and the will of God were behind the successful federal land removal program.

In assessing the destruction of the Native American population within the United States, Marty turned to a source that was utilized by Leonard Woolsey Bacon when he wrote his history in 1897. Bacon quoted Helen Hunt Jackson’s words from her book, A Century of Dishonor, in order to put into context the tragedy of the forced removal of the Cherokee nation from Georgia. Marty referred to Jackson’s book in order to emphasize

342 Marty, Righteous Empire, 7.
343 Marty, Righteous Empire, 9.
344 Marty, Righteous Empire, 12.
345 Marty, Righteous Empire, 12.
the cruel and damning systematic removal to reservations of all Native Americans. Marty also quoted President Rutherford Hayes’ when he said Indians were victims of “broken promises and acts of injustice on our part,” a statement Marty classified as a “magnificent understatement” made by President Hayes one century following what Marty described as the Native American Indian Apocalypse.\footnote{Marty, \textit{Righteous Empire}, 13.}

Following Marty’s in-depth critique of Protestant support for military conquests of Native Americans, he introduced a rather limited description of the effects of the Revolutionary War on various Protestant denominations. He initiated this topic with a comment about the first English Protestants who settled in Jamestown and established Anglicanism as the official religion of Virginia by the beginning of the Revolutionary Era. But it was the Congregationalists in the North and the Presbyterians in the middle colonies, Marty concluded, who were most successful following the Revolutionary War since both sustained solid support for independence, stood for religious freedom, and thrived under the voluntary principle established early in the new nation’s existence. Some denominations struggled during and after the Revolutionary War. Marty noted that the Quakers were perceived to be unpatriotic when they remained faithful to their pacifistic tradition.\footnote{Marty, \textit{Righteous Empire}, 21-22.}

Around the time the colonies were declaring their independence, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson designed the national seal with a picture of Moses and a declaration that ‘Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God.’ This began a tradition of national leaders utilizing Scripture in order to find meaning in the American experience. This religious dimension encouraged Protestant citizens to interpret themselves as actors within the narrative of Exodus and generate support for the destruction of tyranny and the defense of freedom. Next, Marty pointedly assessed the situation in his declaration that “Religious wars are the bloodiest conflicts” due to the fact that “when many religious parties are contending in crusades or to effect change, one expects bloodshed.”\footnote{Marty, \textit{Righteous Empire}, 35.} Marty wrote about the relation between two results that impacted Protestant denominations following the Revolutionary War when he described disestablishment bringing about voluntarism. And then he reminded his readers that from the beginning of Protestant settlement, religion impacted political policies and military matters. This concluded Marty’s discussion of the Revolutionary War. Following this section are references to the war which described events both before and after the War for Independence. While Marty’s discussion of the Revolutionary Era was quite short, his commentary on the Civil War was quite extensive.

Marty discussed the North-South division during his description of the Second Great Awakening, a time period he referred to as some of the most productive years of Protestant empire building. He quoted the Reverend James D. Knowles who prophetically questioned in 1828 if it could be possible for Protestants in Missouri and in Alabama to “consent to a dissolution of the National compact and, worse meet each other with hostile bayonets in the field?”\footnote{Marty, \textit{Righteous Empire}, 56.} This statement revealed that Protestant feelings of unease over the slavery issue were being expressed long before mid-century. Marty wrote about the influence of religion on the impending military conflict. He stated, “When the
War Between the States came, Southern religionists were as ready as their Northern counterparts to justify their cause as being God’s.” Here Marty implies the religious ideology of the Civil War Era actually was more blatant than during the battle for independence against the monarch and Church of England or the fight for land against the Native heathens.

Marty described pastors in both the North and the South as radical in their belief that God would support their cause and they preached a message that God would help them defeat their enemies. Northern abolitionist liberals displayed aggressive rhetoric to fight against slavery. This situation, according to Marty, trapped Southern ministers into a bold, Christian defense of their cultural heritage by justifying it against all attacks.

Marty’s section on the Civil War utilized a tactic employed by the church historians that came before him who emphasized intellectual and biographical history. Both Hudson and Gaustad quoted from Lincoln as well as from other national statesmen in their discussion of the Civil War Era. Marty asserted that Abraham Lincoln often acted and sounded like the only Protestant during the Civil War Era. Although Lincoln never joined a church he expressed a strong Protestant sentiment when he sought to remind both the North and the South that “in this present Civil War, it is quite possible that God’s purpose is something different . . . God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time.”

In quoting Lincoln, Marty demonstrated how Protestant ideals about God’s will and purposes being beyond human comprehension had been replaced by Civil War Era Protestants certainty of knowledge concerning God’s revelation and actions in history. Lincoln also foreshadowed for Marty, the ideals of Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr who in the 1930s and 1940s rejected the Protestant liberal belief in historical progress as the outworking of God’s will, a belief which had been increasingly popular during the decades before World War I. Marty prominently displayed the ideas and writings of these two brothers in a chapter within his Righteous Empire. Marty suggested in his section on the Civil War that following their defeat, the South “introduced the tragic sense of life to the Protestant Empire.”

Marty mentioned in a few places that the period between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War was a period of revivals that solidified Protestant growth and idealism. The Protestant revivals and social outreach were greatly aided by the evolution of the United States from largely agrarian villages into rapidly expanding urban centers. Some of the best known Protestant leaders during this time connected the success of the American nation to the will of God. Marty named Beecher, Bushnell, Wayland and Finney as examples of Protestant ministers that spoke of America as God’s nation. Few Protestant leaders failed to speak with uncritical devotion. One that refused, however, was Abraham Lincoln. Marty quoted Lincoln for a second time in this passage. He stated that Lincoln was “Protestant in his reliance on God, [yet] he was not overconfident that he could interpret precisely what the will of God was for the nation. He spoke of America not as Bushnell had, but rather of its populace as an ‘almost chosen nation.’” Here once again Marty described the ideas of Lincoln in a way similar to the political realism

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350 Marty, Righteous Empire, 65.
351 Marty, Righteous Empire, 65.
353 Marty, Righteous Empire, 66.
354 Marty, Righteous Empire, 120.
of Reinhold Niebuhr as they both protested against those who claimed with certainty that God was on their side, and casted suspicion on those who equated the American nation with the Kingdom of God.

Another chapter in Marty’s text was entitled “Fail to Bind.” In this chapter, he wrote about Protestants response to the violence of the Civil War and the dark period of bitter resentment that followed. He described that period in United States history as creating “permanent problems for those who had sought to advance a single program for America.” He also asserted that “the failure to mend and heal in the 1860s and 1870s shaped the destiny of Protestantism for the ensuing century.” The twelve years of Reconstruction which ended in 1877 was unsuccessful in promoting peace and harmony between the North and South or between whites and blacks. Against the advice of Lincoln, the North insisted on policies that were vindictive to the South. The Southern whites in response became defensive and went to great lengths to continue their oppression of the newly-freed blacks. This was the time period that saw the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, a Protestant organization that utilized a variety of scriptural images to justify their racist message and violent actions. Marty concluded that Protestant churches were by far the strongest national force justifying systemic segregation and oppression.

After Marty concluded his section on the Civil War, wars in his text became benchmarks for other events. Most often he would describe these events in relation to certain wars, for example, he described something as happening following the Civil War or before WWI or by the time of WWII. He described the growth of urban centers, after the Civil War, as being the major factor in weakening the evangelical empire in America. He wrote “to meet the needs, a whole new set of church extension societies was organized after the Civil War.” He then connected the rise of church outreach organizations to the rise of the Social Gospel. Methodist and Catholic organizations worked diligently to send missionaries among the Native American Indians. Their success was great and by the end of World War I over one-third of the Indians claimed to be denominational Christians. Two more places where Marty utilized this formula of dating events in relation to American wars occurred in describing the surprising resurgence of pre-millennial belief after the Civil War. This resurgence led to the increasingly divisiveness prior to the First World War between liberal Protestants who supported the Social Gospel and fundamentalist Protestants who rejected the Social Gospel.

While Marty did not describe the horrors of the First World War, American Protestants’ participation in European battlefields, or the role of denominations in persuading the American people to abandon isolationism, he did write about the Social Gospel’s development prior to the war and rapid demise following the war. He stated that “from the 1880s to World War I the mainline Protestants saw much of their intellectual leadership . . . shaped into a new social gospel.” Furthermore, he wrote that “faith in progress was to be shattered, or at least complicated, by World War I.”

355 Marty, Righteous Empire, 133.
356 Marty, Righteous Empire, 134.
357 Marty, Righteous Empire, 175.
358 Marty, Righteous Empire, 180, 183.
359 Marty, Righteous Empire, 211.
360 Marty, Righteous Empire, 211.
described the work of Walter Rauschenbusch, perhaps the best remembered Social Gospel theologian of that time, as being the “most eloquent evidence of the ‘deep depression’ of spirit that came with it—almost up to that time the modernizers could be optimistic.”

Prior to the war, Rauschenbusch was one of the few Social Gospel Protestant liberals who understood sin, human depravity, and the potential for societies to manifest evil. Most liberal Protestant leaders were attempting to reconcile scripture to a progressive agenda that failed to realistically perceive evil in the world. According to Marty, the Social Gospel’s confident optimism was silenced for fifteen years following the First World War. He interpreted the works of H. Richard and Reinhold Niebuhr as reviving and reshaping many of the key elements within the Social Gospel movement but in Niebuhr’s realism these elements were separated from the liberal naïve view of evolutionary social progress.

Chapter 22 of the Righteous Empire was entitled “Church against the World: The Recovery of Protest and Realism.” This title came from a book written in 1935 by theologians H. Richard Niebuhr, Wilhelm Pauck, and layman Francis P. Miller. Marty was so captivated by the ideas of H. Richard Niebuhr that he was inclined to allow Niebuhr’s words to fill the entire chapter since he was so adept at understanding and expressing the issues facing American Protestants in particular, and the world in general during the 1930s. During this time the Great Depression dominated Protestant thought until the start of the Second World War. In the introduction Niebuhr issued a prophetic warning that had been largely ignored by Protestants for around a hundred and fifty years. Niebuhr wrote that the American Protestantism “knows the ways of God too well not to understand that [God] can and will rise up another people to carry out the mission entrusted to it if the Christian community fails [to do God’s will].”

Marty followed up that statement by asserting “Niebuhr was less interested in one more adjustment to the world than he was to separate from it in order to serve it.” He quoted Niebuhr’s statement that “the crisis of the church from this point of view is not the crisis of the church in the world, but of the world in the church.” Marty summed up the message of this book as a proposal for a framework for the Protestant recovery of social realism. It was a message that was rejected by both the modernist progressives and the conservative fundamentalists since the book made modernists look irrelevant and blasted the individualism of conservatives.

Marty quoted Reinhold Niebuhr, the older brother of H. Richard, who wrote a book in 1927 entitled Does Civilization need Religion: A Study in the Social Resources and Limitations of Religion in Modern Life? This text by Reinhold reached many of the same conclusions that H. Richard made in his The Church against the World. Marty quoted Reinhold Niebuhr, “A psychology of defeat, of which both fundamentalism and modernism are symptoms, has gripped the forces of religion.” Although Reinhold was a powerful voice helping Protestant leaders reach beyond the defeatism that occurred

361 Marty, Righteous Empire, 195.
363 Marty, Righteous Empire, 233.
364 Marty, Righteous Empire, 235.
365 Marty, Righteous Empire, 235.
366 Marty, Righteous Empire, 235.
367 Marty, Righteous Empire, 237.
following WWI, he was often criticized for his cynicism. Marty, however, stated that Reinhold Niebuhr was a Protestant theological bulwark in the 1930s as well as during the next two decades. Niebuhr’s prophetic voice was centered in a ‘church against the world’ idealism which directed his Christian realism. According to Marty, Reinhold “derided the old protestant American dreams of empire, but wanted to take the raw materials of the protestant experience in America and apply them to the urgent needs of the time.”

Like Lincoln before him in the 1860s, Niebuhr in the 1930s sounded the Protestant protest against the liberal progressive Protestant agenda that allowed the world to dominate the message of the church.

Marty indicated that in the 1930s European theology had a stronger influence on American Protestant thought than in earlier generations when American Protestants were surrounded by a greater isolationism. The theological voice most influential in breaking onto the American scene was the Swiss pastor, Karl Barth, who became the most foremost protester of the liberal theology which generated overwhelming Protestant support in Germany for WWI. Barth recognized, according to Marty, the theological bankruptcy of the liberal theological agenda as the destruction of WWI was happening and in 1917 he wrote a scathing cultural rebuke in the form of a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans which focused on God’s distance and separation from humanity and humanity’s need for salvation which rested on God’s action. This theology became known as neo-orthodoxy or crisis theology. Marty assessed that Reinhold Niebuhr utilized many concepts within neo-orthodoxy in order to develop his own social realism that would address American social problems.

In 1932, as Marty noted, Reinhold Niebuhr wrote one of his most influential books, Moral Man and Immoral Society. The book examined American society in the wake of the Great Depression and took a stand against liberal progressivism which too often was blind to social injustice and the unfair labor practices which impoverished too many individual American workers. Marty described this book as Reinhold’s “manifesto.”

Reinhold and other social realists brought the same passion to the problems of labor that conservative Protestants brought to personal vices.

Marty indicated that pacifism provided the most divisive issue between Reinhold Niebuhr and the pre-WWII Protestant liberalism that was stubbornly refusing to justify any war for any reason. Niebuhr’s understanding of social evil made him willing to accept the need for violence in curtailting the systematic nature of sin and he even embraced the “tragic necessity of war” especially with the rise of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany. Niebuhr’s realism strove to avoid the extremes of holy war which consumed American Protestants during the Civil War and WWI, and pacifistic idealism which brought about a radical isolationism which was clung to by Protestant liberals following their enthusiastic participation in WWI. Marty quoted a statement Niebuhr made about war at time when Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. Niebuhr said, “Unwillingness to run some risk of war in the present moment means certain war in the future.” Marty pointed out that by 1939 “certain war” had arrived on the scene and following Pearl Harbor few liberal Protestants in America remained committed to their pacifist principles.

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368 Marty, Righteous Empire, 237.
369 Marty, Righteous Empire, 237.
370 Marty, Righteous Empire, 242.
In concluding this chapter, Marty referred to Paul Tillich, the German theologian who fled Nazi Germany and who joined Reinhold Niebuhr at Union Theological Seminary. Tillich maintained in an essay he wrote in the mid-1930s that a “realistic view of life ‘includes a consciousness of the corruption of existence . . . [and] a repudiation of every kind of social Utopia.” These were ideas that most Protestant liberals had neglected in their acceptance of human progress and their embrace of the Social Gospel. Tillich and Niebuhr, like Barth before them, made it much more difficult for Protestants to think in terms of “Christianizing the social order.” Once again American Protestantism was warned of how easily evil invaded social systems. This was a warning, Marty suggested, that had seemingly disappeared from Protestant pulpits since colonial times, except for some prophetic visionaries like Abraham Lincoln and Reinhold Niebuhr who were able to see past the religious rhetoric and make their case for America as an “almost chosen people.”

The next American war that Marty described took place in the late 1950s and he described the American involvement in Vietnam as “increasingly involving American material, technical aid, and was eventually to see a commitment of American soldiers.” Marty was the first American religious historian to address the Vietnam War in his general religious history since he was one of the first to publish a general religious history following the major escalation of American troops fighting in the Vietnam War. Although Edwin Gaustad’s 1966 first edition of A Religious History of America did not discuss the Vietnam War, his second edition published in 1974 did mention three religious responses to the war by Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders all of whom assessed that the war created a crisis of trust between citizens and government. Marty added that the 1960s peace movement in America became increasingly angry and resentful as United States troops were sent to Vietnam to fight in a war that was viewed as “morally and militarily pointless.” By 1965 the front runners in opposition to the war and draft were main-line Protestant leaders who sounded the alarm of moral bankruptcy of the Vietnam adventure a half decade before the general American population soured on the war. Marty also pointed out that as the war lingered many Protestant leaders who had only advocated non-violent protests of the war turned increasingly to accept the need for violent protest as well. The middle to late 1960s was a time of increasing animosity between Protestant conservative and main-line churches that clashed over divisive social and political issues. Conservatives, in stressing personal salvation, preached a message of neutrality concerning social and political matters. More radical Protestant main-line leaders insisted that neutrality was not an option since neutrality granted support to the systematic social evils of the Vietnam War, military dictators in Latin America, segregated schools, and inadequate housing projects.

Martin Marty’s second general American religious history was more all-encompassing of religious traditions than was his first religious history which focused on the Protestant empire. His text was published in 1984 and was titled Pilgrims in Their

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371 Marty, Righteous Empire, 243.
372 Marty, Righteous Empire, 243.
373 Marty, Righteous Empire, 243.
374 Marty, Righteous Empire, 260.
376 Marty, Righteous Empire, 262.
Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America. It was much more inclusive of Catholic and Jewish history in America, while Righteous Empire was simply intended to be a history of Protestantism in America. In this text, Marty’s critique of Protestant military action against Native Americans was divided into two sections. The first section dealt with Protestant settlers confronting Native peoples for the first time and the second addressed the eras following the Revolutionary War and the Civil War when the United States government destroyed Indian culture and removed them from their land. Marty’s description of early Protestant settlers was less harsh; he argued that the early settlers often faced desperate situations as they attempted to survive their new environment.

In describing how the earliest settlers at Virginia interacted with the Natives, Marty pointed out how the settlers’ significant advantage in weapons aided in their survival against an increasingly suspicious Native population. This military advantage would not be used to threaten the Native Indians with forced retreat from their land or potential genocide for several generations. Describing the Indian reaction to the Jamestown settlement Marty stated, “A prophet had once told [Chief Powhaton] that on a third invasion by white people he would be conquered, and this was that third time. The English replied to him with cannon, and Powhaton, lacking similar arms, soon learned that he could best make his way by leaving the Virginians to their own devices, so treacherous was the colonists’ life together.”

Marty also noted that the English were unhelpful in maintaining peaceful relations with the Indians. Eventually, the brother of Powhaton took over as the chief, but the settlers were unaware since so many Indians were increasingly friendly.

As Marty understood it, the Indians were so friendly that the setters became comfortable enough with the Natives that they allowed them to borrow guns and often would share meals with them in their homes. Marty described how this unwise trust led to a massacre on Good Friday in 1622. This was the one military event that historian William Sweet referred to twice in his historical account. Marty wrote, “The Virginians sat down to Holy Day breakfast, with Indians as guests at some tables. Suddenly, and too late, they learned why the Indians had been paying close attention to their routines. At a prearranged signal, along a 140 mile zone up the James River, the Indians killed 347 colonists—one fifth the population—including John Rolfe.” According to Marty, this massacre ended the missionary impulse of the Virginians and began two years of military conflict.

Marty noted that the early Pilgrim settlers worried at the prospect of having to immediately deal with hostile Natives. The first Pilgrim settlers only saw glimpses of Natives and soon discovered a deserted village which they came to learn was decimated by disease four years earlier. The Pilgrims eventually made a treaty with Chief Massasoit which resulted in some fifty years of peaceful relations. The other Puritans who arrived made John Winthrop their leader and Marty described one force that united this group of settlers, “the Indians, who, though depleted by small pox that the Puritans thought was an act of God, still seemed ominous.” Marty related that the settlers determined that the Natives had a right to only as much land as they could cultivate and thus they “went through the motions of buying the land, their consciences made clear when they saw how

377 Marty, Pilgrims, 55.
378 Marty, Pilgrims, 57.
379 Marty, Pilgrims, 64.
eager the Natives seem to be to sell." However, after two decades of taking over Native land, the settlers’ quarrels with Natives turned to war and a massacre of the Natives at a Pequot fort. Marty quoted Captain John Mason, the Puritan commander during the attack on the Indian fort in which only two settlers were killed, while hundreds of Indians were shot and burned to death as the fort was set ablaze. “God, [Mason] was sure, ‘laughed his enemies and the enemies of his people to scorn, making them as a fiery oven.’”

Marty was not content to limit his discussion on Protestant settler interaction with Natives to the English. The Dutch came to the Island of Manhattan in 1613, and in 1626 purchased the Island from the Natives rather than just removing them. Up until 1639 relations with the Natives were fairly friendly until Governor Kieft crafted a policy forcing Natives to pay tribute. This, according to Marty, was incomprehensible to a people who considered the Europeans to be trespassing on their land. Kieft, in 1640, issued an attack on the Natives and numerous military assaults resulted. Marty cited the journal of David DeVries who described the horror of one such attack, “shrieks of dying Indians, soldiers tearing infants from the breasts of their mothers, men binding sucklings to small boards to cut and pierce them, and adults trying to escape while holding their own exposed entrails in their arms.” Kieft was finally called back to Holland in 1647, but as Marty indicated, the damage had been done as he transformed a friendly Native population into an aggressive, hostile tribe that sought revenge. This tragic episode was Marty’s final description concerning Protestant settlers’ military encounters with Natives.

Marty’s Pilgrims in Their Own Land delved much deeper into the Revolutionary Era compared to his earlier Righteous Empire. He began his discussion of the Revolution with the general statement that “from 1607 until the birth of the Nation after 1776, Protestant peoples came to dominate the area that would become the United States.” In attempting to discern the roots of the colonial American’s striving for independence from England, Marty turned to John Adams who credited the Reverend Jonathan Mayhew of Boston as being the first to preach the benefits that would result from independence. John Adams remembered that Mayhew wrote, “When provoked, it was those who did not resist who should receive damnation . . . John Adams was still commending this discourse to Thomas Jefferson, remembering how as a 14 year old he, Adams, ‘Who was destined in the future course of his life to dabble in so many revolutions in America, in Holland, and in France’ was first intoxicated by the ideas of Mayhew.” According to Marty, the striving for independence found in the words of Mayhew that enthralled John Adams was quickly spread throughout non-Anglican Protestant clergy.

Marty referred to the complaints among Anglican clergy regarding the widespread use of the pulpit to disseminate revolutionary ideology. Charles Inglis, an Episcopal rector, conducted a thorough investigation and discovered that every Presbyterian minister had preached messages promoting independence from England. Even some non-Anglican laymen had determined that the preaching of many ministers was politically

380 Marty, Pilgrims, 64.
381 Marty, Pilgrims, 64.
382 Marty, Pilgrims, 68.
383 Marty, Pilgrims, 91.
384 Marty, Pilgrims, 135-6.
distracted and was “doing the cause of religion more harm than good.”

As for individual ministers, one of the most significant and important figures was John Witherspoon. He was President of the College of New Jersey and under his direction the college became a stronghold of revolutionary rhetoric and by April of 1776 he publicly called for ending all relations with England.

Marty indicated that there were several pacifistic religious groups in Pennsylvania that refused to support the war; however, there was only one of English background which complicated their situation. Patriots interpreted their passive principles as loyalty to England. Many Quakers felt the need to defend their colonial homes against the British Army and either joined the army or paid for a substitute soldier. Some more strict Quaker Meetings rejected members who entered the colonial army. Those members who refused to support the war effort faced harassment, vandalism, and arrest.

The Baptists, Marty noted, made use of the Revolutionary Era to spur the incredible growth which would turn them into the largest Protestant denomination. The beginning of the war rallied the Baptists into the conflict and they demonstrated that they would fight and die for the political freedom they hoped would bring religious freedom to all the colonies. Religious tolerance was not something common between colonial churches as Marty wrote, “The Battling churches ceased fire against each other just long enough to unite against England, but nothing in their past portended that they could get together to help build a nation.” When the war was over the real Protestant battle to end church establishment began in force.

Marty made one mention of the War of 1812 as an event that caused the revivalistic fires of the Second Great Awakening to burn ever higher as anxiety about the war deepened. In introducing the topic of the Civil War, Marty described the religious views of President Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln knew that religious divisions were fomenting the political division between the North and the South so he made it a priority to critique Protestants who proudly declared that God was on their side and would aid them in destroying their foe. Since both sides were so sure about God’s favor, the end of the war and the Reconstruction period were unable to produce national unity.

After this brief introduction Marty turned to a discussion on the history of abolition in the United States.

John Woolman (1720-1772), a Quaker, was the first important questioner of slavery. Accordingly, Marty placed him at the beginning of the long tradition of moral and social reform that took place, some fifty years prior to the Civil War, during the Second Great Awakening. The Methodists, not wanting to slow their growth in the South, compromised on the slavery issue in 1784. Following this compromise, “slavery began to haunt the righteous empire of the dominating Protestants.” Marty also concluded that in spite of all the strenuous and extreme efforts of philosophical, evangelical, and black church abolitionists, slavery could not be abolished apart from the Civil War. Therefore, he stated, “The final story of emancipation for blacks, then, belongs more to

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386 Marty, Pilgrims, 139-40.
387 Marty, Pilgrims, 155.
388 Marty, Pilgrims, 224.
389 Marty, Pilgrims, 243.
390 Marty, Pilgrims, 233.
the history of war and politics than of religion.” After the Civil War, the former slaves embodied critical problems that have never been fully dealt with by the white majority. Following this analysis, Marty wrote about Black congregations during the Reconstruction time period.

Next Marty described the United States Indian policy following the Civil War. Ironically, Indian tribes were officially considered foreign nations even though they lived on land that they had always owned. Frontier settlers pushing west drove the Indians further off their land and when the Native tribes defended their land against the invaders the federal government used military force to defeat the Indians. Indian tribes were often forced by the federal military to cooperate in the selling of tribal lands and if they refused, the military strength of the United States army would forcibly remove them. Marty also went into detail on the massacre and removal of the Sioux tribe following the Wounded Knee incident, describing it as one of the final episodes of systemic violence imposed upon the Native American tribes in America by the federal government.

After Marty described the post-Civil War life of African American congregations and Native Indian removal, he began to utilize war as a place marker for other events; this was a popular strategy used by William Sweet, Winthrop Hudson, and Edwin Gaustad. For example, in describing the growth of Catholicism, Marty wrote that “After the Civil War most cities outside the South boasted their own bishop and cathedral.” Also when Marty was describing the conservative controversy concerning liberal biblical scholarship, he wrote, “Before the Civil War, formal scholarship was rare.” Marty’s turning to an intellectual analysis of Lincoln in his discussion of the Civil War was continued in greater measure in his presentation of Rauschenbusch before World War I and of the Niebuhr brothers between the two World Wars.

Three Social Gospel leaders that Marty discussed leading up to the First World War were Strong, Mott, and Rauschenbusch. Marty indicated that the failure of the Social Gospel to become a nation-wide popular movement partly rested on its leaders’ inability to “access millions of Americans including the lower classes and immigrants whose causes they championed—people who would not have known how to translate or respond to what they offered. Ironically, when a great unifying force finally came along to bring these dreamers and the people for whom they spoke together, that force was an alien and abhorrent instrument: the First World War.” Additional irony occurred due to the fact that the war diminished much liberal idealism concerning humanity, social progress and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

Marty reported that due to America’s entry into WWI, there was a solidifying of new areas of conflict within the white Protestant majority. For example, the Baptists were in favor of unity as long as the unity stemmed from members of other denominations becoming Baptist. He wrote, “For the first time since the Civil War, they found that they could suppress some of their differences—but only for a great cause. Once again it was a war that created the illusion of unity.” Thus, this unifying agent of American

391 Marty, Pilgrims, 254.
392 Marty, Pilgrims, 264.
393 Marty, Pilgrims, 272.
394 Marty, Pilgrims, 302.
395 Marty, Pilgrims, 338.
396 Marty, Pilgrims, 347.
Protestantism also demonstrated the collapse of civilized society and brought death and destruction to so much of the world. Rauschenbusch’s vision of a peaceful world society that increasingly reflected the Kingdom of God collapsed in the aftermath of the war.

Rauschenbusch pressed for Protestant unity, yet his ideas were symbolic of the divide between progressives and conservatives. He saw no conflict between Christianity and modernity and he preached that adaptation to new environments was needed so that the kingdom of God could be reflected in social life. These views alienated conservatives, like Moody, who were solely focused on saving individuals. Marty noted that Rauschenbusch often sounded too utopian for the conservatives in his generation yet his writings took sin very seriously as he clearly understood the death and evil that sin caused in the world. His earliest childhood memories were of Abraham Lincoln being shot and how the town of Rochester mourned by draping the city in black. In his final days, his collar displayed a black crepe he had begun wearing from the start of the war. Yet Marty asserted that Rauschenbusch utilized the war as increased motivation to continue preaching his message of the Kingdom of God being made manifest in society.

As Marty explained, when Rauschenbusch wrote his *Theology for the Social Gospel* in 1917, it was quite anticlimactic in that it appeared to be more of a concluding document than the justification for an enduring movement. It was a time when America had just entered the war and the war effort consumed vast amounts of energy from all Protestant churches. Conservatives were much more effective at utilizing fear of socialism in a time of war. The war itself, Marty related, did the most damage to the Protestant Social Gospel and its progressive message. Marty suggested that Rauschenbusch felt the pain of loss from the war as personally as anyone.

Back in 1898 Rauschenbusch had supported the war against Spain making it challenging for him to explain his opposition to this European war. He had, however, become disturbed by war and the connection of unbridled capitalism to war long before the outbreak of World War I. Marty indicated that his writings and his preaching at times attacked capitalists of peddling war, death and destruction to ensure the highest profit. Rauschenbusch was remorseful concerning the war years in 1918 and concluded that hatred in the world was so all-consuming that he could never again experience happiness. Marty wrote “So much for the image of Rauschenbusch as superficial optimist.” Because of the overwhelming expressions of hatred by Americans toward Germans, Rauschenbusch feared for his safety during the war years. Marty noted that in an attempt to demonstrate his Patriotism, he emphasized his son’s service on the Western Front in the ambulance service.

Marty commented that the First World War was the first major war America fought on foreign soil and its magnitude interrupted the social intricacies of national life. American Protestant churches generally supported America’s wars. This time, however, Protestant ministers, during the years leading up to the war, strongly opposed American involvement in the war, universally agreeing that there was no reason to get involved in a war fought in Europe. When the United States government decided war was

necessary, Protestant denominations not only supported it, but created a whole new ideology in order to justify their support of this war. Supporters targeted pacifists and the remaining neutral dissenters with mean-spirited condemnation on their lack patriotism. Marty mentioned that the activity and effort, in response to the government’s war machine, united the differing Protestant groups more efficiently than any religious activity or belief. Each Protestant denomination competed to be more Patriotic in support of war than the other denominations.

Another fact that Marty brought up in relation to the First World War was that in 1914 both the President and the Secretary of State were Presbyterians with pacifistic leanings. It would seem like Woodrow Wilson and Williams Jennings Bryan would be the most successful duo in keeping America out of military conflict. Bryan would become best known for the Scopes Monkey Trial. President Wilson campaigned in 1916 with the slogan ‘He kept America out of the war’ yet he would become best known for his success in convincing America to join the war to save democracy and his failure to persuade the world to adopt lasting and fair peace policies which would ensure both peace and democracy. Bryan was similar to Rauschenbusch in that he supported and even enlisted in the Spanish American War, and following the war he changed his mind and began a vigorous attack on American Imperialism. By 1914, his most consuming passion, according to Marty, was to keep America out of the war. Bryan resigned as the Secretary of State in 1917 in protest of America’s joining the war. The churches were the most important moral force backing Bryan and Wilson prior to 1917. When 1917 came and the war was being sold to the American people, almost all Protestant denominations granted the Wilson administration’s uncritical support.

Marty described President Wilson asking Congress for a declaration of war against Germany and mentioned the difficulties Wilson faced in dealing with the victorious Allied nations in forming a lasting peace treaty. Wilson had claimed that he feared war since “its spirit of ruthless brutality would infuse every fiber of national life.”402 By April of 1917, however, Wilson was ready to request a declaration of war which he described as a terrifying prospect that was needed because “the right is more precious than peace.”403 After victory, Wilson proposed a generous peace with Germany in order to speed the healing of Europe, but the Allies sought revenge through a crippled Germany and a hostile Congress even thwarted Wilson’s efforts at home.

The discussion of the historic peace churches was limited to a single sentence describing the persecution of these churches. Marty acknowledged the persecution but stated that they were not surprised by the treatment they received from society since they were constantly persecuted during times of war. Marty claimed that from 1914 through 1917, in spite of persecution for being of German decent, Lutheran Americans “did what they always do” in being good Lutherans, they decided to support the ‘powers that be.’404 They never considered the war a holy war like some Protestant denominations yet in their competitive support for the Red Cross and Liberty bonds they demonstrated their patriotism. The vast majority of evangelicals and Social Gospel liberals both competed to lead the charge into war, a war many saw as a holy war. Some ministers described it as a divine crusade, the holiest war in history, a missionary enterprise, and the allied soldiers

402 Marty, Pilgrims, 363.
403 Marty, Pilgrims, 363.
404 Marty, Pilgrims, 368.
as soldiers of Jesus Christ fighting to establish the Kingdom of God. These same patriotic Protestant ministers would be utilized by the government in teaching the American people hatred of the Germans when Americans had no previous reason for hating the Germans.

Marty not only viewed the war and the time leading up to the war as ironic, he also saw the 1920s boom and 1930s bust as ironic. It was an irony that came about due to the Protestant churches failure to unite for any reason except war. Marty wrote, “The churches have had to live with the brutal irony that they—the professors of the way of peace—united only for a war that, in retrospect, was hard to see as a religious crusade.” Here Marty, like Reinhold Niebuhr perceived much irony in the first few decades of the twentieth century as American Protestants combined the goals of the Social Gospel movement with a European war in their crusade for democracy and world peace, but which resulted in a war that made the world and Europe much less peaceful and democratic.

In an additional brilliant analysis of how the war years impacted the religious developments of the next twenty years, Marty declared, “For the next two decades, as if in reaction against the visions of unity in war, Americans retreated into mutually contradictory factions and sects. The land became a chaos of ‘isms,’ in a time of tribal consciousness and lost common purpose.” In his second volume of his Modern American Religion, Marty described the two decades between the World Wars as the most difficult time-period to write about when he wrote Pilgrims in Their own Land. The chapter covering this time period in Pilgrims was entitled “A Season of Conflict.” In his second volume of Modern American Religion the chapter covering this time period was subtitled “The Noise of Conflict.” The vast majority of this conflict occurred due to the hardening of religious and world views between liberals and conservatives, whites against blacks, Protestants against Catholics and Jews, and old-stock Protestants against the newly arrived immigrants. These conflicts were intensified following World War I and would only be overlooked and not solved by America’s entry into World War II.

In the years before the Second World War, Marty explained, there was a major fight among Protestant pacifists who were repentant of their support for WWI and those who saw the danger in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in Europe and the Imperialism of Japan. Marty wrote that “If during World War I church leadership sounded hawkish, the voice of the dove was heard thereafter.” In the 1930s, however, Reinhold Niebuhr—one of the best known Protestant thinkers changed his mind about pacifism and endorsed a Christian realism that allowed for military vigilance against someone like Hitler or Mussolini but would prevent a just war from turning into a holy war.

In 1941, following Pearl Harbor, war came to the United States and once again the Protestant majority supported the war effort. Marty pointed out that the support for the war led the Protestant majority to ignore government policies that were depriving many citizens of due process and many Jewish refugees of a chance to live. Marty stated that “innocent Japanese-Americans were herded into domestic-style concentration camps

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405 Marty, Pilgrims, 369.
406 Marty, Pilgrims, 371.
407 Marty, Pilgrims, 371.
408 Marty, Pilgrims, 400.
409 Marty, Pilgrims, 401.
on no good or just basis.”

Even as Americans learned of Hitler’s death camps for the Jews, Protestant leaders failed to call for increased immigration in order to save Jews from a too common death throughout much of Europe.

In spite these two criticisms that Marty leveled against the apathy of white Protestants who took too long to oppose Hitler, he suggested that there was an increasingly open attitude toward religious faith due to the combination of religion and patriotism that occurred during World War II. Around 1952, legitimate revival of religion began during the Eisenhower administration. Many of the returning soldiers sought out community roots and utilized Protestant congregations to find stability. Both American theologians and United States presidents utilized religious language to get their message disseminated to large audiences. President Eisenhower talked about the Second World War as a religious crusade and then tied that same religious language to his efforts to rid Washington of corruption. Likewise, well-known theologians such as Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr helped to popularize religious ideas through their books and lectures.

Reinhold Niebuhr, whom Marty regarded as the most important American theologian of the twentieth century, could not separate his theological message from his interpretation of American history. Marty mentioned that Niebuhr wrote three books examining the history of America and none was more important than the one he wrote in 1952, The Irony of American History. Here Marty could not help equating the message of Niebuhr to the past message of Abraham Lincoln. Marty wrote that Niebuhr “compared America once again to the chosen people of Israel; unlike most churchly predecessors, but like Abraham Lincoln, he saw America as anything but virtuous and innocent.”

Niebuhr’s critique was strong and argued from a historical perspective. Since the time of the founding of the nation, Americans enjoyed so much success and were enticed to such great power that they forgot their fallibility in relation to God.

Marty pointed out that according to Niebuhr, God did not want to be forgotten and would only show mercy towards Americans, when the nation repented of its pride, rather than due to conversions at revival crusades. Marty noted that Niebuhr concluded that repentance was not something he thought Christian America was apt to do. Marty noted that Niebuhr utilized ironic parallelism in comparing Christian America with Communist Russia. Niebuhr criticized Communists since their ideology made a god out of their state-run society and he compared that use of God to Americans use of the deity to back every cause they supported. America would have to be educated to the reality that God could only be known by taking seriously the difference between God’s will being done and what the majority of Americans were doing. Marty noted that the America in the 1950s was unable to accept Niebuhr’s critique, and that it would take a tragedy like the failure of the Vietnam War for Christian realism, to get a second hearing in America.

Marty continued to utilize Reinhold Niebuhr as someone who attempted to teach Americans to embrace the ironies that enveloped their America and their religious ideals.

410 Marty, Pilgrims, 401.
411 Marty, Pilgrims, 416.
412 Here Niebuhr critiqued the personal salvation being sold by conservative evangelicals like Billy Graham. Niebuhr thought those Christians, who primarily preached personal salvation, too often overlooked the bigger issue of Christian responsibility: the striving for economic justice in America and throughout the world.
413 Marty, Pilgrims, 417.
Marty claimed that Niebuhr’s irony makes more comprehensible the realities at the end of the 1960s, when Americans conflict with each other intensified greatly. Marty listed several groups who showed much agitation with each other, describing each group in a way that shows the breadth of the conflict and brought out the irony of the 1960s situation. American society was so unsettled at that time that conflict was revealed in “men versus women, young people versus their elders, leftists versus right-wings, hawks versus doves, black versus white, homosexual versus straight, hippies versus squares, Eastern religions versus conventional congregations, countercultural Aquarians versus nostalgic upholders of the old ways.” The Vietnam War tended to exaggerate these differences rather than to unite various religious factions who put aside their differences to fight a foreign enemy.

Although Hudson and Gaustad wrote and published their works while the Vietnam War was being fought, neither discussed the war in their general histories. Marty’s discussion and critique of the Vietnam War and American society during this time period was unique in Righteous Empire and even in his later Pilgrims in Their Own Land. Marty, during an interview, commented that 1965 was a volatile year in American history and events conspired to affect change but that change tended to create more conflict. In response to Southern violence against blacks, the Johnson administration pushed for, and Congress passed, a historic amount of civil rights legislation. This legislation, however, along with the administration’s decision to increase the troop-level of combatants in Vietnam completely divided America. Marty continued this chapter by describing the growth of religious and spiritual movements in the late 1960s and 1970s including sections on Black power, Native American renewal, the rise in popularity of Eastern religious traditions and the new West Coast countercultural movement. Marty assessed the situation and pointed to the Vietnam War as a major factor in the rise of discontentment with traditional Protestantism’s values and too often blind support for government policies. Thus, once the Vietnam War ended, much of the counterculture movement lost relevance even though some cultural shifts continued.

In concluding his written section on the Vietnam War, Marty provided two religiously motivated interpretations concerning the war and American culture in the 1960s. First, conservatives and evangelicals spent a great deal of energy condemning mainline and liberal Protestants along with organizations like the National Council of Churches and, second, the World Council of Churches “for ‘meddling’ in politics, particularly on the subjects of racial change and protest against the Vietnam War. Religion was to be a private affair, a matter of soul-saving and not world changing.” In contrast to the conservatives in the 1960s, the lay and clerical leadership of mainline Protestant congregations defended and promoted American civil rights issues and provided open protest to the war in Vietnam. These were two cultural currents within American Protestantism and in the mid-1980s Marty identified some of the key components of the 1960s countercultural conflict between conservatives and liberals who failed to find a peaceful way to coexist.

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414 Marty, Pilgrims, 429.
416 Marty, Pilgrims, 443.
417 Marty, Pilgrims, 454.
418 Marty, Pilgrims, 471.
In writing *Righteous Empire and Pilgrims in Their Own Land*, Martin Marty was the first American religious historian to introduce a moral critique of Protestant settler wars with Indians and later United States governmental policies which systematically deprived Native Americans through means of military force. These two general works of American religious history demonstrated, not only Marty’s grasp of the historical narrative, but his willingness to take a moral stand against wrongs perpetrated by white-American-Protestants during numerous American wars. The first and most obvious occurrence was the treatment of Indians during several centuries, but Marty also criticized white Protestant Southerners use of the bible in justifying slavery, and both sides’ claim of divine justification in glorifying their cause and in perpetuating their ability to inflict bloodshed against their enemies. Marty poignantly pointed out the role the Protestant churches played in creating fear and hatred of the Germans during WWI, the general Protestant apathy towards the Japanese Americans who were placed in confinement camps, and the disinterest in the plight of European Jews who were denied entrance into the United States during the German holocaust. In discussing the Vietnam War, Marty pointed out the war’s divisive force among Protestants in America with the more conservative evangelical congregations supporting the war effort in a traditional way but the more liberal mainline congregations generally opposing the war and openly protesting against it as the war lingered on into the late 1960s. Marty, in spite of all his insightful critiques, did not take a strong moral stand against the war or the killing of Vietnamese citizens during the war.

Marty’s two general histories would set the stage for a more comprehensive treatment of American religious history which did not necessarily result in more descriptions about Protestants and war and which actually provided less critique of Protestant support for war. Marty’s *Righteous Empire* was unique in that as a general history it was focused on the general history of Protestants in America and thus he was able to write significantly about Protestants at war in America. His *Pilgrims in Their Own Land* was more inclusive as a general religious history and addressed issues of Catholic and Jewish contributions to American history which limited the available space in which to write about Protestants and war. In 1972, Sydney Ahlstrom published his large and detailed *A Religious History of the American People*. It was published two years following Marty’s *Righteous Empire* and it would be an eleven-hundred page tome. In it, compared to Marty, Ahlstrom provided a more detailed historical background, a much more diverse inclusion of various religious traditions, but surprisingly a less critical moral critique of Protestant actors within his narrative, specifically when he wrote about the Protestant support for America’s many wars against Native Indians. In many ways, at least in the 1970s, Marty embraced being a church historian and strove simply to write the best history of Protestantism that had ever been written and that included being honest about the role Protestant denominations played during times of war in American history. Ahlstrom, in the 1960s, was a church historian who often wrote about the theological history of American Protestantism, but by the early 1970s he was ready to write a religious history that took seriously the need to incorporate the multitude of religious traditions that helped shape American culture. Yet the fact remains, in spite of their different motivations for writing their consensus histories, both Marty and Ahlstrom wrote narrative accounts of American history in which Protestantism played the dominate role in shaping American religious history. In 1973, Ahlstrom won the National Book
Award for his religious history; it was the same award that Martin Marty won in 1970 for his *Righteous Empire*.

### 6.2 Sydney Eckman Ahlstrom (1919-1984)

Sydney E. Ahlstrom was born in Minnesota and served in the United States Army during World War II as an Army captain. After the war, he received his PhD at Harvard University in 1952 where a number of prominent American historians and scholars mentored him in their trade. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. (1917-2007), the double Pulitzer Prize winning American Presidential historian, taught in the history department at Harvard from 1946 until 1962 when he left to join President-elect Kennedy’s administration. By the time Ahlstrom received his PhD from Harvard, Arthur Schlesinger Sr. (1888-1965) was still a year away from retirement at Harvard; he joined the faculty in 1924 and retired in 1953. Perry Miller (1905-1963), who was born in Chicago and earned undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Chicago, was a long time faculty member at Harvard when Ahlstrom arrived. Although Miller taught in the English department, he was one of the most important interpreters of American Puritanism (as intellectual history interpreted through literature). Miller taught at Harvard from 1931 until his death in 1964. In 1949, while Ahlstrom was a graduate student at Harvard, Miller published his biography of Jonathan Edwards, a showcase of his ability to write compelling intellectual history.

In 1954, Ahlstrom became a faculty member at Yale University and remained a professor there until 1984. Demonstrating his command of intellectual American history, Ahlstrom edited a text which was published in 1967 and included the ideas of some of America’s great theological minds. It was entitled *Theology in America: The Major Protestant Voices from Puritanism to Neo-Orthodoxy*. It began with sections taken from Thomas Hooker and Jonathan Edwards and concluded with passages from Walter Rauschenbusch and H. Richard Niebuhr. In 1972 he published *The Religious History of the American People* a history that he had been researching and writing for ten years. The book was a comprehensive, general American religious history, displaying Ahlstrom’s encyclopedic knowledge of American history, and his ability to describe the religious figures and movements that shaped national life.

In Ahlstrom’s introduction to *The Religious History of the American People*, he skipped over the European settlers ‘taking over’ the land by ‘pushing back’ the Indians. Also his depiction of the Revolutionary period skipped over the military struggle and went straight to Ezra Stiles sermon in 1783 entitled “The United States Elevated to Glory and Honor.” 419 Ahlstrom’s introduction went on to state that following the Revolution “only an occasional very eccentric American ever doubted that the Star Spangled Banner waved over the Lord’s Chosen Nation.” 420 In discussing the great progress of evangelicism in antebellum America, Ahlstrom contended that Protestant denominational splits occurred largely due to the flourishing of an aggressive evangelicism which was tightening its grip on both the North and South. He described the outbreak of militancy between the two evangelical groups “as a kind of double holy

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420 Ahlstrom, 5.
While the social ills of capitalism threatened evangelicalism during the Gilded Age, Protestant America united for both the Little War of 1898 and the Great War of 1914-1918.

After writing his introduction, Ahlstrom wrote well over a hundred pages on the European Prologue which included the European settlements of New Spain and New France. While he described some military conflicts, especially between the Spanish and Natives, he focused primarily on the European missionary efforts. By the time he began to write about “The Protestant Empire Founded,” the title of his second section, he had missions on his mind as he became engrossed with the difficult time all Europeans encountered in attempting to convert the Indians. This focus on missions limited his description of how the Natives were gradually and permanently displaced from the land. Perhaps his thinking was attuned to Sidney Mead, to a greater extent than to Martin Marty, concerning Mead’s idea of ‘plenty of space for all’ within the American frontier. While both Marty and Ahlstrom picked up on the theme of ‘empire,’ Marty’s first chapter of Righteous Empire was entitled “Clearing Space: the Removal of the Native American,” which was an idea that contradicted Mead’s notion of ‘plenty of space for all.’ Ahlstrom continued the theme of ‘empire’ in his second section which was titled “The Protestant Empire Founded” but immediately turned his focus toward Puritan intellectual history and the settlement of various congregations in different colonies while ignoring the issue of ‘space’ that was taken from the Natives by the Puritan settlers.

Prior to Ahlstrom examining the religious and political ideas behind the English settlements in Virginia and New England, he briefly dealt with the fact that the English were well aware of the Native Indian presence. In fact, the Indian was the biggest obstacle in the way of a permanent colonial empire, and the conversion of the Indian would be a formal objective of English imperialism. In spite of their knowledge of the Indian, Ahlstrom described how unprepared the first English settlers were to deal with the Indians. He wrote, “Yet nobody knew or could have guessed how diverse these indigenous people were, or how resistant to conversion and incorporation they would be.” Much of the resistance stemmed from the incompatible way of life between the Europeans and the Indians. Native peoples respected and venerated the earth as sacred, whereas Europeans cut down trees and plowed up prairies believing that the land was to be utilized in pursuit of hard work and individual advancement. Ahlstrom wrote more about Indian religion in this section than any American church historian before him had written.

Ahlstrom also referred to an episode that occurred in 1970 to highlight the religious attitudes of Indians regarding the land. It was an event that Martin Marty mentioned in his Pilgrims in Their Own Land. Both thought it was significant that the Pueblo Indians on the Taos Reservation, in 1970, won a sixty-four year political battle to have Blue Lake and 48,000 acres of land returned to them based on religious grounds. The sacred land of Blue Lake was central to the religious tradition of the Pueblo Indians and both authors viewed this development as one of the few highlights for Native tribes having their religious rights acknowledged and respected.

As Ahlstrom wrote increasingly about the immigration of Europeans and especially of the English, he gradually adopted Marty’s theme of ‘clearing space’ as he

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421 Ahlstrom, 8
422 Ahlstrom, 100.
mentioned how the frontier continually moved further and further west as more direct and more violent clashes between Protestants and Native Indians became unavoidable. Ahlstrom stated, “As settlement moved westward countless battles and wars were fought, an American epic was written, and as Teddy Roosevelt would say, the west was ‘won.’ Most of the land (almost all of the good land) was cleared of its earlier inhabitants in the name of progress and the greatest good, and the Indian was pushed into various pockets and corners.” 423 This winning of the west did not happen quickly and Ahlstrom’s descriptions of early Protestant settlers’ interactions with Natives would differ greatly from interactions post-Civil War. In much the same way as Marty, Ahlstrom described the earliest settlers’ interactions with Natives to be based on a daily struggle to survive and the post-Civil War interactions to be based on white settlers’ greed and cruelty.

Ahlstrom described the 1607 Jamestown settlement as a colonial experiment that was barely able to survive as it was subject to “Indian massacres, pestilence, misgovernment, sloth, avarice, disorderliness, and neglect.” 424 This statement highlights the settlers’ struggle with Native surprise attacks; however, this statement about Jamestown was Ahlstrom’s only statement about Protestant settlers’ interactions with Indians during the founding of New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies. In fact up to this point in his historical account, Ahlstrom wrote more about Indian religion than he had about Protestant settlers’ relations with Indians. Ahlstrom’s next chapter was titled ‘Tensions in the New England Way’ and here he wrote more about Protestant settlers’ wars with Native tribes along with the failure of Indian missions.

Settling more and more land generated military conflict with Natives. Ahlstrom pointed to Protestant settlers’ disrespect of Indian rights as a leading cause of the Pequot War in 1637. He also indicated that hostile Indian relations with colonial settlements before and after this war added to the economic difficulties of colonial life. The missionary efforts of John Eliot, aided by his translation of the Bible into their Native language in 1663, was one of the most promising missionary endeavors in colonial America. Missionary efforts were disrupted in 1675-76 by the tragic and vicious King Philips War. The Indian tribes were almost successful in their attempt to reclaim land lost to colonial settlements. Ahlstrom wrote, “the Wampanoags and Narragansetts devastated the outlying white settlements, pressed back the frontier, and, but for the coordinated offensive of the New England Confederation, might have carried the day.” 425 The Indians may have destroyed several English settlements during the war; however, after the war all Indian tribes were removed from Southern New England.

In Northern New England the Indians turned to France for aid and, according to Ahlstrom, soon thereafter the French and Indian Wars would limit New England growth in the north and west. This limitation would end in 1759 with the capture of Quebec and the end of the war. Ahlstrom reiterated, however, that during the French and Indian War the fear of massacre and treachery was a daily colonial reality so as to radically reduce mission outreaches to any Native tribe. 426 The end of the French and Indian War would mark the end of Ahlstrom’s discussion of early colonial wars with Native Indians. Next Ahlstrom would turn his historical narrative to the Revolutionary Era; however, he would

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423 Ahlstrom, 103.
424 Ahlstrom, 105.
426 Ahlstrom, 157.
continue to occasionally write about Protestants’ interactions with Indians within the ever-westward expanding frontier.

Two of the more significant descriptions about Protestant relations with Indians took place while Ahlstrom wrote about the Revolutionary War Era and the post-Civil War westward expansion. One of the most important factors leading up to the Revolutionary War, according to Ahlstrom, was a sense of ‘common destiny.’

This American colonial unity stemmed from what Ahlstrom described as, “an utterly alien and hostile ‘civilization’ beyond the frontier, resisting white encroachment, and making frequent incursion on westward-pushing white settlements.” This sense of unity helped to inspire the idea that colonial America should be independent from England.

Two decades following the Civil War, after the Indians had been removed from the majority of their land, a major change occurred in government policy toward Native tribes. Ahlstrom described what happened in 1871 when he stated that “Congress gave up the fiction that Indian tribes were independent powers, abolished the treaty system, and recognized that Indians were in fact wards of the state. President Grant’s announcement of a ‘peace policy’ therefore, opened a new epoch in American Indian relations.”

Yet this ‘new epoch’ could not hide the fact that white Protestants destroyed Native lands and forced Native tribes onto small, relatively uninhabitable, reservations. This fact was made clear by Ahlstrom as he cited Helen Hunt Jackson’s 1881 book *A Century of Dishonor*. It was a book that was quoted by Leonard Woolsey Bacon in 1897 and by Martin Marty in 1970. Yet, none of the church historians who wrote from 1930s-1969 mentioned Jackson’s book, which is not unusual since they generally omitted descriptions about Protestant settlers’ relations with Native Indians.

Ahlstrom noted that Jackson’s work was the culmination of a long struggle to inform the nation of the tragedy that had been forced on the Native Indians in America. Ahlstrom concluded his remarks concerning Protestants and Native Indians by stating that “conquest and removal yielded to a search for some means of ‘solving’ the problem.” He also mentioned that at the current time there were three main modes of thinking about how to solve the ‘Indian problem.’ The three solutions were assimilation, protected isolationism, and extermination with the middle solution winning the day.

Almost immediately following the end of the French and Indian War, the political dynamics shifted between England and the American colonies. Colonists, who no longer had the French and Indians to fight against, turned their attention to the English and their increasingly harsh imperial policies. The Revolutionary period resulted in political and military turmoil which would last for almost four decades and was not concluded until 1801, the year Thomas Jefferson was elected President.

The Revolutionary War narrative, within Ahlstrom’s work, focused on the problems Protestant denominations faced because of the war, rather than on battle scenes of Protestant colonists at war with the English. Among other things, the war brought on an extended religious depression. He noted, however, that colonial Protestants were able to maintain their belief in the Puritan idea of America as a providential nation and that independence from England was a divine right that a righteous and just God would

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427 Ahlstrom, 346.
428 Ahlstrom, 346-7.
429 Ahlstrom, 861.
430 Ahlstrom, 861.
bestow upon his chosen people. Ahlstrom noted that the religious downturn was short-lived following the end of the war and by 1801 revivals of religion were spreading across the nation. The religious revivals rekindled Puritan millennial ideals that a repenting nation faithful to God’s covenant would be God’s instrument in creating the Kingdom of God on earth. These Protestant revivals would flourish following the end of the Revolutionary War, but during the war and in the lead up to the war, most churches were pressed for support from both sides. Eventually the majority of Protestant denominations came to identify with the Patriot cause and contributed significantly to the rise of pro-independence and anti-English mentality.

Ahlstrom’s narrative returned to the beginning of the Revolutionary War to describe the impact of the war on Protestant ministers. The war deprived local churches of their ministers since Patriotic clergy left their congregations to join the army as soldiers and chaplains. The Protestant religious situation was so bad that, according to Ahlstrom, the war “left churches disorganized and their members preoccupied by burning questions of military or political nature.” The Anglicans and Methodists faced many more challenges during the war than other Protestant denominations, since they tended to be more loyal to England and their leadership refused to support the independence of the American colonies. Even as a large percentage of Methodist leadership returned to England, the Methodist grew with the spread of revivalistic fervor in the Methodist laity and because of a message of personal religious experience. Ahlstrom noted that the Congregationalist and Baptist were not impacted as significantly as the Anglicans and the Methodists.

Ahlstrom’s narrative concerning the war made no mention of any battlefield description of colonial Protestants at war against the English. His narrative did, however, describe that as the war approached a flood of colonial fear and antipathy toward the Church of England arose. But his text quickly digressed to a discussion of how colonial American congregations developed based on voluntary support of the laity, following the end of the Revolutionary War. This description of the importance of the volunteer laity in the Revolutionary War period ended Ahlstrom’s historical account of the Revolutionary War and he did not describe any other war until his discussion of the Civil War Era.

In section nine, Slavery and Expiration, Ahlstrom began his historical narrative on the Civil War Era. He pointed out that Protestant churches’ attitudes were a major factor in building momentum for a very violent military conflict in which American Protestants killed each other in unimaginable numbers for that time period. He wrote, “In this hardening of attitudes the churches were a powerful factor. They provided the traditional recourse and appeal to the Absolute. They gave moral grandeur to the anti-slavery cause and divine justification for slavery.” Next Ahlstrom cited some prayers and sermons by Episcopal pastors, which demonstrated the hatred the North and South had for each other, along with the certainty that God would fight on their behalf. In researching the division

431 Ahlstrom, 264.
432 Ahlstrom, 350.
433 Ahlstrom, 365.
434 Ahlstrom, 375.
435 Ahlstrom, 382.
436 Ahlstrom, 668.
between Protestants in the North and South he concluded that, “Volume after volume could be filled with the same bloodthirsty condemnations, the same prayers for aid from the Almighty, the same self-righteous benedictions.” This, of course, was a common insight that every American church historian wrote about when discussing this time period beginning with Leonard W. Bacon.

The historians L. W. Bacon, P. G. Mode, W. W. Sweet, C. E. Olmsted, W. S. Hudson, E. S. Gaustad, and M. E. Marty all concluded that the Protestant denominational divorce ominously foreshadowed the violent political division within the United States. Sweet, however, in his focus on the settling of the American frontier during the time period between Revolution and Civil War declared that the Protestant split was not simply the initial division, but that it was the crucial and decisive division leading to war. Ahlstrom even cites William Sweet’s statement that “there are good arguments to support the claim that the split in the churches was not only the first break between the sections, but the chief cause of the final break.” In support of this idea, Ahlstrom reflected on the years 1846 through 1860 writing that during this time “churchmen gradually converted the antislavery movement into a massive juggernaut, and dedicated the South to preserving a biblically supported social order. To these opposing causes, moreover, they transmitted the overcharged intensity of revivalism, carrying it even to the troops when war finally came.” Next Ahlstrom addressed the way the war shaped national identity and attempted to solve America’s longest standing moral contradiction.

Ahlstrom stressed the fact that the Civil War was a ‘moral’ war. He wrote, “The Civil War has become enmeshed in the national self-consciousness not simply because of its enormous cost in carnage and death, but because it exposed a fundamental moral commitment which the nation has never been able to discharge.” Equality, liberty, and justice were all ingredients in the founding of the nation and now would be the time in which Americans would decide if these concepts were a rhetorical ruse or a literal truth worth fighting and dying for on American soil. Ahlstrom elegantly described the way in which he interpreted the Civil War as being a ‘moral war’ when he stated, “It was not ‘moral’ because one side was good and the other evil, nor because purity of motive was more pronounced on one side than on the other. It was a moral war because it sprang from a moral impasse on issues from which Americans in the mid-nineteenth century could no longer escape.” He acknowledged that there would have been no war, if there had been no slavery, or no moral outrage against slavery. But from the 1830s until 1860 slavery became a mightily entrenched institution in the South and abolition became an emboldened crusade in the North. War could not be avoided.

Ahlstrom succinctly described the war’s origin, its aftermath, and its passionate meaning for American religious history. He stated, “Its origins go back at least to Europe’s almost simultaneous discovery of the African Gold Coast and the New World. Its aftermath still constitutes the country’s chief moral challenge. Nowhere in Christendom was Negro slavery more heavily institutionalized, nowhere was the disparity between ideals and actuality so stark, nowhere were the churches more deeply

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437 Ahlstrom, 671.
438 Ahlstrom, 673.
439 Ahlstrom, 673.
440 Ahlstrom, 649.
441 Ahlstrom, 649.
implicated. Few subjects, if any, are so fundamental to American religious history.\textsuperscript{442} Additional examples of the moral significance of the Civil War in American religious history would be presented as Ahlstrom wrote significantly about the importance of the Protestant chaplaincy in the Union and in the Confederacy.

The military chaplaincy was the most honored religious activity that the Protestant churches supported. Ahlstrom noted that one chaplain was assigned to each regiment by the Union War Department and by the Confederacy as well. Denominations, both North and South, were valiant in their efforts to provide chaplains. As their situation was extremely difficult, the chaplains’ efforts were often heroic as they aided soldiers in battle, cared for the sick and dying, and held revival services in between the fighting. Ahlstrom, like several other historians, noted that these chaplains had a remarkable success at winning converts and creating a revivalistic spirit within all ranks of soldiers. In support of this extended time of revival among the troops, Ahlstrom noted that William Wallace Bennett found enough material to write an entire book on just the revivals that occurred in the South, this book was published in 1876 and entitled \textit{Narrative of the Great Revival in the Southern Armies during the late Civil War between the States}.\textsuperscript{443}

Ahlstrom highlighted the fact that calculations on military converts differed greatly from a low of around one hundred thousand to a high of more than two hundred thousand. America was a deeply pious Protestant nation at war which intensified the need for a personal relationship with God. Ahlstrom suggested Protestant devotion contributed to the length and ferocity of the war in writing that "more cynical commanders and more despairing men might have been less sure that the Almighty was with them and that victory must surely come. Perhaps piety lengthened the war. Certainly it deepened the tragedy and made the entire experience a more enduring scar on the national memory."\textsuperscript{444} Ahlstrom described the Civil War as a ‘scar on the national memory’ as well as being a result of and a solution to the ‘moral crisis’ that confronted America in the mid-nineteenth century. In doing this Ahlstrom presented the Civil War as a moral war to a greater extent than the historians that came before him. In addition, he pontificated to a greater extent than did other historians, about the unfinished outcome of the war as America still struggles with racial issues stemming from slavery and the violent way slavery was ended.

The churches were at the heart of the pre-war, war, and post-war racial struggles that presented America with its most profound moral dilemma. While the churches during the war effort raised large sums of money to provide tracts, Bibles and other literature to soldiers in the field; they also promoted distrust and hatred of the enemy, which in this case meant preaching national discord based on the other’s view of slavery. Ahlstrom commented, “The churches, not only because of their role in stimulating this philanthropy, but because of their entire involvement in sectional controversy and war work, were permanently altered in their public stance and in their attitudes toward social affairs. Like the nation as a whole, they would never again be the same."\textsuperscript{445} The South in mourning its defeat on the battlefield doubled down in its defense of antebellum

\textsuperscript{442} Ahlstrom, 649.
\textsuperscript{443} Ahlstrom, 675.
\textsuperscript{444} Ahlstrom, 677-8.
\textsuperscript{445} Ahlstrom, 681.
evangelicalism and its rejection of modernism. The North in celebrating its victory on the battlefield and in mourning its dead president passed national legislation attempting to protect and educate the newly freed population but failed to create change in Southern states or in local communities.

Ahlstrom pointed out that after the war, Protestant pulpits continued to verbally attack the other side. Southern clergy often beseeched God to send judgment upon the North for invading the South, killing Southern men, and burning Southern cities. At the same time Northern preachers continued to hail their victory as God’s vindictive judgment against the South for their rebellion. And what was the result of all this mean-spirited preaching following a war that left six hundred thousand dead? Ahlstrom concluded that the end result was “smoldering rage” on both sides. He wrote, “In the South there was relief and dejection and smoldering rage. In the North—as Lincoln’s funeral train made its way to Springfield—the exultation that might have burst forth yielded to relief and dejection and smoldering rage.” Rage carried the day as both sides blamed each other for the war.

Those who sought to make sense of the war usually chose the categories of judgment and punishment in which to communicate their ideals; yet for the most part Northern and Southern apologists would utilize these categories to defend their own side. Abraham Lincoln, Philip Schaff, and Horace Bushnell were three individuals who sought to end the self-righteousness displayed by those in the North and South. They sought to remind the nation that God’s ways were above human understanding, there was uncertainty within all historical reality, and the claim of moral purity by either side was foolishness. Ahlstrom pictured these three theological thinkers as a foreshadowing of the neo-orthodox theology that would criticize liberalism and liberal support for war following the First World War. Ahlstrom’s depiction of these three thinkers as neo-orthodox might not have been as manifest as Marty’s parallel depiction of Abraham Lincoln and H. Richard Niebuhr, but Ahlstrom did make it clear that these Civil War Era American spokesmen wanted to separate God from the American culture that created the Civil War.

Ahlstrom’s section on Civil War intellectual history followed his lengthy historical narrative of battlefield activities by Protestant chaplains and soldiers. In writing this section, he delved into the writings and ideology of Lincoln, Schaff, and Bushnell in much the same way as several of the historians who wrote before him (Sweet, Hudson, Gaustad, and Marty) although often those prior historians’ account of the Civil War was limited to intellectual history and neglected battlefield accounts of Protestants at war.

While Lincoln was the most famous of the Civil War representatives, Ahlstrom began with Bushnell’s thinking concerning God’s will and the Civil War. As Bushnell tried to comprehend the suffering and sacrifice of the war, he turned to the most sacred Christian symbol, the cross. Through the lens of Christ’s crucifixion, Bushnell compared the nation’s suffering and death in war to Christ’s suffering and death on the cross. Although the Civil War, like the cross, may have been a symbol of torture and execution, they both could also be interpreted in some sense as good since they resulted in eventual redemption. The cross was good because of Christ’s resurrection redeeming humanity and the Civil War would ultimately be good due to the nation being redeemed for the sin

446 Ahlstrom, 682-3.
447 Ahlstrom, 682.
of slavery. Schaff perceived the war, Ahlstrom wrote, as primarily a judgment on the entire nation for being complicit in the sin of slavery. Yet like Bushnell, Schaff also perceived a possibility for national redemption flowering out of the suffering and death that could shape an America that would fight for the cause of human freedom around the world.  

Ahlstrom agreed with the general consensus that the meaning of the war for Lincoln could be found in two of his more famous speeches: the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address. Ahlstrom wrote that it was the Second Inaugural Address in which Lincoln “expounded the duty, destiny, and present woe of the ‘almost chosen people.”  

Lincoln’s primary conception of the Union during the Civil War encompassed three main ideals: a moral purpose for America as a nation under God; the trail by fire and blood of this central ideal; and the possibility of new birth through a renewed charity toward all. Ahlstrom pointed out that Lincoln’s vision of the birth of a new nation based on charity never became a reality since there was too much hatred and bitterness caused by the war. America’s enduring tolerance for racism never allowed the newly freed slaves to achieve a genuinely equal freedom. This reality became especially troubling after the Presidential Compromise of 1877 when the Federal military was withdrawn; the ‘Solid South’ rose again to prevent freed slaves from voting using every means necessary from state legislation to violent intimidation by the Ku Klux Klan.  

Ahlstrom, perhaps more than any other historian, narrated the deep divisions within the Union following the Civil War which were not resolved following Lee’s surrender. He also narrated how those divisions continued to affect Protestant congregations and how those divisions influenced the Civil Rights agenda one hundred years later. Ahlstrom recounted that the “South embarked on a course of its own, becoming reconciled to the North in certain respects, yet remaining profoundly separated in its own mind and memory and in its own distinctive religious history.” America was unable, therefore, to peacefully resolve this deep political divide that was centered in racial attitudes. Ahlstrom insightfully noted that “Perhaps the same racial impasse that had made armed conflict inevitable also made just reconstruction impossible.” And a lack of justice for the freed slaves was the price to be paid for the political divisions between the North and the South.  

In the North, Ahlstrom stated that the Social Gospel, in spite of its roots in abolitionist ideology, simply forgot the South and ignored the climatic sufferings of the freed slaves during the Progressive Era (1890s-1920s). In the South, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans unanimously declared and demonstrated their support for the Lost Cause and became determined to fight against the ideology of the modernist North who forced passage of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution. The passage of these Amendments would not improve the lives of most freed slaves in the South especially following 1877 when Northern troops withdrew from the South. Although the Constitutional Amendments did not immediately grant equality

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448 Ahlstrom, 686.
449 Ahlstrom, 686.
450 Ahlstrom, 687.
451 Ahlstrom, 688-90.
452 Ahlstrom, 690.
453 Ahlstrom, 691.
to the freed slaves, Ahlstrom ended his discussion of this time period by pointing out that the rise of independent Negro Churches played an important role during and after reconstruction in uniting freed slaves and to strengthening the Radical Republicans.\footnote{Ahlstrom, 696-7.}

Ahlstrom next mentioned the war with Spain in 1898. He noted that this war marked the end to the post-Civil War era. Ahlstrom connected the prolonged racist attitudes of the South to a justification of America’s foreign domination. He wrote “Imperial acquisitions in the Caribbean and the Pacific led to the nationalization of Southern attitudes on race. Jim Crow was at the peak of his career. Denomination mattered little, for support for the racist creed ran the gamut from urban Episcopalians to country Baptist.”\footnote{Ahlstrom, 728.} Like Marty, Ahlstrom described the way war and a common enemy could unite the nation by diverting the public’s attention it did not matter very much whether the enemy was Spain or Germany. They both also pointed out the temporary nature of such a diversion on the divided nation which could not heal itself following the Civil War. Marty and Ahlstrom pointed out that WWI patriotism briefly closed the deep fissures within Protestantism but in the years after WWI those fractures became wider and the nation became more entangled in disastrous divisions.

Ahlstrom, after his section on the Civil War, increasingly began to utilize certain wars as period markers for other events which happened in the United States. He wrote, “A strange formlessness marks the half century which follows the Civil War.”\footnote{Ahlstrom, 733.} He described that time period as one of great social and economic revolution. It was also a time when new immigration patterns threatened the established Protestant churches while they had not even been able to heal their divisions caused by the slavery issue and the Civil War itself. This new and increased immigration pushed many Protestants, especially in the South, into a more radical Nativism. These social conditions along with the influence of Liberal theology and the Social Gospel in the North convinced Ahlstrom to conclude that “no aspect of American Church history is more in need of summary and yet so difficult to summarize as the movements of dissent and reaction that occurred between the Civil War and World War I.”\footnote{Ahlstrom, 823.} This statement revealed the way Ahlstrom utilized these two wars and eventually WWII to describe and narrate a time frame around other events. Here he also pointed out the increasingly complex ways communication broke down between liberals in the North and conservatives in the South and the racial tension that continued to dominate their cultural worlds. Ahlstrom also cited Sidney Mead’s concept of America’s two religious heritages laid out in \textit{The Lively Experiment}. The two heritages were comprised of an emphasis on unity and patriotism grounded in the Enlightenment and by a divisive heritage based in a denominational structure. Mead stated that “the high degree of amalgamation of these two faiths took place in the decades following the Civil War.”\footnote{Mead quoted in Ahlstrom, 845.}

Ahlstrom also described this time between the Civil War and WWI as a time of conflict and changing policy with Native Indians. He wrote, “The most sensational aspect of the white man’s dealings with the Indian, nearly to the end of the century, was continued arm conflict, a series of skirmishes and minor wars that became intrinsic to the
myth of the Wild West.” He also noted that in 1871 Congress stopped the treaty system that treated Indian tribes as foreign powers and began to treat them as dependents of the state. With President Grant’s calling for a ‘new peace policy’ with the Natives and with Helen Hunt Jackson leading reform efforts with her 1881 scathing report entitled A Century of Dishonor, the nation entered a new era of giving protection to Indian tribes, albeit through isolationism, and thus stemmed the tide of extermination and conquest that was central to acquiring western land for settlement. Ahlstrom preceded a long list of church historians, who referred to Jackson’s report, starting with L. W. Bacon who used the text to condemn the expulsion of the Cherokee nation from Georgia.

In beginning his discussion of the twentieth century, Ahlstrom summed up the last seven decades when he stated, “Wartime excitements and postwar deflations of spirit have provided the rhythms for the religious climate of the United States during the greater part of the twentieth century.” He went on to describe the post-WWII years as a time in which “steady acceleration of uncontrolled economic growth, population movement, and governmental expansion had brought the United States by the later 1960s to a state of advanced technocratic crisis compounded by yet another war.” These statements set the stage for his discussion of the war with Spain which he described as the ‘Little War’ that was the ‘rehearsal’ for WWI, the ‘Great War.’

Churches reflected President William McKinley’s pious support for the Spanish American War, turning the five month military effort into a crusade for imperialism and missions. Ahlstrom quoted the Methodist president when he confessed to praying for guidance and was rewarded when God revealed to him that, “There was nothing left for us to do but to take them all and to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them by God’s grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died.” All Protestant denominations embraced the idea of the war as a crusade against the Catholic Church and Papacy; however, the Methodists were the most fervent at proclaiming the war as a righteous and holy war that would be able to end the ‘Romish superstition in the West Indies.’ Ahlstrom concluded his comments about the Spanish American War with a rather bold declaration considering the number of wars American Protestants had embraced. He stated, “Never have patriotism, imperialism, and the religion of American Protestants stood in such fervent coalescence as during the McKinley-Roosevelt era.” These same three forces would, according to Ahlstrom, march America into the Great War in 1917 for the next Protestant crusade to ‘make the world safe for democracy’ in spite of President Wilson’s vow in 1914 to maintain a strict neutrality.

On April 2nd 1917, President Wilson went before Congress to ask for a declaration of war by selling the war as having divine sanction. Ahlstrom commented that Wilson framed the war as a ‘holy war.’ He even quoted Wilson’s statement when he told Congress that he was ready “to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars [because] the right is more precious than peace, and we

459 Ahlstrom, 849.
460 Ahlstrom, 875.
461 William McKinley (1843-1901) was the twenty-fifth President, leading the United States to victory in the Spanish-American War.
462 Ahlstrom, 879.
463 Ahlstrom, 879.
464 Ahlstrom, 880.
shall . . . bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free." On April 6th, Good Friday, Congress declared war and the Protestant churches that supported isolationism in 1914 and who helped re-elect Wilson on the platform that ‘he kept us out of the war’ were quick to support this political change. Signals for this political change arrived as early as 1915 when Germany sunk the Lusitania and by 1917 Protestant denominations were enthusiastically joining the President’s global crusade to spread freedom and peace by means of a war that would demonize Germany.

Ahlstrom referred to Ray Abrams’ Preachers Present Arms and cited it several times. Abrams documented the way Christian ministers embraced the war hysteria and preached war and hatred propaganda supplied by the War Department throughout the years of World War I. Since Abrams’ influential book was published in 1933, Sweet was able to utilize the book in his 1939 edition of The Story of Religions in America where he increased his condemnation of the Protestant clergies’ support for the First World War. Ahlstrom was the first American church historian to refer to Abrams’ text since Sweet, even though every other church historian who wrote between Sweet and Ahlstrom documented the Protestant clergies’ general support for the war effort against Germany.

Ahlstrom defended the historical accuracy of Abrams’ book. He stated that a common charge against Abrams’ book was that it provided an inflated account of churches rhetoric in support of the war. Ahlstrom reaffirmed that the fact of the matter was that the vast majority of all religious leaders in America joined the crusade in support of war and often they were extremely vocal in pushing war propaganda.

Ahlstrom documented how both liberal Protestants and conservative Protestants joined together in their condemnation of Germany and their praise for the American war effort. Ahlstrom did include a brief mention of a few Protestants who advocated the pacifist position against all war, even this one. Ahlstrom pointed to the traditional ‘peace churches’ such as the Quakers and the Mennonites as Protestant groups who were willing to face public abuse in order to refuse combat in the American armed forces. After painstaking research, Abrams documented seventy ministers from non-German and non-pacifistic churches that were openly critical of the war effort. Ahlstrom noted that Abrams’ research revealed that most ministers who protested against the war came from churches with strong Social Gospel leanings like the Unitarians and Congregationalists and none came from churches in the South.

Emphasizing the directly and indirect way Protestant churches embraced the war effort, Ahlstrom wrote about their disseminating propaganda, encouraging enlistment among their congregations, displaying military service flags, holding liberty loan drives, and complaining that too many Protestant leaders were too passive in their support for the war. During this time, no amount of saber rattling could satisfy the requirements of Protestant leaders attempting to prove their patriotism through their blood lust. Ahlstrom agreed with the conclusion made by past historian William W. Sweet, when he wrote in

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465 Ahlstrom, 881.
466 Ahlstrom, 884.
467 Ahlstrom, 887.
468 Ahlstrom 887.
469 Ahlstrom, 892.
his *The Story of Religion in America* that “for the period of World War I the separation of church and state was suspended.”

The official end of the war arrived in November of 1919 marking a national celebration, an opportunity for a global cooperation, and a hope by Protestant leaders that their wartime crusade for permanent peace could be preserved. Ahlstrom noted that only five days prior to the armistice, the Republican Party won the midterm elections and took control of both houses of Congress dealing President Wilson a defeat that greatly weakened his ability to push for a fair peace treaty and an international assembly to prevent future war. Republican senators were determined to block support for Wilson’s peace plan and the European Allies were even more determined to make Germany suffer under an unreasonable debt in order to punitively reinforce their suffering through the terms of the peace treaty. American Protestants did not object. As Ahlstrom stated, “Having supported a war to crush the Hun, they favored the treaty’s harsh terms.”

Protestants, however, did support the World Court and the League of Nations and they, in general, were outraged by the Senate’s final rejection of these international peace agencies.

Ahlstrom’s discussion of World War II began in his chapter on the 1930s because the decade best known for the Great Depression ended with the start of World War II. Ahlstrom described the re-emergence of foreign policy debates during the 1936 election as the Japanese Empire invaded China, German Nazi’s demilitarized the Rhineland, Italian fascist invaded Ethiopia, and Spain was embroiled in civil war. Protestant leadership was devastated by foreign developments indicating another large and deadly war. Most Protestant ministers wholeheartedly embraced American neutrality and pacifism since they learned of the horrors on the battlefield during WWI.

Ahlstrom stressed the historical reality of “countless Protestant ministers” publicly declaring from their pulpits that they would never again support any war for any reason. He stated that two historic assumptions were at the foundation of their newly found pacifism. First, they believed that civilized nations would never again embrace war now that the tragic loss of life in WWI was so well documented. Second, they thought it possible for the United States to overlook foreign dictators’ aggressions. As the gravity of the international conflict grew increasingly dire, the Protestant pacifistic monopoly came to an end, creating a time of conflict and divisiveness within Protestant churches.

Ahlstrom noted that the Protestant position for and against war rarely rested on pure reason or scriptural interpretation but rather grew out of fear and unreasonable devotion to previous national ties. In America, these debates concerning war were abruptly ended in December of 1941 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. December 7th was the day that Franklin D. Roosevelt claimed would live in infamy and it was the day that brought a unified America into the Second World War. The reasons for the United States entering the war were clear and understood by most Protestant ministers. The ministers, however, remembered the lessons of WWI and refrained from a foolhardy embrace of military culture. Ahlstrom referred to John Abrams’ 1930s critique of Protestant institutional leaders’ uncritical support of WWI when he wrote that “the

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470 Sweet quoted by Ahlstrom, 892.
471 Ahlstrom, 893.
472 Ahlstrom, 930.
churches did not ‘present arms’ with the disgraceful lack of charity and proportion they had displayed during WWI.”

The 1940s was the decade, according to Ahlstrom, that saw the split between Fundamentalism and the great ‘moderate middle,’ since during the 1920s and 1930s they remained doctrinally conservative. Much of this division occurred as the moderates were inclined to embrace much of neo-orthodoxy while the Fundamentalists were disposed to rejecting neo-orthodoxy as a modernist attack on Scriptural inerrancy. Neo-orthodoxy was instrumental in helping theology and theologians shape much of America’s moral, intellectual, and cultural life and it helps to explain the 1960s countercultural revolution, the increasing skepticism of main-line Protestants concerning American imperialism, and the war in Vietnam.

Ahlstrom also addressed the role played by neo-orthodoxy in America during the 1940s and he credited this movement with tempering Protestant America’s enthusiasm for war. He wrote that “the ‘Protestant search for political realism’ had not been entirely in vain.” This was a reference to the theological ideals of Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr. Neo-orthodoxy in America stemmed from the theological critique of German Protestant culture that failed to provide an alternative narrative to the nationalistic rush to war in 1914. The alternative was provided in 1919 by the Swiss theologian Karl Barth. American theologians, none better than the Niebuhr brothers, renewed their interest in the sinfulness of humanity, the limitation of culture and civilization, the danger and realization of power, and the lack of virtue within America and American foreign policy.

Ahlstrom stated that although neo-orthodoxy’s time of influence on American Protestantism was short, it created a vast reassessment of Christianity’s entire tradition. Ahlstrom perceived a connection between neo-orthodoxy as it was expressed in America by the Niebuhr brothers and a reworking of the American Social Gospel. Ahlstrom, as he considered the impact of Reinhold Niebuhr’s *Moral Man & Immoral Society* (1932), seriously considered that “given the immensely practical bent of American Protestantism and the staggering policy questions of the Roosevelt era, one may wonder if the degree to which American neo-orthodoxy’s history is enmeshed with the biography of Reinhold Niebuhr does not prove that a revision of the social gospel was the primary purpose of the movement.” Ahlstrom did not fully document his comparison of American neo-orthodoxy as a renewed Social Gospel but instead went on to describe Niebuhr’s attacks on the liberal belief in an unyielding progress and in the idea that history is the Christ. It was in his description of these attacks where Ahlstrom viewed Reinhold as doing more than any other American theologian to make relevant a worn-out and battered Social Gospel.

Ahlstrom, like many historians before him, began his discussion of the Second World War by decrying the peace treaty of WWI and the twenty years of tragic European history. The United States was not a neutral bystander during the tumultuous years

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473 Ahlstrom, 932.
474 Ahlstrom, 932.
475 Ahlstrom, 932.
476 Ahlstrom, 932, 4.
477 Ahlstrom, 939–43.
478 Ahlstrom, 942.
479 Ahlstrom, 942.
following WWI. American foreign policy continued to keep American capitalistic and imperialistic interests at the fore which did not always correspond with the more pacifistic opinions of the Protestant clergy. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Ahlstrom noted that the army of Protestant pacifists was reduced to less than twelve hundred. Although not as enthusiastically as during WWI, Protestant denominations did begin to compete with Catholic and Jewish congregations in their support for the United States war effort in WWII. Ahlstrom credited the disgrace of Protestant leaders in the decade of 1925-1935 due to their undaunted support for the United States war effort in WWI, along with the theological impact of neo-orthodoxy on Protestant clergy. Ahlstrom noted that as Protestants argued the merits of the United States entering WWII in 1941, Protestantism had already lost much of its moral authority that it held in 1917. He also commented that by 1945 when the Allied victory was clearly in view, a religious revival was starting to occur within Protestant congregations.

According to Ahlstrom there were three themes which marked the religious resurgence from the 1940s through the 1960s. First was the aspect of American affluence. Second was the movement of Americans into urban centers. Third was the trend to nationalize industry and business along with a significant increase in professional personnel. These three post-World War Two trends led to a vast increase in Protestant home missions to American urban and suburban areas since they were experiencing such rapid population growth. The situation quickly developed into a time of cold war between the Soviet bloc communists and America and American allied democracies. In 1950, the cold war turned hot as American foreign policy deployed troops to Korea in an attempt to stop communist expansion. This marked the first time an American church historian discussed the Korean War, although it must be noted that in 1996 Martin Marty addressed the Korean War in the third volume of his Modern American Religion: Under God, Indivisible (1941-1960). In this text, Marty also briefly discusses the Vietnam War and in doing so he became one of the first American church historians to mention the Vietnam War. In 1992, Mark Noll in his A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada briefly mentioned both the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Ahlstrom’s brief mention of the Korean War was part of his discussion of the religious implications that resulted from the conflict between the United States and the USSR. He pointed out an important American cultural ramification that occurred during this time was that church membership became a way to demonstrate patriotism and to support ‘the American way of life’ as opposed to that of atheistic communism. Thus, during this era Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy began attacking political opponents as being communists and disloyal to America. At this time being an active church member, especially at a Protestant church, was a reliable way to remove suspicion of communist ties since it was generally perceived that a Protestant church member was a patriot fully supporting of the American capitalistic way of life. In describing the increasingly tight American connection between patriotism and church membership, Ahlstrom described America as a ‘nation with the soul of a church’ which was a direct reference to Sydney Mead’s 1967 essay entitled The Nation with the Soul of a Church and was the title to a book of his published essays which came out in 1975. Mead coined the title of his essay from a statement made by the English writer G.K. Chesterton in his book What I Saw in America. It was a book he wrote in 1922 and in the first chapter he

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480 Ahlstrom, 949.
wrote that America is “the only nation founded on a creed.”\footnote{Chesterton, G. K. The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton: What I Saw in America, The Resurrection of Rome, Sidelights, George Marlin Editor, Vol. 21, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990, 41-45.} While the nation might have been founded on a creed, the fact that America was a ‘nation with the soul of a church’ was much more noticeable following the decade after WWII than it was following WWI.

Ahlstrom documented that in 1920 only 43% of the population had a church affiliation compared to 55% of the population claiming some church affiliation by 1950.\footnote{Ahlstrom, 952.} Ahlstrom finalized his argument stating that in the post-WWII generation, patriotism and civil religion became more important than specific religious ideology. He pointed out that this generation of Catholics and Jews for the most part were viewed in American society to be as equally patriotic as Protestants. Writing in the mid-1950s, Will Herberg’s book \emph{Protestant, Catholic, Jew} described these three religions as a “triple melting pot” of American culture from which “the characteristic American religion” is supported and maintained.\footnote{Ahlstrom, 954.} This depiction of American Protestant revival stemming from an increasingly patriotic population after the end of WWII and the fear of a spreading communist threat provided a fitting conclusion for Ahlstrom’s discussion of war.

### 6.3 Catherine L. Albanese

Catherine Albanese wrote \emph{America Religions and Religion} in 1981, eleven years after Martin Marty, her professor at the University of Chicago, wrote \emph{Righteous Empire}. Albanese received an MA from Chicago in 1970 and remained at Chicago for two more years completing her PhD in 1972. Her dissertation was entitled \emph{Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the Revolutionary War}. In 1987, she began teaching at the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 2005 she became Chair of the Religious Studies department, and in 2008 she was named the J. F. Rowny Professor Emerita in Comparative Religions. Albanese’s \emph{America} was written when she was a religious professor at Wright State University where she began teaching in 1972. Biographical information about Catherine Albanese was not easily obtained and autobiographical information was not made available for this project.

\emph{America Religions and Religion} told the story of religion in America in a fresh and innovative way. She left behind the chronological pattern of previous American church and religious historians and presented the story of religion in America largely based on religious group identity. She presented religious groups based to some degree on their arrival in America. The final chapter of \emph{America} addressed civil religion and it drew from the research she completed for her dissertation. In utilizing this organizational scheme, Albanese wrote about Native American Indians, Jews, and Roman Catholics prior to writing about Protestants. Following her two lengthy chapters on Protestants in America, she discussed African American religion, new religious sects, the occult, eastern religions (Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism), regional religion (a case study on Southern Appalachia), New Age religious movements, and civil religion (focused on the Revolutionary Era).
In presenting America’s diverse and abundant religious groups, Albanese wrote much about group dynamics, lived religion with a focus on actions rather than beliefs, and group identity. Writing about Protestants and war, however, was not a priority for her, especially in the first part of her text which focused on the many diverse religious groups in America. Thus American wars were largely left out of her discussion of religious groups. The majority of her references to war within this text occurred in the second part where she discussed the one American religion. Throughout her text, Albanese employed the organizational model of Winthrop Hudson who perfected the practice, began by his teacher William Sweet, of utilizing American wars as a place marker for what historical events occurred before and after the war.

In the first and longest part of her text, Albanese’s intent was to document the ‘manyness’ of pluralism in American religious life from the beginning of European colonization. In accomplishing this task, she ignored Protestant support for war against Indians to the same extent as William W. Sweet did, but she was motivated by a largely different rationale. Albanese focused on the Revolutionary War Era somewhat similarly to Sweet who focused on the Revolutionary War and Civil War when he wrote his 1930 text. Sweet ignored earlier wars primarily to focus on Protestant denominations growth in the West following the Revolutionary War, while Albanese neglected war to focus on religious pluralism only returning to the Revolutionary Era to discuss the rise of the one national civil religion.

In demonstrating the degree to which Albanese focused on pluralism, her text contained more information discussing the growth of neo-paganism in America than the largely Protestant neo-orthodoxy movement following WWI. Albanese’s preface utilized a quote from Sydney Mead’s *Lively Experiment* in which he expressed the fact that Americans were “a people in movement through space.” The quotation went on to express that the documentation of the Protestant pilgrimage into the Western frontier was plentiful, but the exploration into the spiritual and mental pilgrimage of the American people was too often hidden. Her text was one attempt to bring into the open the spiritual and mental pilgrimages of the American people.

Albanese’s text began with a discussion of Native American religion which ignored conquest and only briefly mentioned military encounters against Indians like the Wounded Knee Massacre in late December of 1890 when the United States 7th Calvary Regiment surrounded the Lakota Sioux tribe in South Dakota and attempted to disarm them. A scuffle broke out and a shot was fired which led to four Hotchkiss rapid fire machine guns being used against the Sioux resulting in over 150 Indian deaths and around 25 soldier casualties likely the result of friendly fire. Albanese also addressed the revitalized Indian religion of the Ghost Dance which was a peaceful Native religion, adapted by the Sioux, who tragically believed the ritual white garments would make them invincible to the bullets of their adversary. This belief led to increased casualties at Wounded Knee which was the only mention of Protestant military action against Native Indians.

The only mention of war in the next chapter on Judaism was a brief reference to WWII, when Albanese wrote about the horrors of the Holocaust which occurred when Adolf Hitler ruled Germany and over six million Jews perished. There were no references

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484 Albanese, 31.
485 Albanese, 44.
to Protestants and war in the section on Roman Catholicism. There were only brief references to war in the two lengthy sections on Protestantism in America. She did not write about any Protestant wars against Natives in the Anglican Virginia settlement. While Albanese did not discuss Protestant conquest during early settlements or later centuries, she did write a paragraph about how hostile the relations were between English Protestants and Native Indians.

She described the traditional stories of aid and friendship in the Thanksgiving and Pocahontas narratives as belying the reality of conflict and stolen land. She wrote, “There were wars between them; conversion attempts by the English were dubious and marked by tardiness and few missionaries; ‘empty land’ became the characteristic English justification for moving further into the wilderness that was the Indians’ home.”486 In addition to this very general statement of conflict between Native Indians and Protestants, Albanese only mentioned that the settlers in New England took the conflict with Natives as proof of their disobedience to God. She claimed that there were several signs that Puritans saw as proving God’s displeasure. She stated that “if plague or witchcraft, Indian wars or conservative Anglicans troubled their settlements, these were signs for the Puritans that something was amiss in the Christian commitment of the people.”487 These two statements were the extent to which Albanese wrote about Native Indian wars with Protestant settlers.

Following her section on New England settlers, Albanese often wrote about American wars, utilizing them as location markers for other religious events in American history. Her section on “Early Liberal Protestant Thought” was put into context by her subtitle: “From the Revolution to the Civil War,” and within this section she wrote at length about how Puritan thought was modified by the Unitarians, the Universalists and Transcendentalists, but very little about the Revolutionary War or the Civil War. While she elaborated on the Revolutionary War in more detail in a future chapter on civil religion, here she briefly mentioned that Americans “felt a disruption in the life of the churches occasioned by the war, with even pastors enlisting and with the countryside turned into a battlefield, church life could hardly have been unaffected.”488 She utilized this section to discuss the liberal thought of Horace Bushnell and placed his ideas into historical context by stating that “well after the Civil War” his liberalism would be championed as the Social Gospel.489 Her only statement in this section concerning the Civil War was a general comment that “slavery and the Civil War would become sources of friction for older, mainstream churches, and so denominations would dissociate into Northern and Southern factions.”490

Albanese quickly turned from the time period of the Revolution and Civil War Eras when she wrote that the “Post-Civil War Era was known as the Gilded Age, because beneath the glittering surface of society there was a sense of spiritual malaise. Then America entered the twentieth century, experiencing a continued wave of prosperity until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.”491 Here, Albanese showed how she utilized

486 Albanese, 102.
487 Albanese, 116.
488 Albanese, 125.
489 Albanese, 132.
490 Albanese, 132.
491 Albanese, 133.
war in an effort to contextualize the Gilded Age of prosperity in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Turning from the age of liberal theology, Albanese wrote about a movement which was in many ways an extension, as well as a critique, of the Social Gospel. She described it as theological realism or neo-orthodoxy. She wrote, “Originating in Europe, it tried to bring an end to what it saw as uncritical acceptance of the age of progress.”492 She went on to describe the influence of the Niebuhr brothers in making known the “prophetic word of their Reformation ancestors.” The Niebuhr brothers, along with other American neo-orthodox “believed that there was evil in the present constitution of society, and they were convinced that the mystery of evil could never be completely eradicated by human effort. In tangible ways, these Protestants insisted, the Word must stand in judgment over every political, economic and social endeavor.”493 This paragraph completes Albanese’s remarks about the Niebuhr brothers and neo-orthodoxy in America.

After describing the rise of liberal Protestant thought, Albanese wrote a follow-up chapter on Protestant evangelical missions. In this chapter she described the First and Second Great Awakenings without connecting them to the Revolutionary War or the Civil War. She briefly discussed the Indian removal of the mid-nineteenth century by mentioning the 1830s Trail of Tears. In this section, Albanese used the Civil War to put in context some changes in Protestant missions. She wrote that “by the eve of the Civil War, the missionaries could look to a slave population in which large numbers were at least nominally Christian.”494 She added that “in the 1860s, the Civil War brought a decline in foreign mission interest and support.”495 She continued to assert that “after the Civil War, Dwight L Moody promoted revivals in the cities . . . [and that] inherited restorationist themes were bolstered by the movement of premillennial dispensationalism.”496 In beginning another chapter on religion in Appalachia, she stated that “as the years passed and especially after the Civil War, those who remained in the mountains developed a distinctive religious culture.” In these references to the Civil War, very little information was provided about the Protestant soldiers who fought and died in the war. In fact, very little was written about Protestant support for secession or war.

In a chapter on religious pluralism, Albanese mentioned the 1960s and the Vietnam War and commented that events during this time period made Americans more uncertain about politics and religion.497 In this section she discussed Einstein’s theory of relativity and his quantum theory in growing American ‘New Age’ religious movements but she did not discuss the First or Second World Wars that so shaped Einstein’s life. One of the few references to WWII came when she described the split between fundamentalists and evangelicals and she mentioned that “still further division was to come after World War II.”498 While a section on the Revolutionary War will be included in her writing on civil religion, her discussion of religious liberty and the constitution did

492 Albanese, 141.
493 Albanese, 141.
494 Albanese, 180.
495 Albanese, 184.
496 Albanese, 189.
497 Albanese, 353.
498 Albanese, 370.
not include any mention of the Revolutionary War.\textsuperscript{499} In this section, it was the Vietnam War that was the focus of Albanese’s attention and it was the place of her first critique of American war.

She identified the Vietnam War as the trigger “for a national protest that embraced widely different elements in American society. Ministers and priests joined with flower children and the mothers of soldiers to argue against the war . . . the urge to immediate moral purity was also involved in the antiwar movement. Many Americans feared they would bear the guilt of a terrible national sin if they continued to destroy the lives and landscapes of the Vietnamese.”\textsuperscript{500} Here Albanese provided her first critique and criticism of American war. In this critique, however, she did not criticize Protestant support for the Vietnam War but pointed out how Protestant and Catholic leaders united with other pacifistic and non-violent groups to organize a national protest of the Vietnam War.

Albanese discussed and critiqued the often volatile combination of the political with the religious during times of war. She described Billy Sunday and Billy Graham as evangelicals who preached a Christian duty to support American war efforts, while she also mentioned the “New Age” spiritualists who equally loved America but thought that America could embrace its destiny as a peacemaker on the world stage. She concluded this section and introduced her discussion of civil religion by stating that “during times of conflict like the American Revolution and the Civil War . . . popular behavior frequently resembled mass revival.”\textsuperscript{501} It was here that Albanese critiqued the enthusiastic embrace with which most Americans greeted war by comparing their response to an emotion-laden Protestant evangelical revival. In addition, this section critiqued Protestant leaders’ historic role as most prominent cheerleader for war effort, which was as close as Albanese came to providing a direct criticism of Protestant support for specific American wars.

She began her discussion of American civil religion by claiming that it “grew and changed throughout American history, and its presence was particularly visible in millennial fervor during wartime.”\textsuperscript{502} This began her discussion of the Revolutionary War, a war she described in the most detail of any American war, much of it based in the dissertation she wrote at the University of Chicago entitled \textit{Sons of the Fathers} and like her dissertation this description of the Revolutionary Era focused on the development of civil religion in America. Albanese in this section described how America developed a national identity out of thirteen separate colonies but the discussion of how Protestants justified war, fought in war and died on the battlefield was largely left unspoken.

Albanese did not write about General George Washington the leader of the American Continental Army, whose war strategy was honed during the French and Indian War, and whose leadership skills enabled his troops to survive a harsh winter at Valley Forge before commanding the surprise attack of the British by crossing the Delaware River. Her mention of George Washington was simply to remark that by the time he won his first presidential election, the foundation for American civil religion was

\textsuperscript{499} Albanese, 402-3.
\textsuperscript{500} Albanese, 414-5.
\textsuperscript{501} Albanese, 418.
firmly in place and it was built out of the Protestant material of New England Puritanism and the secular inspiration of military victory over Great Britain. Albanese wrote about the Puritan millennial rhetoric that energized the colonial American population as it streamed from pulpits, political rallies, newspapers, and popular songs. Evangelicals and deists alike branded the British troops as Satan’s minions who were attacking God’s righteous saints in the Battle of Armageddon. American colonial rhetoric also claimed the British were the Egyptians of old who were increasing their brutality against the colonel “New Israel.” Albanese did indicate that all of this pastoral sermonizing against the British resulted in major disruptions in Protestant churches as many pastors marched off to war along with the majority of the men in their congregations.

For Protestants in the Revolutionary Era, Albanese stressed that the war was a venerated story of beginnings and it served as the central ideal behind American civil religion. She asserted that civil religion often provided a defense mechanism for national guilt and that the stronger the guilt, the more vigorous and intense the claim of being chosen and innocent. She pointed out that this was the case in many of the national struggles that occurred during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and were the result of racism. Albanese’s critique of American nationalism’s blindness to American faults during war times spread out from the Revolutionary Era. She addressed two other military conflicts. First, she pointed out that the Civil War crisis occurred because of slavery and the South’s inability to compromise with the North. Second, she criticized the Vietnam War quagmire and the Watergate scandal since they were compounded by a nationalism which could not accept American defeat. Albanese concluded this section with the assertion that even during the War of 1812 American nationalism was unrestrained and Protestant support for the war led the way. She compared the support Protestants in America gave to the war effort during the War of 1812 which paralleled the support they gave during the Revolutionary War since in both cases once the war started it became a Christian crusade, a holy war.

6.4 Mark A. Noll (1946-Present)

Eleven years after Albanese published her comprehensive American religious history, Mark Noll published *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (1992). His history was not a “general religious history” of America in the literal sense since it only dealt with Christianity; however, the same criterion largely applied to all American religious histories written before the 1960s and to Marty’s *Righteous Empire*. Noll received a PhD in the History of Christianity from Vanderbilt University, taught as a professor at Wheaton College for twenty seven years, and is currently the Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History at Notre Dame University. His success and longevity at Wheaton College demonstrated his orientation to combine modern historical methods with an evangelical worldview. Wheaton College, located in Illinois, was founded by Wesleyans in 1853 and has been committed to both intellectual progress and Christian faith since its inception. This commitment was demonstrated by the institutions first

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503 Albanese, 435.
504 Albanese, 438-9.
505 Albanese, 447.
506 Albanese, 450.
president, Jonathan Blanchard (1860-1882) as he maintained the schools dedication to the abolitionist movement and guided the school through the Civil War.

Noll’s *History of Christianity* addressed Protestants and war differently compared to Martin Marty and Sydney Ahlstrom. Noll’s text pointed back to the historical accounts of Mode, Sweet, Hudson and Gaustad. This was largely due to Noll’s section on Protestant settlers discounting racism and land acquisition as motivating factors for war and his analysis singling out failed missions as the primary grounds for war between Protestants and Natives. Most of Noll’s discussion about American Protestants at war connected war to evangelical interpretations of scripture. His historical text’s description of war focused on the Civil War while other descriptions of American wars were relatively brief and primarily served to illustrate evangelical history in America. His critique of Protestant evangelicalism during the Civil War included an in-depth analysis of the role that the Bible played in motivating both sides to engage in war, of justifying an increasingly violent war, and of claiming divine sanction for military action against the enemy.

In considering how twentieth century war may have shaped Mark Noll’s writing about war it is interesting to note that he was born on July 18th, 1946, approximately one year after the Japanese surrendered in August of 1945 bringing an end to World War II. Mark Noll’s father was a veteran of WWII and went to college in Iowa City, Iowa and was, in fact, still attending college when he was born. When Mark Noll turned eighteen in July of 1964, it was less than a year earlier in November of 1963 that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Only two weeks before his birthday, on July 2nd, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law abolishing segregation. On July 18th, the actual day of his eighteenth birthday, six days of race riots began in Harlem, and the war in Vietnam intensified throughout that summer. Noll graduated from Wheaton College in 1968 and completed his PhD at Vanderbilt in 1975. Thus, many of the historical events he wrote about concerning the tumultuous 1960s including the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War, he experienced firsthand as a young man.

At Vanderbilt, two of the professors Noll studied with had an intellectual focus on war. Dr. Douglas Leach was a historian of the American colonial period and Dr. Paul Hardacre specialized in the English civil wars of the seventeenth century. Noll claimed that the scholar who most impacted his thinking was the evangelical historian George Marsden. This evangelical influence might explain why Noll inevitably tied evangelical causes to various American wars. Noll focused on failed evangelical missions rather than Indian conquest, the partnership between evangelicalism and republicanism during the Revolutionary Era and the manipulation of scripture by Northern and Southern evangelicals during the Civil War period. He also extended evangelical themes to the twentieth century wars he discussed. In writing about the First and Second World War, Noll wrote about the rise of fundamentalism after World War I and the rapid increase of evangelical and biblical publication following World War II.

A comparison of Albanese’s and Noll’s approach to American religious history, in addition to an examination of how they described Protestant support for war, will reveal much about each author since they both attended graduate school during a similar time period, receiving their PhDs in the early to mid-1970s. Albanese graduated from Chestnut Hill College in 1962 six years prior to Noll graduation from Wheaton College and, after completing two master’s degrees she received her PhD from Chicago in 1972.
while Noll received his PhD from Vanderbilt in 1975. An interesting difference between Noll’s and Albanese’s approach to American religion is revealed when comparing the degree to which each scholar wrote about European neo-orthodoxy and neo-paganism. Albanese wrote significantly more about neo-paganism, in her effort to highlight religious diversity in America, than she wrote about the Niebuhr brothers and neo-orthodoxy which she described in one paragraph when addressing the challenges to Protestant liberalism. Noll, however, wrote several pages on the Niebuhr brothers and neo-orthodoxy in America, focusing on the influence of four books written by H. Richard Niebuhr while completely ignoring neo-paganism.

In spite of their marked difference in writing about the Niebuhr brothers and neo-orthodoxy, both of these scholars who were writing in the 1980s and 1990s, diverged significantly from Marty and Ahlstrom and were more similar to William W. Sweet, the first church historian to reference H. Richard Niebuhr’s work. Both Noll and Albanese, like Sweet, largely skipped past the Protestant settler wars against Indians, except for an occasional reference (by Sweet and Noll) to how Native attacks affected Protestant missions. In writing about other wars, Albanese and Noll like Sweet, focused on the Revolutionary War as the key to national identity. Noll and Sweet, to a greater extent than Albanese, described the Civil War in a way that strongly critiqued the evangelical fervor of Southern Protestant denominations that unquestionably supported secession and war to perpetuate slavery. In addition, Noll and Sweet critiqued Northern radical Republicans as abolitionists who refused compromise and who pushed the North into a war in order to free the slaves.

In discussing the Protestant settlements, Noll started by writing about missions and he concluded that the Protestant missions to Indians were, in general, a failure and that their contact with the Indians did more to antagonize than it did to convert. Noll first wrote about Protestants at war with Native Indians when he described the King Philips War (1675-1676) which he described as the “undoing of the Native American mission on the mainland.” He surmised that the war did not result from a racism problem but rather that the English Protestants could not accept that ‘Indian Christianity’ might not be identical to ‘Puritan Christianity.’ The Protestant settlers, therefore, could not trust or accept Indian converts. After the hostilities broke out, the missionary John Eliot was not even trusted, and eventually the Christian Natives were quarantined on Deer Island. Noll mentioned the French and Indian War since it interrupted the missionary efforts of the Moravians among the Iroquois. Thus, Indians and Protestant wars with Indians are only mentioned to inform the reader about the failed missionary efforts of English Protestants.

Mark Noll described the Revolutionary Era by pointing out that both the evangelical successors of Puritanism and the republicans had similar historical outlooks even if they were motivated by different forces. He stated that evangelicals viewed history as a struggle between Christ and the antichrist while the republicans viewed history as a struggle between the forces of liberty against tyranny. The ideal historical result for evangelicals would be increased Christian freedom and for republicans it would be increased political liberty. Victory over England meant political independence and

507 Noll, 73-4.
508 Noll, 74.
509 Noll, 74.
self-rule for republicans. For evangelicals, victory over England was a sign of the rapidly approaching millennial rule of God on earth. Protestant ministers utilized the sermon effectively in preaching that their British oppressors were described in chapter 13 of the Book of Revelation as the beast. Noll’s description of the Revolution emphasized the way Protestant clergy utilized the biblical text in support of war against Britain. The utilization of scripture by Protestant evangelicals was a topic Noll highlighted in every section of his historical text.

According to Noll, Protestant evangelical ministers during the French and Indian War preached sermons condemning the French Monarch and the Catholic Pope as being the beast described in the Book of Revelation. However, these same Protestant clergy during the Revolution condemned the English King and British policies using the same biblical texts. Communities from New England to the Southeast were roused to fight the English by Protestant sermons condemning the English King and calling for a holy war that could create a holy nation. Ministers left their churches in order to preach as chaplains to the rapidly growing colonial militia.\(^5\) Noll described similar events surrounding the Revolutionary Era as earlier historians had done but he broke them down into their evangelical and republican components and connected evangelical ministers’ sermon material to scripture, specifically to the Book of Revelation. Noll also acknowledged some Protestant clergy utilized scripture to support loyalty to England; however, very few Protestant evangelicals supported biblical interpretations that justified Christian pacifism.

Noll noted that between one-fifth and one-third of all colonists remained loyal to the English crown. Most of those who remained loyal were members of the Church of England and they claimed scriptural support in the backing of the status quo. In addition to the loyalists, several groups of Christian pacifists supported the English crown in their rejection of the colonial militants call to war, since they rejected all wars as unjust.\(^6\) Noll went on to declare that one of the primary reasons Americans have claimed a providential view of history, in thinking that God is always on America’s side, stemmed from the popular merger of American republican and Protestant evangelicalism during the Revolutionary Era. Those who voiced opposition to this merger were hastily silenced by the national culture born out of victory, since they were classified as traitors who fled back to England, or as unrealistic religious radicals.

Before moving on to the Civil War, Noll discussed the ‘ambiguous mission to the Cherokees’ in Georgia which proved a popular topic among American church historians going back to Leonard W. Bacon. Noll, however, provided additional background information about the history of the tribe’s forced removal. He reported that following the Revolutionary War, the U.S. government punished the Old Cherokee Nation for siding with the British and for warfare against settlers expanding into the southeast. The 1797 Peace Treaty resulted in the Cherokee Nation’s acceptance of white civilization and missionary endeavors. In one generation, the majority of the tribe had been converted to Christianity and cultural renewal. When gold was discovered in northern Georgia, it did not matter how Christian the Cherokee Indians had become. The missionaries were powerless to prevent the nation that they viewed as the cradle of Christian civilization

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\(^5\) Noll, 118-20.
\(^6\) Noll, 130.
from brutally crushing a people that had been converted. The U.S. army forcibly relocated the Cherokee tribe to Oklahoma in what became known as the Trial of Tears.

Within his discussion of the Civil War, Noll mentioned the Civil War numerous times in describing events that occurred prior to the Civil War. He adopted the common practice that William Sweet made popular of utilizing wars as a reference point for events within American history. In a seven page span, Noll referred to the Civil War five times to document various trends in American church history. He mentioned that ‘by the time of the Civil War’ the Restorationist movement had many achievements, ‘in the decades before the Civil War’ black ministers had developed formal theologies of liberation, ‘before the Civil War’ many black preachers were educated and had risen to official positions in various denominations, ‘in the forty years before the Civil War’ evangelical values directed political parties, and finally ‘in the period before the Civil War’ the evangelical stronghold on politics was unmatched in all of North America except for the dominance of Catholics in Quebec, Canada. 512  These time-period references to the Civil War would give way to a discussion of the Civil War.

Noll began his section on the Civil War by quoting C. C. Goen who wrote that America’s ‘broken churches’ led to a ‘broken nation.’ He described this national and denominational division in his book Broken Churches, Broken Nation: Denominational Schisms and the Coming of the American Civil War which was published in 1985. Noll followed this up by stating that in 1844 before the Methodist division they were the largest national organization besides the U.S. federal government. 513  Noll also noted that by this time in American history, it was common for people in the United States to perceive the nation as ‘God’s New Israel’ which only served to intensify the feelings of hostility between the North and the South.

During the Civil War, Noll described how soldiers in army camps attended regular revivals held by chaplains in both regions of the country. These revival services were long and intense worship services that included prayer meetings. As the war lingered on and as the North gained military advantage, Southern religious fervor increased since the Confederate Army increasingly hoped that their religious piety could curtail the Union Army’s conquest of the South. In the South, Protestant evangelicals expected that their piety could turn the fortunes of war toward their favor, since they believed their prayers and suppletions could initiate a divine intervention on their behalf. 514  Here, Noll critiqued the Southern evangelicals and their clergy for creating false hopes of a divine intervention which only served to prolong the already too bloody Civil War. Noll criticized evangelical ministers in both the North and South for turning the Civil War into a holy war and for utilizing revival services to motivate soldiers to keep killing.

For Noll, the Civil War was a ‘religious event’ because in his words “it consumed the energies of a religious people.” 515  Due to the religious nature of the American people, Abraham Lincoln became a mythical figure in American civil religion. Especially and most quickly in the North, Americans were compelled to view Lincoln’s life and death with the weight of religious symbolism. He was honored as the ‘savior’ of the Union; he

513 Noll, 316.
514 Noll, 318.
515 Noll, 320.
liberated the slaves, he attempted to ‘heal’ the national wounds; and he became a ‘martyr’ on Good Friday. Noll quoted Lincoln’s own words as pointing to the profoundly religious way he perceived the nation that was engaged in a massive Civil War for the majority of his presidency. These were well known words of Lincoln which many other church historians have quoted.

Noll pointed out that Lincoln described America as “the last, best hope of the earth,” and described Americans as “the almost chosen people,” and he described the war as a trial to determine if a nation “conceived in liberty . . . can long endure.” Martin Marty pointed to the cautionary words of Lincoln who was critical of an optimistic nation that was too quick to claim God was on their side as a precursor to the critique that neo-orthodoxy brought to an over-optimistic liberalism following WWI. Noll stopped short of Marty’s suggestion yet he did write that “it is one of the great ironies of the history of Christianity in America that the most profound religious analysis of the nation’s deepest trauma came not from a clergyman or a theologian but from Abraham Lincoln.” Noll found irony in what happened following the war as well.

Noll wrote, with a sense of irony, about Civil War Era forces that produced a more secular American nation. He noted the ironic result that “a war won (and lost) by people who felt that true religion was at stake, produced a nation in which the power of religion declined.” Along with creating a more secular America, the Civil War also ended chattel slavery but once more with an ironic twist of producing systematic oppression that Noll found so disturbing that he stated “the crusade against slavery had won—and it had lost.” Lynch mobs and Jim Crow laws served to remind the newly freed slaves that their freedom was still limited by an institutionalized racism that created enough fear to keep blacks trapped in substandard employment and housing. The racial hierarchy that was so ingrained in the culture stemmed from Protestant churches’ denominational identities “which were long defined by region.” These regional differences dictated how Northerners and Southerners read and understood the Bible and biblical interpretation was used effectively as a religious weapon. Noll concluded that another unfortunate precedent of the Civil War was that military success became the most important religious work and churches spent all their energy in promoting the war effort for their region. This type of religious crusade would come back to infect the churches during WWI.

Noll did not emphasize the liberal religious anti-war culture that developed during the decades prior to WWI to the same degree as Marty and Ahlstrom. He only hinted at this development when he mentioned that William James Bryant resigned as Secretary of State when he felt that President Woodrow Wilson was pushing the country toward war against Germany. Noll also stated that WWI ended liberal ‘utopian visions’ and brought an ‘institutional form’ to the deep disappointment felt by all Protestant liberals. Once Congress declared war, all the Protestant denominations put aside their pacifistic and non-violent ideals and wholeheartedly supported the war effort. Historians like Marty and

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516 Noll, 321.
517 Noll, 322.
518 Noll, 323.
519 Noll, 324.
520 Noll, 333.
521 Noll, 291, 301.
Ahlstrom saw World War I as bringing a distinct change in the liberal Social Gospel since the war highlighted the problems of optimistic belief in ongoing progress and because European neo-orthodoxy began to influence American scholars like the Niebuhr brothers.

Mark Noll noted another change in the American religious scene made manifest by the crisis brought about by World War I—the mobilization of the fundamentalist movement. The uncertainty brought about by the war and the powerful critique of Protestant liberalism set the stage for more conservative Protestants to make a stand about the ‘fundamental’ unchanging truth of Christianity and scripture. Fundamentalist Protestants and Roman Catholics both viewed the church and the state as under God’s control and believed that God’s hierarchy flowed from the church into the social order. Noll noted that H. Richard Niebuhr named this idea ‘Christ over culture’ in his classic text *Christ and Culture* (1951). For Noll, the more politically conservative H. Richard Niebuhr served as his primary influence and his works were cited much more than his more politically liberal brother Reinhold Niebuhr whose critique of liberal Protestant support of capitalism did not prevent his expression of Christian realism from an attempt to revitalize aspects of the Social Gospel.

Before Noll’s discussion of World War II, he discussed the influence and popularity of the Bible in American culture. He claimed that following WWII, publishers in the United States have printed approximately two Bibles for every citizen. He also commented that the Bible at this time was both a radical force for social change and also a conserving force for maintaining the status quo. In fact both Protestant liberals and conservatives interpreted scripture through cultural lenses that increasingly caused conflict, much less, however, than the biblical interpretations of the North and the South prior to the Civil War which resulted in an inevitable military clash.

Noll pointed out that, concerning religion as well as politics in America, World War II dominated the decade of the 1940s. This domination resulted in both good and evil outcomes within American culture. Christians throughout America were appallingly supportive, or at least silent, concerning the internment of ethnic Japanese, many of whom were Christian, for almost the entire length of the war. On a brighter note, Noll commented that the denominations through chaplains and social outreach, offered a great deal of ministry to the troops fighting overseas and those at home preparing to fight in Europe. Compared to Noll’s sections on the Revolutionary War and Civil War, his discussion of WWI and WWII were very brief. He did, however, address the postwar period and the 1960s and the cultural upheaval brought about by the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement. Noll surmised that a growth in the psychological dimensions of religion was brought on post-WWII due to the spread of Communism and the fear of nuclear weapons had created a culture of dreaded uncertainty.

The 1960s brought only more uncertainty and violence to America as progress was slow for civil rights leaders and a distant war in Vietnam was rapidly escalating. Violence was so common that the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the 1968 assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were put into

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522 Noll, 382.
523 Noll, 402.
524 Noll, 437.
525 Noll, 440.
perspective, by the comparison Noll made to the more than 50,000 deaths of ‘less-well-known’ Americans in Vietnam. All this violence, according to Noll, produced “an even more permanent scar” on the religious landscape of America. The violence also produced mainline Protestant protests of the war and led to a radical critique of the war and United States foreign policy in general. Noll remarked that for the first time since the Protestant pacifistic turn following WWI, mainline Protestant denominations rejected the war effort, preached against the military, and some even embraced the policies of the traditional pacifists.

Following his discussion of World War II and the Vietnam War, Noll returned to discuss some of the theological developments in the years between WWI and WWII. Most of his discussion stemmed from the way the neo-orthodox ideas of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth, who developed a well-known critique of liberalism, came to America in the 1930s and 40s. Noll’s discussion focused on the Niebuhr brothers since he classifies them as the most popular American theologians of the twentieth century. He began his discussion with the ideas of Reinhold Niebuhr. After working as pastor in Detroit, Reinhold Niebuhr was a long-time professor at Union Theological Seminary. He developed a social ethic that became known as ‘Christian realism’ which questioned the optimistic faith that liberalism placed in humanity and in human progress. These ideas were similar to Barth’s neo-orthodoxy; however, Niebuhr’s system differed from Barth’s theology in many significant ways. Niebuhr was more concerned with ethics than with theology and showed more interest in society than in the church. As a pastor in Detroit, Niebuhr was distraught about the cost of industrial life on the workers and he developed some radical ideas including socialism and pacifism in order to overcome the capitalist crisis. Noll noted that it was the approaching of WWII that convinced Niebuhr to abandon socialism and pacifism since war was sometimes needed to put a stop to aggressive societal evil.

H. Richard Niebuhr agreed with Reinhold on the inadequacy of theological liberalism; however, his own insights were centered more on theological considerations and on the role of the church as an ideal and as a social institution. Noll mentioned that the younger Niebuhr accepted a professorship at Yale Divinity School in 1931 and taught there until his death in 1962. His belief system was centered on the “experiential nature of religion” which brought him to the idea that humanity is intertwined within history and can never escape that history. Since humanity can never transcend history, it can never perceive objective truth or have complete certainty. Like his brother, he adopted Barth’s neo-orthodox critique of theological liberalism’s unrealistic hope in humanity’s potential and he understood God’s sovereignty resulted in humanity’s dependence upon God’s will.

Noll briefly addressed four of H. Richard Niebuhr’s most influential books. His first major work was *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929); it pointed out how closely denominations have been shaped by cultural traditions. This text was cited for the first time by an American church historian in William Sweet’s 1930 *The Story of Religion in America*. H. Richard Niebuhr’s next influential text was *The Kingdom of God in America* (1937) which Noll described as providing “a brilliant portrait of the way in

\[526\] Noll, 442.
\[527\] Noll, 525.
\[528\] Noll, 527.
which the idea of God’s kingdom has shifted content throughout American history—from God’s sovereignty in the time of Jonathan Edwards, to the Kingdom of Christ during the 1800s, and finally to the coming kingdom for twentieth-century liberals.” Noll also referred to Niebuhr’s famous critique of theological liberalism located in this text: “A God without wrath, brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.” Noll mentioned this statement by H. Richard Niebuhr in order to demonstrate the comprehensiveness of his criticism of Protestant liberalism and how he attacked liberalism for distorting the gospel and not just for justifying capitalism and nationalism.

The last two works Noll mentioned were H. Richard Niebuhr’s *Christ and Culture (1951)* and *The Meaning of Revelation (1941)*. In *Christ and Culture*, Niebuhr presented four basic classifications concerning the way Christians have historically related and interacted with secular culture. In *The Meaning of Revelation*, Niebuhr asserted that God’s self-revelation makes relative all other human events and endeavors. In this way, he claimed that the church provides the values, albeit relative values, for making known God’s revelation. After the section in which Noll described the ideas of some of the best known theologians of the twentieth century, he elucidated his understanding that not all the concerns of North American Christians were represented in the ideas of American theologians; however, Noll considered them important for their attempts to make an ancient tradition relevant in a modern American society.

Noll summarized the numerous destructive events that occurred in the twentieth century, the most damaging being a number of wars. Yet, he did not describe how these events impacted American Protestants, how religion shaped American Protestants’ interpretation of the events, or how an American evangelical identity was shaped by these events. He wrote, “The blows rained on North American society included two world wars, a great economic depression, followed by unprecedented (if unevenly distributed) affluence, and a major cultural upheaval at the time of the Vietnam War.” Noll continued by addressing the less destructive events that occurred in the twentieth century by stating, “Shocks only slightly less powerful—such as the Red Scare after World War I, the Korean and Gulf wars . . . and violent business cycles in widely scattered regions on the continent—have rolled by almost without number.” These two sentences which Noll wrote at the beginning of his final chapter clearly expressed just how common war time had been for Americans and how difficult these times would have been to deal with during the twentieth century since war times were surrounded by other traumatic events like the Great Depression and the rise of the Communist USSR. Remarkably, he did not mention war again within this chapter or comment about the lasting consequences of all these military conflicts on American Protestants and evangelicals.

Mark Noll is the final American religious historian discussed in this chapter and in this dissertation. While he interpreted similar American events as other historians, he clearly had an evangelical agenda and brought a fresh voice concerning the esteem placed

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529 Noll, 528.
530 Noll, 528.
531 Noll, 528-9.
532 Noll, 529.
533 Noll, 532.
534 Noll, 532
on the biblical text by American Protestant evangelicals and on how their biblical interpretations have historically motivated American evangelical behavior. Each war that Noll wrote about was described in connection to the way evangelicals’ interpret scripture. The Bible motivated settlers to convert Natives and when missions failed war against Indians was unavoidable. During the Revolutionary Era, evangelicals perceived the King of England as the anti-Christ who was described in Revelation 13 motivating their willingness to go to war against Britain in order to win their independence. Abolition and slavery were both justified through scripture and the division of evangelical churches into Northern and Southern denominations directly led to the Civil War. Noll connected WWI with the rise of fundamentalism, a conservative Protestant movement that reacted to modernity with a literal interpretation of the Bible. As a final point, he connected WWII with the rapid increase in biblical publications.

6.5 Conclusion

An analysis of the comprehensive American religious histories written during the 1970s through the 1990s provided insight into the way European neo-orthodoxy and Reinhold Niebuhr’s political realism were described by American religious historians’ narrative accounts. While William Sweet in 1930 cited H. Richard Niebuhr’s Social Sources of Denominationalism in two of his chapters and in his 1950 edition he included Reinhold Niebuhr’s break with the Christian Century and his turn to Christian realism as a way to confront evil in society. Yet it was not until the 1970s with Marty and Ahlstrom, and the 1980s and 1990s with Albanese and Noll, that neo-orthodox theology in general and the Niebuhr brothers’ writings in particular were so widespread that their influence could be more easily traced and documented.

The pre-1930 historical accounts as presented in Chapter One all enthusiastically described Protestants support for war, especially wars against Indians since they were justified by providing a military defense of Christian settlements that were sanctioned by God. In 1930, Sweet wrote a history in which he did not mention settler wars against Natives in New England, and in 1965 Hudson wrote a historical account that did not include any settler wars with Natives. In addition, Sweet, Hudson, and Guastad all attempted to provide objective historical accounts grounded in historical facts and data when discussing Protestants’ support for American wars. These three scholars also provided sections in their historical works that described or cited the theological and historical ideas of the Niebuhr brothers. In 1960, however, Olmstead’s wrote about Protestants at war with settlers, analyzed why the wars occurred, and provided a critique of Protestant support for those wars rather than justifying the wars or simply treating them as simple historical data. He discussed how the settlers perceived the Indians as ignorant, shiftless, and depraved savages and pointed to these attitudes as reasons for lack of success in missions and in leading to hostilities. Earlier accounts justified settlers’ attitudes toward Natives but Olmstead questioned them in an attempt to critique them. He also provided the most significant analysis of neo-orthodoxy and the Niebuhr brothers’ influence on American theology post-WWI and pre-WWII.

Olmstead’s 1960 critique of Protestants at war against Natives and his interest in the Niebuhr brothers and neo-orthodoxy set the stage for Martin Marty’s 1970 history entitled Righteous Empire. While Sweet in the 1930s unlocked the door for American religious historians to criticize Protestant support for war, Marty completely knocked the
door down, making impossible a return to pre-1930 descriptions of Protestant support for all American wars. *Righteous Empire* text changed the field of American religious history, as he dramatically challenged the way Protestant support for war against Native Indians was described by religious historians. Marty not only critiqued the attitudes of Protestant settlers toward Natives; he declared that the military actions perpetuated against the Indians were genocide. In addition, his section on the Civil War portrayed Lincoln as an American prophet of what would be called European neo-orthodoxy following WWI. According to Marty, Lincoln and the Niebuhr brothers understood that evil can arise in any human society, that war may be necessary to confront the human evil, and that no human society should ever claim divine sanction for their particular cause. In many ways, Marty’s *Righteous Empire* attempted to do what Baird, the Bacons, and Mode did in writing an American religious history that told the story of the ascendency of Protestantism; however, Marty would not uncritically celebrate Protestantism’s rise to dominance. Marty’s text presented not only an honest critique of settler atrocities against Indians, but also a critique of all American wars to which Protestants granted unquestioning support and in which they claimed that God was on their side.

Sydney Ahlstrom had much the same objective as Martin Marty, although Ahlstrom’s text was devoted to telling a more inclusive story than did Marty. Ahlstrom’s *A Religious History of the American People* discussed Protestants the most, but not exclusively, like Marty’s *Righteous Empire*. Since Ahlstrom wrote about so many different American religious groups, his critique of Protestants at war was not as sharp as Marty’s critique. While Ahlstrom was not as clear as Marty in his denunciation of the Protestant settlers’ treatment of the Natives, he was just as poignant in his criticism of Protestants in America for their unquestioning support for just about every war effort, especially during the Civil War and WWI. Ahlstrom did not describe Lincoln as a forerunner to neo-orthodoxy but he did discuss American neo-orthodoxy in the context of a reshaping of the Social Gospel theology in the 1940s, which made it relevant during the social turmoil of the 1960s.

In discussing the Niebuhr brothers and neo-orthodoxy, Ahlstrom revealed that their influence on the Social Gospel was great enough to warrant a reassessment of the entire Protestant denominational tradition in America. Ahlstrom probably held such a high regard for neo-orthodox remodeling of the Social Gospel because he considered Puritan theological ideas as coming to flourish within the Social Gospel. Thus, his critique of Protestants at war must be viewed as part of his critique of the liberal Social Gospel, a critique that was provided by the critique of liberalism by the Niebuhr brothers.

Albanese’s and Noll’s texts approached American religious history differently from each other and from Marty and Ahlstrom who came before them. Albanese’s text focused on religious diversity within America and as such paid little attention to war until her final chapter which addressed civil religion. In fact, as far as her discussion of Protestants at war is concerned, her text has more in common with Sweet and Hudson than it does with Marty or Ahlstrom. Since she only addressed the Revolutionary War while discussing American civil religion, she actually wrote less concerning war than any other historian within this study. She did not mention the Protestant settler wars with Natives in spite of beginning her text with a chapter on Native Indian religion, yet Sweet twice referred to the 1622 Indian attack of a Virginia settlement. In addition, Sweet and
Hudson both wrote about the Civil War, WWI and WWII (the 1950 edition of Sweet’s text).

The lack of writing about war in Albanese’s text most likely stemmed from her focus on religious diversity. While she only addressed the Revolutionary War in terms of its connection to civil religion, she did cast a critical pall over civil religion when she stated that it provided a justification for national and military abuse. She also revealed her knowledge of European neo-orthodoxy and the thought of the Niebuhr brothers when she wrote her very brief but insightful paragraph addressing their impact on Protestantism in America. While Albanese’s work focused on American religious diversity, Noll’s work focused on American evangelicals and their interpretation of scripture. His discussion of settler wars with Natives centered on a failed evangelical mission to the Natives. His description of the Revolutionary War focused on evangelical pastors’ sermons equating the King of England to the beast in Revelation Chapter 13 and he wrote about the Civil War Era as a time when evangelicals in the North and in the South both utilized scripture to support their causes and claim divine sanction for their military actions. Noll even managed to relate WWI and WWII to the rise of fundamentalism and the rise of biblical publication, respectively in America. The only war that Noll briefly addressed without a clear connection to evangelicals and the way they interpreted scripture was the 1960s escalation of the Vietnam War. Noll, however, did include the Civil Rights movement and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his description of the chaotic 1960s but did not elucidate the fact that King’s movement was based in part on an interpretation of scripture that centered on Jesus as the Prince of Peace. Noll’s work also highlighted the work of H. Richard Niebuhr and his brother Reinhold as providing a needed neo-orthodox challenge to the Protestant liberalism that dominated America both before and after WWI. The American theological awakening to neo-orthodoxy in the 1940s was led by the Niebuhr brothers whose works highlighted a new-Calvinistic interpretation of scripture and history in which human and social evil are taken seriously along with humanity’s dependence on God.

The historians in this chapter clarify the conclusion that after the 1930s, American religious historians who described the Niebuhr brothers’ theology also described Protestants at war in three ways that were categorically different from the enthusiastic justification for Protestant support for American war written about by historians prior to the 1930s. First, Sweet, Hudson, and Albanese simply did not discuss certain American wars, especially choosing to omit settler wars against Indians. Second, Sweet, Hudson, Gaustad, and Albanese wrote very brief descriptions about the data related to American wars, at least the wars they did choose to describe. Third, Olmstead, Marty, and Ahlstrom wrote critically about Protestants at war, especially wars against Natives, and they provided a much needed critique of Protestants’ unquestioning support for other American wars.

This chapter highlighted several consensus American religious histories that documented the way in which the field has been more critical about Protestant support for war since William Warren Sweet’s The Story of Religion(s) in America. The theological developments during the 1920s and the 1930s which were connected to his critique of Protestant support for war changed the way future American religious historians would describe Protestant support for war in the 1970s through the 1990s.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The fact that Reinhold Niebuhr influenced American religious historians during the 1960s and the 1970s should not be very surprising since Richard Reinitz in 1980 detailed Niebuhr’s impact on the field of American history. *Irony and Consciousness: American Historiography and Reinhold Niebuhr’s Vision* traced the way Niebuhrian irony inclined the writing of consensus American histories in the second half of the twentieth century. According to Reinitz the historical profession was infused with a more critical evaluation of American history and with a newfound sense of the ironic nature of the United States use of political power. Reinitz documented this trend in American historical circles but he neglected American religious history and did not start his historiography until the 1950s. So the fact that Niebuhr’s writings to some degree were connected to William Warren Sweet’s more critical view of Protestant support for war during both the Civil War and WWI in 1930 was quite remarkable.

This dissertation has documented the way in which American church and religious historians have described Protestant support for American wars beginning with the 1702 work of Cotton Mather and finishing with the 1992 work of Mark Noll. During that 290 year span of church historians writing about war, William Warren Sweet in his 1930 and 1939 editions of *The Story of Religion(s) in America* represented a central shift in the fundamental way wars were described and which wars were described. The two most dramatic differences were that justification of Protestant support for war was no longer unquestionably assumed and other wars besides settler wars with Native groups became the center of focus. In the American church histories written earlier than those by Sweet, Protestant settler wars with Natives were the wars that were written about the most and the justification for those wars set the stage for Protestant support for all wars to be justified. In the American church histories written after Sweet, the Revolutionary War and the Civil War take the most prominent place and even accounts of the First and Second World Wars are given larger descriptions than Protestant settler wars with Native Indians. In addition, Protestant support for war was described much more critically and at times even cynically, especially accounts of the Civil War, Spanish American War, and World War I but also including settler wars, World War II, and Vietnam.

When discussing Cotton Mather and the earliest Puritan writers of American church history, the only wars there were for them to write about were wars with Indians. Chapter One utilized Mather to describe how the Puritan historical writings justified war against the Native population. These earliest of American church histories contained the most radical rhetoric that claimed the destruction of the native savages was God’s

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providence since the settlers’ survival and prosperity depended upon the success of their military encounters. These Puritan accounts provided a model for the nineteenth and early twentieth century histories that utilized a more modern historical criterion for evaluating historical evidence, yet these methods were used to justified Protestant support for American wars. The first chapter continued by examining the writings of Robert Baird, Leonard Bacon, Leonard W. Bacon and Pete Mode. These authors all wrote consensus American church histories prior to William Sweet. Their historical accounts all included lengthy accounts that justified Protestant support of settler wars with Indians based on a more modern historical criterion, like self-defense and increased agricultural output. Other wars that were addressed by these authors utilized the same modern arguments to uncritically justify Protestant support for each war.

Chapter Two presented the theological developments in America during the 1920s and 1930s which directly impacted the critical nature of William Warren Sweet’s description of Protestant support for American war in his 1930 and 1939 editions of *The Story of Religion(s) in America*. These theological developments included: Sweet’s knowledge of Methodist personalism at Boston University; his publishing numerous articles in the *Methodist Review* with Knudson, McConnell, and Brightman; his being welcomed into the liberal academic circle at the Chicago Divinity School; his developing friendship with Wilhelm Pauck; the attack on liberalism by fundamentalists, European neo-orthodoxy and Reinhold Niebuhr’s political realism; three 1928 reviews of Karl Barth by Knudson, Pauck and Niebuhr; and finally Niebuhr’s hundreds of articles and editorials published by the *Christian Century* during the 1920s and 1930s.

Even before 1920, Sweet and the three disciples of Borden Bowne’s Boston University personalism were widely published in the *Methodist Review*. Sweet’s Methodist childhood and academic career were quite similar to Brightman’s, McConnell’s and Knudson’s and Sweet’s high regard for Bowne was made known in 1935 when he included Bowne in his *Makers of Christianity—From John Cotton to Lyman Abbott*. Sweet maintained his liberal Methodist world-view throughout his academic career making him more sensitive and reactionary toward fundamentalist attacks on the Protestant liberal tradition of the Social Gospel in which the Methodist churches played such an important role. This led Sweet to resonate with Knudson’s critique of Barth as too dogmatic concerning the absolute nature of God’s transcendence. Knudson’s view of Barth added to Sweet’s mistaken characterization and rejection of Barth as a fundamentalist.

Chapter Two traced the way in which the Boston liberal school of personalism reinforced Sweet’s liberal identity, so too did his being hired by the Chicago Divinity School, with its growing faculty who supported and encouraged modern historical criteria from which to research and write church history. Dean Shailer Mathews and Shirley Jackson Case sought out Sweet and created a new faculty position for him so they could lure him away from DePaul University. Thus, Sweet became the first history professor of American Christianity at any institute of higher learning. At Chicago, Sweet also developed a friendship with a Wilhelm Pauck, a German historical theologian who only arrived at Chicago two years before Sweet. Pauck, whose father fought in WWI, was a teenager in Berlin during the war and could have provided Sweet with firsthand knowledge of life in Germany during the Great War. In 1928, Pauck wrote a critical essay on Barth stressing that Barth was too extreme in limiting human access to the
revelation of God especially in times of human prayer and worship. This critique of Barth’s thought would have added to Sweet’s opinion that Barth’s theology was too similar to American fundamentalism to be taken seriously by anyone outside of the fundamentalist stronghold of Princeton Theological Seminary.

In addition, Chapter Two detailed how Reinhold Niebuhr, a liberal socialist pastor in Detroit in the 1920s would turn to pacifism after viewing the destruction of Germany and the vindictiveness of the Allies peace treaty during his summer trips to Germany. Starting in 1922, Niebuhr’s writings would become commonplace in the Christian Century, a Protestant publication dedicated to the liberal ideals of the Social Gospel, pacifism and nation isolationism. Even before Niebuhr’s turn to Christian realism in the early 1930s, his rhetorical and confrontational style stood out as he condemned Protestant churches for siding with big business and ignoring the impoverished plight of factory workers. He also began his critique of the failure of Protestant liberalism to recognize social evils and to utilize political means to restrain social evils such as racism and classism. By 1928, when Niebuhr wrote an essay about the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth, he had already become quite cynical toward sentimental and naïve liberal Protestantism.

Niebuhr’s article on Barth accused Barth of being too pessimistic as his absolute doctrine of the ‘Christ-idea’ was born, according to Niebuhr, out of the subjective pessimism of human need. Niebuhr’s characterization of Barth doctrine would have indicated to Sweet that Barth was a fundamentalist since Niebuhr viewed Barth as having an absolute doctrine of revelation in which the absolute ‘Christ-idea’ can only be revealed to humanity through God’s gift of grace because human reason was so corrupted by sin. The fundamentalist main attack on liberal Protestantism was that they did not take sin seriously enough and the fundamentalists’ doctrine of sin led them to reject modernism and scientific evolutionism based on an absolute and literal reading of scripture as the Word of God. Ironically, Niebuhr’s critique of Barth’s pessimistic theology was only a means to condemn liberal Protestants in America who were too sentimental and optimistic to recognize or resist evil. According to Niebuhr, American Protestants could not recognize the evil of French occupation of Germany following WWI. In addition, they failed to resist the evil of German nationalism that led to Hitler’s conquest of Europe and his mass-murder of the Jews. Niebuhr clearly stated that he preferred Barth’s dogmatic pessimism to American Protestant liberalism that demanded pacifism and political isolationism regardless of the situation.

Chapter Two examined Sweet’s 1939 The Story of Religions in America where he classified and dismissed Barth’s neo-orthodoxy as fundamentalist. Sweet was a liberal Protestant historian who sought out objectivity his whole academic career but he became defensive and subjective in his attack on this European neo-orthodox theology that he perceived as a threat to liberalism. Yet, the most painful attack on liberalism, for Sweet, was most likely not the one from Europe but the one that was developing right here in America. Reinhold Niebuhr whose friendships with liberals dominated much of the 1920s was now a realist condemning American Protestant liberals as unable to recognize the most serious social evils and unable to restrain the evil they could identify.

This criticism from a Protestant liberal insider must have stung William Warren Sweet the most. Sweet likewise would have been hurt by Niebuhr’s critique of Charles Morrison as a foolish pacifist and Shailer Mathews as a naïve liberal. These attacks by Niebuhr must have been truly cutting to the liberal Sweet, who was close friends and
colleagues to the Protestant liberals that became the focus of Niebuhr’s rhetorical condemnation. In spite of what Sweet undoubtedly perceived as unjustified criticisms of Protestant liberalism by Reinhold Niebuhr, Sweet’s historical work in the 1930s revealed that the writings of Niebuhr along with American interpretations of Karl Barth led to his writing an increasingly critical historical account of Protestant support for war.

Chapter Three delved into William Warren Sweet’s biographical background that motivated him to write his 1930 consensus American church history that would, like those that were written prior to his history, trace the success of Protestantism in America. Sweet, however, would abandon descriptions of wars with Indians as he focused on westward expansion, the Civil War era, and the growth of the liberal Social Gospel prior to the Great War. In maintaining this new focus even in 1930, Sweet took a more critical stance against Protestant clergy during the Civil War and WWI who zealously preached hatred for enemies that motivated their congregations to abandon reason in their eagerness to go to war. It was a criticism strangely similar to Barth’s critique of Protestant liberal theological support of Germany’s war effort in 1914 and most likely born out of Niebuhr’s critique of Protestant liberal support of unrestrained capitalism and unquestioning nationalism.

In 1930, Sweet wrote the first American church historical account that criticized the Protestant clergy both in the North and the South for preaching hatred that intensified and lengthened the Civil War. In addition, in 1939 his second edition provided a detailed condemnation of American Protestant clergy’s zeal for war during both the Spanish American War and World War I. Even as a liberal historian Sweet was increasingly realistic in his criticisms and condemnations of American Protestant support for war in all three of his successive editions: 1930, 1939, and 1950. His historical writings provided a solid foundation for future American religious historians to look realistically at American Protestant support for war, support that was too often uncritically granted in the achieving of aims that were either unrealistic (World War I) or unjust (slavery, Spanish American War, and Vietnam). Even when supporting wars that were necessary and just (abolition and WWII), Sweet pointed out that too often the preaching of animosity for one’s enemies in times of war can lengthen the conflict and cause additional death and suffering. The theological developments of Reinhold Niebuhr’s political realism and the American interpretation of Barth’s neo-orthodoxy, regardless of their accuracy, would have contributed to William Sweet’s knowledge of current theological and political trends.

Chapter Four examined the consensus American religious histories of William Sweet, Clifton Olmstead, Winthrop Hudson, and Edwin Gaustad. This generation of historians published their major works between 1930 and 1969. All four of these authors were knowledgeable of the theological developments that happened in the 1920s and 1930s. In addition, the consensus history of William Sweet paved the way for a whole new generation of American religious historians to write less about settler wars with Indians and to write more critically about the wars they did describe. The importance of the theological developments from the 1920s through the 1950s greatly impacted Olmstead, Hudson and Gaustad who, in general, wrote the least about settler wars against Indians but more critically than the prior generation about Protestant support for the wars they did describe. Sweet’s 1930 critique of Protestant clergy’s role in making the Civil War a longer and more brutal war as well as his criticism of Protestant support for WWI
marked a fundamental shift away from American church historians justifying Protestant support for war. This set up increasingly harsh condemnation of Protestant support for war in Sweet’s 1939 revised text, in Olmstead’s 1960 consensus history which critiqued Protestant preaching as a major factor in motivating zeal for every American war starting with settler wars, and in Marty’s 1970 history which was the first to condemn the role of Protestant support for settler wars against Indians and which led to the eventual genocide of so many Native populations.

Chapter Five included an examination of the next generation of American religious historians that included Martin Marty, Sydney Ahlstrom, Catherine Albanese, and Mark Noll. Each author published a consensus like religious history between 1970 and 1992. Marty and Ahlstrom wrote more about wars against Native Indians than had the earlier generation. In many ways Albanese’s and Noll’s texts both looked back to the histories of Sweet, Hudson, and Gaustad since they neglected to write significant critiques concerning Protestant support for the colonial settlers and westward settlers killing of Native tribes and deporting them to reservations. Marty was the most aggressive in his condemnation of the treatment of the Native population as he condemned Protestant support for the genocide of the Native Indians.

In general, both Marty and Ahlstrom wrote more critically concerning Protestant support for war than those historians who came before them and the two, represented in this chapter who wrote after them. In addition, Marty and Ahlstrom provided the most critical commentary about Protestant nationalistic tendencies and their persistent claim that God was on their side during times of war. Not surprisingly Marty and Ahlstrom also wrote the most about European neo-orthodoxy and Reinhold Niebuhr. They were also the two historians who wrote the most about Reinhold Niebuhr’s later works from the 1940s through the 1960s when Niebuhr’s critique of American power and his critical evaluation of American history were more pronounced in comparison to Niebuhr’s writings during the 1920s and 1930s which informed Sweet’s historical accounts in the 1930s. Marty and Ahlstrom also wrote more about the other theological developments that helped to inform Sweet’s initial critique of Protestant support for war in 1930. Therefore, it follows that Marty’s and Ahlstrom’s criticisms and condemnations of Protestant support for war would be greater than Albanese’s and Noll’s since the last two historians wrote less about the theological developments that influenced Sweet in the 1920s and 1930s.
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