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# The Utilization Of Local History In Teaching American Religious History: A Gilded Age And Progressive Era North Dakota Case Study

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THE UTILIZATION OF LOCAL HISTORY IN TEACHING AMERICAN RELIGIOUS  
HISTORY: A GILDED AGE AND PROGRESSIVE ERA NORTH DAKOTA CASE  
STUDY

by

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A dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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2013

This dissertation, submitted by Christopher Neal Price in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Arts from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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Dean of the Graduate School, Wayne Swisher

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## ABSTRACT

Teachers of college-level courses on American religious history generally leave out the importance of local and regional histories when telling the story of religion in America. The study of local history provides a fertile ground for understanding broad national trends in a local context. This dissertation focuses upon a little-studied religious body in North Dakota to see how Anglo settlers on the prairie viewed their religious experience in a Gilded Age and Progressive Era context. By emphasizing the records of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention at the North Dakota State Archives in Bismarck and the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks at the Orin G. Libby Department of Special Collections, it quickly became evident that the North Dakota Baptists fell solidly in line with the overarching English-speaking Protestant establishment that supported such efforts and ideas as evangelism, reform, nativism, and the Great War as the pathway to a truly Christianized America. As a Doctor of Arts project, this research was integrated into a course on Religion in American Politics and Culture. The results of this case study in terms of student learning and assessment make up the conclusion of this project.

## Chapter I

### Introduction

In 2004, the postmodern philosopher and father of literary deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, passed away. A reporter called Derrida's fellow literary critic Stanley Fish and in an interview asked him "what would succeed high theory and the triumvirate of race, gender, and class as the center of intellectual energy in the academy." According to Fish's recollection, he "answered like a shot: religion."<sup>1</sup> In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on the study of religion in higher education. The American Historical Association (AHA) announced in 2009 in an article by Robert B. Townsend in its *Perspectives on History* that religious history had taken over cultural history as the most popular topical field in the historical profession. Cultural history had previously held the top spot for fifteen consecutive years. In all, 7.7 percent of those surveyed by the AHA named religious history as one of their three main areas of interest. One can also gauge the rise of religious history by noting that in the same year as this survey, 10 percent of all employment and fellowship announcements in the historical profession listed the history of religion as one of the possible fields of specialization. In the academy as a whole, this rising interest in religious history is also evidenced by the growth of full-time scholars who listed "religion" as a specialization from 1.4 percent in 1975 to 3.1 percent in 2009. Townsend's article in *Perspectives on History* quoted Yale Professor Jon

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Fish, "One University under God?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 7, 2005, <http://chronicle.com/article/One-University-Under-God-/45077/> (accessed November 9, 2012).



Butler, who pointed out that the growth in the field is a result of the realization by historians “that the world is aflame with faith.” The failure of the secularization thesis has led to new questions of why religious belief is still relevant in an age that was supposed to see the end of religious belief.<sup>2</sup>

The growing importance of the study of religion in American classrooms at both the secondary and postsecondary levels is also evidenced by the increased attention that textbook writers and publishers have given the topic in recent years. In the 1980s, Paul Vitz undertook a study of United States history texts for the Department of Education. Vitz argued that there was an attempt to secularize American history and downplay religious events and ideas in teaching the subject. Paul Boyer examined why this might be the case and argued that there was a fear of broaching the subject of religion after the Puritans in the chronology of America at least partially because of the conflict that such discussions could conceivably cause in a more pluralist society than was the case in earlier years.<sup>3</sup> Carleton W. Young also looked into the teaching of religion in the classroom as a subject for objective historical inquiry (at least to the extent that historical inquiry can be objective). Like Boyer, Young believed that a discussion of the importance of religious belief in American history was entirely appropriate and noted twenty-six topics that should be a part of a survey of the history of the nation. These topics included events and groups such as the Puritans, the revivals of the First and

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<sup>2</sup> Robert B. Townsend, “A New Found Religion? The Field Surges Among AHA Members,” *Perspectives on History*, December 2009, <http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2009/0912/0912new3.cfm> (accessed November 9, 2012). Thinkers such as Karl Marx and Max Weber, among others, believed that modern society would increasingly marginalize religious belief.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Boyer, “In Search of the Fourth ‘R’: The Treatment of Religion in American History Textbooks and Survey Courses,” *The History Teacher* 29, no. 2 (February 1996): 196-216.

Second Great Awakenings, the founding and growth of the Mormons, the abolitionists, the social gospel, the Civil Rights movement, and the New Religious Right. Unlike Boyer, however, Young found in his study that textbooks had actually improved upon their coverage of these topics over the course of the twentieth century by increasing the number of religious references in the texts.<sup>4</sup>

One of the leading college-level textbooks currently on the market has entered the discourse regarding the place of religion in United States history survey courses. George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi's *America: A Narrative History* is a most widely used textbook for the US history survey. Shi noted that one of the main goals that he and Brown had when revising *America* was to improve the text with a new theme in each successive edition. In 2010, W. W. Norton published the eighth edition of Tindall and Shi's text. The authors chose the "theme of religion and its myriad effects on history and society" as their theme for further coverage in the new edition. They argued that "religion...has played a crucial role in the development of the United States," while also noting that religion, and specifically, "Christianity in America has always assumed many forms" and that "[r]eligious freedom has been as valued a principle as religious belief."<sup>5</sup> A study of America that intends to come anywhere close to a comprehensive treatment must look at religious beliefs and trends.

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<sup>4</sup> Carleton, W. Young, "Religion in United States History Textbooks," *The History Teacher* 28, no. 2 (February 1995): 265-271.

<sup>5</sup> George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), xvii-xviii. The American Textbook Council notes that *America: A Narrative History* is one of the top choices for AP History classes that attempt to model college-level work. See <http://www.historytextbooks.org/adopted.htm>, (accessed March 11, 2013).

In addition to the textbook controversies surrounding the study of religion, entire courses on the religious history of the United States and other parts of the world are becoming increasingly available and popular on college campuses. Fish noted this popularity of religious study on college campuses by stating, “Announce a course with ‘religion’ in the title, and you will have an overflow population. Announce a lecture or panel on ‘religion in our time’ and you will have to hire a larger hall.”<sup>6</sup> While Fish may have overstated his case a bit, his attitude toward public lectures and classes on religion on college campuses is quite telling.

H-AmRel, a list-serve that is part of the popular H-Net website has links to numerous syllabi related to courses on American religion and religious history that have been taught on college campuses like Wake Forest, the University of Colorado, and the University of Wisconsin at Madison. These syllabi give an overview of the types of topics covered in academic classes on American religion. One thing that quickly becomes clear is the emphasis on major nationwide religious movements. There is little emphasis on the place of local history or microhistory in the field of American religious studies.<sup>7</sup> As undergraduate students of history progress toward their degrees, history departments around the nation typically require a capstone course that usually involves a research seminar. For those students who have an interest in religious history, an emphasis on local history could open up topics and questions that will propel a younger generation of scholars toward profitable graduate study and productive years in the academy.

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<sup>6</sup> Fish, “One University under God?”

<sup>7</sup> “H-AmRel Syllabi,” <https://www.h-net.org/~amrel/links/syllabi.html> (accessed November 10, 2012).

A few scholars have covered the viability of local studies in recent discussions on direction of the teaching profession. Kim Perez and Steven Kite of Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kansas, recently published an article on the importance of local history for research in rural colleges and universities in *The History Teacher*. The work of Perez and Kite noted that many smaller colleges and universities do not have some of the perks that come from being near a large city or an important historical site. However, this perceived lack of resources does not necessarily entail that important history cannot be studied at these institutions. The authors pointed out that “[t]here have been a number of models for local history courses or projects published, but rarely do these reflect our situation in rural Kansas. In fact, most of these models are situated in large population centers, at large universities, and/or at schools near important historical sites.” In spite of these obstacles, the authors noted that they were “able to effectively fulfill [their] educational mission by focusing on local history.” The public history program that Fort Hays State implemented allowed faculty and students the opportunity to use local studies “as a training tool for research, writing, and publication” on such historical subjects as members of the local business community.<sup>8</sup>

This project will follow the pattern of studies such as that of Perez and Kite and utilize local history to show how easily accessed local resources can be used to illustrate how communities follow or buck national trends. The paper will begin with a general overview of the literature regarding religion in America during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. The Gilded Age saw massive changes to the American economic and intellectual landscape. These shifts threatened the Protestant hegemony that had

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<sup>8</sup> Kim Perez and Steven Kite, “It’s Not the End of the World, But You Can See It From Here: The Importance of Local History in a Rural Setting,” *The History Teacher* 44, no. 2 (February 2011): 261-272.

dominated the moral direction of the nation during most of the nineteenth century. To combat the effects of a new industrial society that created a growing urban discontent, some Protestant ministers attempted to alleviate the plight of the poor laborers, largely through the movement that would come to be known as the social gospel.

Rural states like North Dakota did not see industrialization to any degree near that of some urban areas, so the social gospel did not impact the local communities as it did places like Hell's Kitchen in New York City or in Chicago. Nevertheless, many of the presuppositions of the Protestant establishment greatly influenced North Dakota churches. From an overview of American religion in the years surrounding 1900, this work will then move to a study of the North Dakota State Baptist Convention. This body was not the largest among religious organizations in North Dakota, but it shared many ideas in common with the general overarching Protestant hegemony in relation to American exceptionalism and the nation's place in world affairs. To this end, the churches that made up the North Dakota Baptist Convention emphasized evangelism and moral reform efforts that had much in common with the progressive reforms of the early twentieth century. Many times, these efforts took on an ecumenical flavor, as the Baptists cooperated with their brethren in other Protestant denominations such as the Presbyterians and the Methodists. Like many of their Protestant cohorts, the Baptists had a strong distrust of a perceived Catholic menace that they believed was in the process of attempting to take over the nation. The large Catholic population in North Dakota probably stoked these fears, although interactions with the local Roman Catholic Churches fail to show up in the Baptist record. Compared to the voluminous amount of

evidence of interaction with other Protestant churches, the lack of any discussion of the largest congregation in town is quite telling.

From a brief examination of the parent denominational association, this project will then move on to the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks. This church serves as a case study for examining national trends in a local microhistory. North Dakota as a whole had a large immigrant population in its early history, and many ethnic Germans in North Dakota had ambivalent opinions toward American actions during World War I. The Grand Forks Baptists stood in stark contrast to these German residents of the state. The First Baptist Church of Grand Forks saw the American nation as having a special mission from God, and this assignment necessitated calls for moral reform, opposition to those outside the Protestant mainstream who threatened this mission (especially Catholics), and support for World War I as a war to protect democratic and Christian ideals against the supposed anti-Christian German autocracy.

In order to emphasize the importance of local history in a course on American religious history, much of this research will be shared in lectures given in a special topics course titled “Religion in American Politics and Culture.” This discussion will be placed in the broader context of Gilded Age and Progressive Era American religious history to show how national trends influenced some, but not necessarily all, local Protestants. The purpose of bringing these topics up over a series of lectures will be to emphasize to students who are about to embark upon their own research that local history is a fertile field for fruitful research. Students will be expected to discuss some possible research topics related to local religious history in group work during the class period. They will also be instructed to formulate possible research questions that may guide such a study.

To formulate the arguments in the case study related to the larger North Dakota State Baptist Convention, Chapter III utilizes the records of the Convention that are held at the North Dakota State Archives in Bismarck. The discussion in this chapter relied mainly upon resources related to the annual meetings of this body with the assumption that these general meetings would be very likely to reflect opinions that had widespread support among the leadership of the denomination. Chapter 4, which focuses on local history, relied extensively upon the records of the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks. This church operated from the 1880s until its combination with the local Congregational Church formed the Grand Forks Federated Church in 1941. First Baptist left its records to the Chester Fritz Library on the campus of the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. These chapters locate the local religious landscape among the Baptists in the broader context of a “Protestant America” that attempted to dominate American society during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The findings of this research will then be integrated into a course on “Religion in American Politics and Culture” with a two-fold purpose, both of which have pedagogical ramifications. The first purpose of sharing the story of the local Baptists with students is to buttress the general narrative of how religious belief impacted the Gilded Age and Progressive Era in American history. The second purpose of these lectures on the activities of the North Dakota Baptists during their formative years is to illustrate to students the potential benefits that Perez and Kite noted in their aforementioned work at Fort Hays State by translating their concept of local history to the rural plains of North Dakota.

Some historians would question whether these concepts would warrant an entire course. Could they not be covered in an American history survey class? The answer to this question is a qualified yes, but such coverage would of necessity be quite cursory. Because religious belief has played and continues to play such an influential part in American culture, an entire course allows students to investigate why the topic continues to arouse such controversy in the general discourse of the day. Additionally, such a course on American religious history situates some of the more important movements in American history into a more complete context than would a course on religious philosophy or theology, although these topics of necessity receive some coverage in a course on religion in American politics and culture.



## Chapter II

### Gilded Age and Progressive Era Religion: A Review of the Literature

#### Christianity in Early American History

When looking at the history of the English-speaking settlements in North America that became the United States of America, the study of religion is one topic that inevitably comes into the picture. From the earliest settlements set up by the Pilgrims and Puritans to the current entry of the religious right into the political discourse, religion has impelled Americans to act in accordance with their beliefs. One of the more interesting eras of American religious history is the era that bridged the end of the Civil War to the end of World War I. Broadly defined, the Gilded Age and, more importantly, the Progressive Era combined are known as the era of the social gospel in American religion. While minority faiths, such as Judaism, Catholicism, and Mormonism, and to a lesser degree people of no faith, were definitely present in the United States during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era (to the consternation of many that belonged to the Protestant establishment), the major Protestant churches tended to dominate the religious landscape at this point.

The United States Census Bureau noted a large growth in the number of church members during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, from just under 21,700,000 adherents in 1890 to nearly 42,000,000 in 1916. Included in these statistics were 357,135 Jews and nearly 16,000,000 Roman Catholics. The Catholic population made up a

sizable minority of 37.5 percent of the church members in America (and the largest single denomination), and this number was actually a decrease in the percentage from 1906, when Catholics made up over 40 percent of religious adherents in America. While the combined number of Protestant adherents made up an overall majority of American church members, their hegemony did not go unchallenged.<sup>9</sup>

Christianity has traditionally emphasized relationships between people. The New Testament refers to relationships between those in the earliest churches. The book of Acts describes an early community that held possessions in common.<sup>10</sup> The writings of James<sup>11</sup> and the letter of Paul to the Galatians<sup>12</sup> have passages that readers can interpret to have leveling tendencies. Both Paul<sup>13</sup> and Peter<sup>14</sup> described the Roman government in positive terms as a minister for the good of society. Historians have long noted a strong social ethic among Catholics.<sup>15</sup> The Christian church through much of its history concerned itself with acts of mercy and charity. The Puritans led by John Winthrop hoped to found a godly commonwealth that would “uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience and liberality” and “delight in each other; make

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<sup>9</sup> Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Bulletin 142: Religious Bodies, 1916* (Washington, DC, 1916), 29-30, [http://books.google.com/books?id=MBIHZX-7zZ4C&pg=PA28&source=gbs\\_toc\\_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=MBIHZX-7zZ4C&pg=PA28&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false) (accessed March 22, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Acts 4:32-37.

<sup>11</sup> James 2:1-10. James encouraged his readers to show no partiality to those who are wealthy.

<sup>12</sup> Galatians 3:28. Paul wrote that gender, economic, and national distinctions are immaterial for followers of Christ.

<sup>13</sup> Romans 13:1-7.

<sup>14</sup> I Peter 2:13-17.

<sup>15</sup> Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Although Todd’s work specifically discussed the Puritan social order, it very clearly tied the social concerns of the earliest Puritans to the Erasmian Catholic humanists.

others' conditions our own; rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, as members of the same body." This was to be the "city upon a hill" to which many, including Ronald Reagan, have referred in thinking of American exceptionalism.<sup>16</sup> With the expansion of America into the western frontier that first began along the Appalachian Mountains and then moved westward to the Pacific, a rugged individualism became the mythical ideal in America. This rugged individualism extended in many ways to thoughts held by much of the Protestant establishment on economics and religion.

While the founding fathers seemed to believe that religion was a positive force for public morality, they did not include any specifics about the topic of religion in the Constitution as it initially went into effect in 1789, with the exception of stating that there would be no religious tests required for public office. The freedom of religion embodied in the Bill of Rights and the disestablishment of the remaining state-supported churches in New England during the early nineteenth century led to a completely voluntary religious environment that flourished during much of that epoch in American history.<sup>17</sup> Nathan Hatch referred to this process as the "democratization of American Christianity" in his book by the same name. Hatch argued that the "theme of democratization is central to understanding the development of American Christianity, and that the years of the early republic are the most crucial in revealing that process."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," <http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/charity.html>, accessed 21 September 2012.

<sup>17</sup> For an introduction into the early thoughts of the founders on the role of religion in American government, see Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), especially Chapter 1.

<sup>18</sup> Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 3.

This democratic ideal was frequently combined with classical political economy to produce an emphasis on laissez-faire capitalism. For much of the nineteenth century, there was little in the way of a call for government regulation of the economy, owing to the belief in the natural laws of the invisible hand of the market that Adam Smith proposed in his magnum opus, *The Wealth of Nations*. It was widely believed that this invisible hand would bring the economic world into equilibrium if left alone. Of course, the government had protective tariffs for much of the nineteenth century. These taxes, though falling outside the rubric of free trade, were quite popular among many Americans as they thought that these taxes protected infant American industries. Additionally, the federal government gave large land grants to railroad companies who built transcontinental lines in the late nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

It was in this milieu that the American version of the Industrial Revolution began in earnest in the post-Civil War era. The industrialization of American manufacturing actually began in the decades before the Civil War, but industrial capitalism expanded greatly in the post-war era that is now referred to as the Gilded Age. A major result of increased industrialization was the growth of American cities. A nation that had been very agrarian since its inception now saw the rise of massive cities along the East Coast and the Midwest. Immigrants who spoke different languages and adhered to different religious beliefs than the traditional Anglo-Saxon and Germanic Protestants came from areas other than Northern and Western Europe. These Central and Southern Europeans were frequently Roman Catholic, Orthodox, or Jewish, and the Protestant establishment

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<sup>19</sup> There is debate over how successful protective tariffs actually were. An argument contra the idea that protective tariffs were necessary is Douglas A. Irving, "Did Late Nineteenth-Century U.S. Tariffs Promote Infant Industries? Evidence from the Tinplate Industry," *The Journal of Economic History* 60, no. 2 (June 2000): 335-360.

saw these newcomers as a threat to their hegemony in American society. Additionally, there was a small population of skeptics who questioned the reality of religion and even the Deity. New ideas and social realities began to break down the largely Victorian morality that American Protestants espoused in the latter nineteenth century. Because many Americans believed the extreme poverty and plight of the immigrant was the result of religious and ethnic inferiority, most old-line Protestants initially did little to alleviate the new problems of the urban centers.

### A Spiritual Crisis in the Gilded Age

The Civil War was a crisis otherwise unknown in the history of the United States. The Union and the Confederacy combined to slaughter over 600,000 of the nation's finest resources. Those who survived were left to deal with the carnage and had to adapt their experiences with their previously held conceptions of a righteous and benevolent God.<sup>20</sup> The Gilded Age created crises in a number of other areas of life. Paul A. Carter described a specifically spiritual crisis that arose during this Gilded Age. The post-Civil War era saw the convergence of numerous changes in the economic and scientific realms. Darwinism, the higher criticism of the Bible, and the social upheaval of rapid industrialization converged at nearly the same time to shake the faith of many. Carter noted that the Gilded Age was an age of striking contrasts: the popularity of the revivalism of Dwight L. Moody that was simultaneous with the growth of agnosticism and infidelity.<sup>21</sup> Carter emphasized the importance of Darwin's writings and the questions that they raised in the minds of many. In addition to the obvious questions

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<sup>20</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), 4-13.

related to the origin of mankind, Darwinism brought into question such important Christian doctrines as the Adamic fall, the Noahic flood, and the emphasis on an afterlife in which God would judge all men. In the thinking of many people in the late nineteenth century, evolution equated with progress; the Fall coincided with a decline in human capabilities. Darwin brought into question the nature, and even existence, of a human soul that exists after death; resurrection and judgment presupposed the existence of the metaphysical nature of humanity. Many people found these ideas incompatible and distressing.<sup>22</sup>

### Bifurcation in the Ranks of American Protestantism

A number of writers, perhaps beginning as early as Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, have emphasized a sort of Protestant establishment that reigned over the world of ideas and morals during much of the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> In 1982, Ferenc Morton Szasz discussed the breakdown of this general Protestant consensus in *The Divided Mind of American Protestantism*. Szasz's book was in many ways an overview of the religious setting of American society over the periods popularly known as the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era. He carried the narrative to 1930 to show where the major battle lines were drawn in what came to be known as the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy. The popular understanding of this era that is held by the religious right emphasizes the rise of Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory of natural

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<sup>22</sup> Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age*, chapters 3 and 5 especially deal with the topics of the fall of man and the resurrection of the dead.

<sup>23</sup> Norman A. Graebner, "Christianity and Democracy: Tocqueville's Views of Religion in America," *The Journal of Religion* 56, no. 3 (July 1976): 263-273. Though Tocqueville noted the importance of Protestant agreement on morals, Graebner pointed out that Tocqueville believed that Catholics made the best democrats.

selection as the leading cause of conservative ire. Szasz discussed both evolution and the rise of comparative religion and argued that few Protestants had a major problem with these developments, although he underestimated the extent of the dissent. Many notable Protestants in the Gilded Age, such as Henry Ward Beecher, attempted to reconcile evolution with the account of creation as recorded in the biblical book of Genesis. Theistic evolution became a popular middle ground between the extremes. Szasz concluded, “Comparative religion came and went with a minimum of dispute; evolution was absorbed with little controversy.”<sup>24</sup> He then noted the main cause of evangelical anxiety during the Gilded Age as the rise of German higher criticism that began to look into the historical background of the biblical writings.

Higher criticism had characteristics in common with medieval Catholicism, which focused upon an allegorical method of interpreting Scripture and tended to look for the spiritual meaning of the text. The Protestant Reformation changed this emphasis with its stress on the written word and the idea of *sola scriptura*. Instead of looking for an allegorized spiritual meaning, the reformers began to take a more literalistic approach to biblical interpretation. The Protestants of America were heirs to this literal view of the Bible, and higher criticism that questioned the authorship and validity of certain biblical passages, especially those that dealt with the miraculous, troubled them greatly. Advocates of this higher criticism questioned the greatest miracles of all, the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Jesus. In arguing that this higher criticism constituted a larger crisis for American Protestants than evolutionary thought, Szasz looked at heresy trials. These examples of ecclesiastical jurisprudence did not arise from an attempt to

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<sup>24</sup> Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880-1930* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1982), 14.

harmonize the Bible and evolution, according to Szasz's account. Instead, they centered around modernist ministers and theologians who accepted the findings of German higher critics.<sup>25</sup> However, as the work of Jon H. Roberts shows, Szasz was a bit too emphatic in his assertion that evolution had little to do with the dividing of Protestantism in the late nineteenth century.

The argument posited by Szasz that an attempt to reconcile the Bible and evolution had no part in late nineteenth-century heresy trials is not entirely accurate. Jon H. Roberts' *Darwinism and the Divine in America* also noted some of the same heresy trials that aroused the interest of Szasz in *The Divided Mind of American Protestantism*. Roberts pointed to the 1886 trial of future President Woodrow Wilson's uncle James Woodrow of the Columbia (Presbyterian) Theological Seminary. The committee that investigated Woodrow's thoughts on the transmutation of species and the inerrancy of the Bible returned with a majority report that affirmed "that the Scriptures...teach—that Adam and Eve were created, body and soul, by immediate acts of Almighty power...and that any doctrine at variance therewith is a dangerous error." Roberts noted that the final vote of the Presbyterian General Assembly was 137 to 13 in favor of the verbiage contained in the report. Further confirmation of the antipathy that the Assembly had for evolutionary thought is evidenced by the fact that James Woodrow lost his job as a result of the trial.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Szasz, *The Divided Mind of American Protestants*, 16. Chapter 2 of Szasz's work focuses upon the rise of higher criticism in the study of the Old Testament and the heresy trials that arose as a reaction against those who accepted it in some of the more conservative denominations.

<sup>26</sup> Jon H. Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America: Protestant Intellectuals and Organic Evolution, 1859-1900* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 225-227.



Roberts focused upon two divisions in terms of Protestant attitudes toward evolution. One of these divisions focused upon time; the other focused upon people. Between the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* and around 1875, most religious thinkers tended to oppose evolution based upon the reasoning of popular scientists who opposed evolutionary thought. The arguments of a few leading scientists like Louis Agassiz buttressed their opposition. After 1875, the bifurcation of Protestant America occurred along the lines of those who supported evolutionary thought and those who did not. Religious discourse on evolution began to shift away from a discussion of science to one of theology, largely because a large majority of scientists came to accept Darwinism. Those who were more liberal attempted to adjust their interpretation of the Bible to account for evolution. This group tended to view natural history in terms of progress that was superintended by God, and these particular beliefs had much in common with earlier Enlightenment deism. A more conservative group disputed this assertion on theological grounds that were based on a presupposition of the absolute inerrancy of the Bible that extended to scientific assertions. *Darwinism and the Divine in America* corrected the earlier marginalization of the nineteenth-century evolution debate that was evident in the work of Szasz.<sup>27</sup> A discussion of this bifurcation in American Protestantism is an important topic for discussion in a class on Religion in American Politics and Culture because of its impact on the Fundamentalist-Modernist debate that would impact the 1920s. The most notable example of this confrontation was the infamous Scopes Monkey Trial that pitted former Democratic Presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan against Clarence Darrow, one of the leading trial attorneys of the

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<sup>27</sup> Roberts, *Darwinism and the Divine in America*.

day. The argument regarding Darwinism is still salient even to the present with the debate over school curriculum choices in America that has been prevalent in political discourse for decades.

*The Divided Mind of Protestant America* expanded beyond the chronology of Roberts, however. According to Szasz, the divided mind among American Protestants really exploded after World War I, and the main impetus for this fissure was the activity of William Jennings Bryan, although the seeds of the conflict went back much further as there was a “[g]rowing conservative awareness that the ‘new’ theology was appreciably different from their position” and “the belief that the liberals were running the denominations as a minority faction.”<sup>28</sup> By the time of the infamous Scopes Monkey Trial, “Almost single-handedly, Bryan revived the issue of evolution and brought it to the attention of the American public.” Bryan’s concern was that a purely naturalistic worldview that could result from a belief in Darwinism without the ethical teachings of Christianity would lead to a lack of moral grounding in society. Bryan had no major problem with evolution in lower forms of life, but he believed man was a special creation, and this concern led to his becoming a major opponent of Darwinism and to his being one of the attorneys in the Scopes Monkey Trial.<sup>29</sup> A discussion of the popular understanding of this particular trial provides a good opportunity to engage students in how historical interpretations can be shaped over time by popular media.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Szasz, *The Divided Mind of American Protestants*, 68.

<sup>29</sup> Szasz, *The Divided Mind of American Protestants*, 137. Szasz spent most of the last three chapters of this book in dealing with Bryan and his opposition to evolution. A recent biography of Bryan that spends quite a bit of time discussing his quest for a Christian America is Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Barry Hankins has argued that the film *Inherit the Wind* solidified the popular conception of the Scopes Trial in the national consciousness. In referenced to the trial itself, he notes a review by *Time* that

Jean Miller Schmidt continued this discussion of a divided Protestantism in her 1991 book, although her focus ventured away from the topics of Darwinism and German higher criticism. *Souls or the Social Order* pointed out the general agreement among Protestants regarding the method for improving society. Schmidt traced this attitude to a rising Arminian view of the individual that Charles G. Finney popularized through his revivals and the preaching of personal perfection. Arminian theology held out hope for the salvation of any person and stood in contrast to the Calvinist view that only individuals whom God chose beforehand could be saved. Reformers in the antebellum period focused upon saving and changing individuals who would then impact the society. Many ministers, including even the widely popular liberal theologian Henry Ward Beecher preached that poverty was usually due to the slothfulness and sin of the poor. Schmidt furthermore pointed out the generally monolithic nature of Protestantism during the nineteenth century by noting the list of people who supported the mass meetings of Dwight L. Moody in the 1870s. Those who supported the emerging social gospel movement like “Lyman Abbot, Washington Gladden, and R. Heber Newton, conservatives like Charles Hodge, A. J. Gordon, and A. C. Dixon, and the celebrity preachers like Phillips Brooks, Henry Ward Beecher, and T. DeWitt Talmage” all endorsed Moody’s ministry. The two parties that arose were more related to praxis than theological concerns for Schmidt. Where Szasz focused on the ideological divide between conservatives and liberals, *Souls or the Social Order* focused upon the

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was highly critical of the historical usefulness of the film. The popular understanding of the Scopes Trial began in the 1930s with the publication of Frederick Lewis Allen’s *Only Yesterday*. An earlier inquiry by Ronald Numbers “studied news coverage of the trial in five metropolitan newspapers and found that not a single one interpreted the trial as a defeat for fundamentalism.” See Barry Hankins, *American Evangelicals: A Contemporary History of a Mainstream Religious Movement* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 59-67, and Barry Hankins, “The (Worst) Year of the Evangelical: 1926 and the Demise of American Fundamentalism,” *Fides et Historia* 43, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2011): 1-14.

individual versus the social aspects of the gospel as its dividing line. Schmidt did point out that even though many of the liberal theologians were adherents of a Social Gospel, they still had a desire to see individual conversions. Famous Social Gospel preachers such as Walter Rauschenbusch also wanted to see a revival of religion in addition to the reform of society. Schmidt noted 1912 as a major dividing line in American Protestantism. It was at this point that the conservatives in the Federal Council of Churches called for and got a Committee on Evangelism to add to the previous committee that emphasized the role of the church in social issues. Conservatives who were previously happy to work with liberals in their denominations increasingly came to raise opposition.<sup>31</sup>

#### Early Historical Accounts of the Social Gospel

Jean Miller Schmidt was by no means the earliest historian to study the relation of Gilded Age and Progressive Era Protestants to the reigning social order. One of the earliest historians of religion in Gilded Age America was Aaron Ignatius Abell, who published *The Urban Impact on American Protestantism, 1865-1900* in 1943. Abell noted the impact that the cities, and the industrialization that led to their growth, had on American religious life. He argued that the Protestants “did not adopt a satisfactory program of social ethics until late in the [nineteenth] century” because they were focused only upon the conversion of individuals.

By rigidly separating body and spirit and denying religious value to the former, Protestant thought necessarily ignored the problem of human welfare in the great cities. This attitude led to tacit approval of the rising craze of wealth-getting...Until the mid-eighties the urban poor scarcely figured in Protestant

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<sup>31</sup> Jean Miller Schmidt, *Souls or the Social Order: The Two-Party System in American Protestantism* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1991), 48. For an in-depth discussion of the increasing split among the denominations included in the Federal Council of Churches, see especially Chapter 6.

missionary tactics...Even the Baptist and Methodists faiths, once religions of the poor, now displayed almost frantic solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the rich.<sup>32</sup>

Many of these wealthy individuals were able to move themselves and their inner city churches to the suburbs during the Gilded Age. The Riverside Church, built near Harlem in New York City with funds largely donated by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was a notable exception and was a church that stayed near the city. These new churches were often smaller and more ornate than their predecessors. They tended to have no galleries for non-members. Abell argued that these new churches showed “contempt for the poor,” the poverty-stricken individuals who extended beyond denominational lines in their economic condition. It was then left to the Roman Catholic Church to minister to the massive numbers of the urban poor and recently-arrived immigrants. The Catholics were much more successful because of their programs for the poor.<sup>33</sup> It took time for the evangelical churches to adapt to the changing conditions, and not all did.

Abell was one of the first to follow a view of the early social gospel in a stimulus-response framework with *The Urban Impact on American Protestantism*. This framework owed its existence to the work of Arthur M. Schlesinger in a 1931 essay first published by the Massachusetts Historical Society. Ronald C. White and C. Howard Hopkins referred to Schlesinger’s “A Critical Period in American Religion, 1875-1900” as a “seminal essay” in the study of the social gospel. Schlesinger formulated the challenge-response paradigm that focused on the social gospel as a reaction to

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<sup>32</sup> Aaron Ignatius Abell, *The Urban Impact on American Protestantism, 1865-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 4.

<sup>33</sup> Abell, *The Urban Impact on American Protestantism*, 6-8.

“urbanization and industrialization on the socio-political front, and Darwinian thought and German biblical criticism on the intellectual front.”<sup>34</sup>

Henry F. May also fell into the stimulus-response camp with his work *Protestant Churches and Industrial America*. May focused his work on the generally conservative nature of American Protestantism during much of the nineteenth century. Most ministers, even those considered the most forward-thinking on theological matters, such as Henry Ward Beecher, did not have much affection for radical economic ideas. Socialists and trade unionists were opposed by a ministry that tended to hold a laissez-faire attitude on social and economic issues. Most colleges and universities, then controlled by the leading denominations, had courses in moral philosophy and political economy that tended to legitimize the established economic order. Ministers tended to view any attempt to raise wages as an affront to natural laws of the market established by God. It was only when working-class violence erupted beginning in 1877 that the churches began to understand social problems in more depth. The response by the churches took various forms, depending upon whether the reformers were conservative, progressive, or radical in outlook. Regardless, the understanding of many Christians in relation to socioeconomic issues changed dramatically over the last quarter of the nineteenth century. While later historians have to a degree continued to emphasize the stimulus-response paradigm, it has not remained completely dominant in the study of Gilded Age and Progressive Era religion.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ronald C. White and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), xiii. Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *A Critical Period in American Religion, 1875-1900* (Facet Books, 1967).

<sup>35</sup> Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949).

Hopkins and White noted another major strand in the interpretation of the social gospel in American religious history. Rather than looking at the religion of the Gilded Age in terms of a stimulus and response, this view of the social gospel looked at it in terms of continuity with earlier strands of American religious thought. They noted H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Kingdom of God in America* as the fountainhead for this interpretation of continuity. To Niebuhr, the Puritans understood the concept of the kingdom of God as a Calvinistic construction of the sovereignty of God, and those who adhered to the social gospel around the turn of the twentieth century understood the kingdom more in terms of the rule of Christian ethics. While he did not view the Puritans and the advocates of the social gospel as having similar constructs of the kingdom of God, Niebuhr noted that the concept of a kingdom was a thread that tied the two eras together.<sup>36</sup>

A few powerful individuals during the Gilded Age were able to accumulate massive amounts of wealth by profiting from low wages, high rents, and other forms of economic exploitation. These were among the most conservative elements in American society. The writings of Charles Darwin would seem an unlikely source of justification for an essentially conservative movement, as they were embraced by the religious liberals of the day. However, scholars like Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner used the idea of Darwinian natural selection to justify the established order. In his work on social Darwinism, Richard Hofstadter argued, "It was those who wished to defend the political status quo, above all the laissez-faire social conservatives, who were first to pick up the instruments of social argument that were forged out of the Darwinian concepts."

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<sup>36</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), xix-xvii; White and Hopkins, *The Social Gospel*, xiii-xiv.

Survival of the fittest became a watchword that justified the most brazen of economic exploitation during the Gilded Age. It was not until some thinkers like Lester Frank Ward, a sociologist who was influential in the school of thought known as Reform Darwinism, began to question whether the best members of society, rather than merely the strongest and most heartless, were actually able to achieve the most that people began to question this assumption.<sup>37</sup>

Another very early and eminent scholar who studied the rise of the Social Gospel was Charles Howard Hopkins, who went back further than many in his investigations. Hopkins argued that the Social Gospel arose in a milieu that had “four distinct winds of doctrine” that showed a continuity with earlier American religious movements. The first of these winds of doctrine was that of “[c]onventional, institutionalized, orthodox Protestantism,” which “provided the frozen foundation of complacency, whose stubborn refusal to warm to the social gospel was to constitute a perennial problem.” Three groups gave varying levels of support to social Christianity: “enlightened conservatives” who wanted to reconcile Christianity with new ideas in science, those who followed in the reforming footsteps of early nineteenth-century evangelicalism, and “a coolly rational but nevertheless determined and influential Unitarian school that frankly challenged both the presuppositions and the ethics of conservatism.”<sup>38</sup>

Hopkins began his study at the end of the Civil War and argued that the earliest stirrings of the Social Gospel began with the rapid industrialization that began in earnest

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<sup>37</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 5. Ward and others pointed out that the most unethical were often the people who rose to the top of society, rather than the best. The first edition of Hofstadter’s book appeared in 1944.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Edward Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1940), 14.



after the end of that conflict. Furthermore, he pointed out the increasing emphasis that many adherents of a more social Christianity gave to socialist ideas. *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism* argued that the Social Gospel, while having antecedents in the 1860s and 1870s, matured in the 1890s and won recognition in the Progressive Era with the rise of various activities undertaken by many of the leading denominations to alleviate social deprivations.<sup>39</sup>

The main critique against the excesses and the massive inequities of the Gilded Age was what would come to be known as the social gospel. White and Hopkins described the Social Gospel as “basically an indigenous movement growing within the matrix of American Protestantism. Interacting with the changing realities and problems of an increasingly industrialized and urbanized nation, the Social Gospel viewed itself as a crusade for justice and righteousness in all areas of common life.”<sup>40</sup> They also pointed out a fact that is often forgotten because of the liberal nature of the movement. The early adherents of the Social Gospel frequently had an evangelical background that hearkened back to the reformist days of the antebellum period. Many evangelicals were involved in the abolition and temperance movements.<sup>41</sup>

This interpretation held by White and Hopkins looked back to the work of Timothy L. Smith on *Revivalism and Social Reform*. Smith argued that the revivalism of the antebellum period, in connection with an increased focus on a form of holiness that

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<sup>39</sup> Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel*. Hopkins largely relied on the writings of Social Gospel adherents and official documents related to religious organizations in compiling this work.

<sup>40</sup> Ronald C. White and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), xi-xii, 3.

<sup>41</sup> White and Hopkins, *The Social Gospel*, xiii-xv. Abell and Henry F. May fell into the stimulus-response camp, while H. Richard Niebuhr, Robert Handy, and Richard Hofstadter fall into the group arguing for continuity.

wanted to sanctify all of life contributed to the “evangelical origins of social Christianity” and the calls to end slavery in the United States. This viewpoint would fall into line very nicely with the belief that the social gospellers were acting in the tradition of the antebellum reform movements.<sup>42</sup>

One of the best known examples of scholarship on the role of Protestantism in American history was Robert T. Handy’s *A Christian America*, first published in 1971. Handy also pointed out the continuity that most Protestant groups had in trying to realize a truly Christian America until the end of the Progressive Era. Reform efforts throughout the nineteenth century and into the era of the Social Gospel that coincided with the Progressive Era were largely attempts to usher in a civilization that was totally Christianized. Handy situated the adherents of the Social Gospel in this tradition that included reform efforts toward temperance and strict Sunday Sabbath observance. Evangelism and expansionism were also important in Protestantism because of a desire to expand Christianity throughout the world. Many then believed that it was possible to see a complete world conquest by Christian ideology within a generation.<sup>43</sup>

#### Popular Culture and the Spread of the Christian Message

One of the more important points that White and Hopkins made regarding the rise of the Social Gospel was the importance that popular culture could have on the lives of ordinary parishioners in the pews.<sup>44</sup> Dwight L. Moody was not the prototypical Social

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<sup>42</sup> Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957).

<sup>43</sup> Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971). Handy noted such groups as the Student Volunteer Movement as the vanguard of this movement to evangelize the entire earth.

<sup>44</sup> White and Hopkins, *The Social Gospel*, 143.

Gospel preacher. His message was a very typical evangelical appeal to individual conversion. However, this is not to say that Moody was not concerned for the plight of the poor. He spent his early ministry among the poor in the slums of Chicago. He did, however, fully utilize the popular press of the day to promote his very ecumenical meetings during the Gilded Age.<sup>45</sup> While Moody's meetings may have been the largest in American history to that point, his methodology was not entirely unique. Mark Noll noted the work of multiple historians, including Harry Stout, who pointed out the way early evangelical revivalists in the eighteenth century, such as George Whitefield, adapted their methods to the changing mores of the day, most notably in terms of an "emerging language of consumption." Moody's business-like approach in the Gilded Age was closely related to this tradition and showed how popular means could help in getting the message out to the masses.<sup>46</sup>

Prominent advocates of the Social Gospel came to utilize other aspects of popular culture to challenge the propriety of the established desire for "filthy lucre." Among the ministers who began to use the medium of the novel was Charles M. Sheldon, a Congregational minister from Topeka, Kansas. John P. Ferre investigated the importance of fiction in spreading the Social Gospel message by looking at a handful of best sellers from the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Among the books he studied was Sheldon's *In His Steps*, in which personal decisions to do what Jesus would do guided the characters in

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<sup>45</sup> For an account of Moody's use of the press and a wide variety of churches to promote his evangelistic meetings, see Bruce J. Evensen, *God's Man for the Gilded Age: D. L. Moody and the Rise of Modern Mass Evangelism* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>46</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 146-150. Noll quoted Harry S. Stout, "George Whitefield in Three Countries," in Mark Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies in the Popular Protestantism of North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 59.

the novel to give up drinking and exploiting others for personal gain. Ferre noted astutely that the majority of Americans were not reading the theological works of social gospel ministers such as Walter Rauschenbusch and Washington Gladden. Rather, they read the mass-marketed publications that included books like *In His Steps*. Ferre argued that “the mass media both reflect and shape cultural attitudes and values through a complex process of negotiation between audience and text, the bestselling religious novels during the early twentieth century are expressions of the central religious dialogues of the era.” This dialogue still had a strong middle-class and individualistic bent. Evil involved individual selfishness in each of the Social Gospel novels Ferre investigated, but the evil was not intrinsic to the individual. It was institutions that caused evil in the weak. “Human resolve” and formulas such as “What would Jesus do?” were the methods of resolving the problem of evil in these works, and these methods correspond very neatly with the social gospel’s emphasis on Christian praxis.<sup>47</sup>

#### The American South and Religion in the Gilded Age

One section of the nation that most historians have viewed as an outlier in dealing with this spiritual crisis was the South. The Gilded Age provided some unique problems for the South as this region that formerly had an economy based upon race slavery had to deal with the emancipation of over four million former slaves. Rufus Spain discussed some of the major issues facing the South by looking specifically at the Southern Baptist Convention, itself a child of the divisive nature of Southern slavery. Spain considered his work a “social history” of Southern Baptists and relied on such official documents as state and national convention proceedings and state Baptist papers and newsletters from

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<sup>47</sup> John P. Ferre, *A Social Gospel for Millions: The Religious Bestsellers of Charles Sheldon, Charles Gordon, and Harold Bell Wright* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988), 99-106.

the period 1865-1900. While this approach ultimately missed many individuals in the denomination, Spain made a compelling argument that the Southern Baptists were much more conservative than many of their Northern brethren in dealing with such issues as church/state relations and economic issues. This conservatism proceeded largely from their distrust of Northerners and the traditional Baptist adherence to the separation of church and state. The Southern Baptists tended to believe that the capitalist system in effect during the Gilded Age should remain largely as it stood with few changes.

Conversion of individual businessmen into good Christians would effect positive change in the commercial and industrial environment. Early in the Gilded Age, the Southern Baptists wanted little part of government intervention in education and moral issues, but by the end of the period, they grew to encourage more governmental intervention in issues such as temperance. They did not, however, in Spain's account, generally agree with the advocates of the Social Gospel, and preferred rather to change individuals with the more traditional rendering of the gospel. It was hoped that these individuals, and not government, would then impact society in a positive way. Spain argued that the origin of the Social Gospel among Northerners led to much of the Southern suspicion against it.<sup>48</sup>

Frederick A. Bode also focused upon the South in his discussion of Gilded Age and Progressive Era Christianity. Rather than focusing upon the Southern Baptists exclusively, Bode also looked at other related groups like the Primitive Baptists and the Methodists in North Carolina politics. The South was much more homogenous in terms of religion than was much of the rest of the country. Part of this owed to its agrarian

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<sup>48</sup> Rufus B. Spain, *At Ease in Zion: Social History of Southern Baptists, 1865-1900* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1961), 209-214. Spain focuses much of the early part of this book upon race relations. See specifically Chapter 5 for his discussion on the economy and Chapter 7 for the topic of temperance.

nature that saw little of the immigration affecting the large cities of the North. Bode noted that the vast majority of churchgoers were Protestant. This religious makeup contributed to the unique situation in the region. Bode's study had a very narrow chronological focus, but emphasized the importance of the rise of the New South by utilizing a Gramscian understanding of hegemony.<sup>49</sup> Rather than being agents for change as they were in the Northern United States with the Social Gospel, the churches in the South tended to buttress the hegemony of the established order. Even as certain ministers such as John C. Kilgo, the president of Trinity College (later Duke University), began to entertain hopes for the industrialization of Southern society, they supported the hegemony of the industrial class. The close relationship between Kilgo and the Duke family is quite instructive on this point. Some of the traditionalists bemoaned the mixing of politics and religion that arose from these debates over the place of businessmen in the New South and the public support of the University of North Carolina. These traditionalists thought that a liberal arts education should remain the prerogative of the denominations, rather than the state government. The Old South definitely showed it was not finished when it came time to have an opportunity to disfranchise black voters. The New South thus in many ways remained a reactionary society in which the old white elites shared hegemony over the masses with the new industrialists. According to Bode, the social gospel as it was found in the North impacted the South little. While Bode's work was more of a political history, it actually depended upon a greater variety of

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<sup>49</sup> Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist who was a founder of the Italian Communist Party. His most famous writings were his *Prison Notebooks*, penned while the Italian fascists incarcerated him. One of his best-known contributions to Marxist thought was the idea that the economic system of capitalism was supported by a hegemony of thought and culture that must be challenged among the working classes to bring about social changes. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

primary sources than did the work of Rufus Spain (which ironically claimed to be a social history) that mainly relied on the opening of the religious press.<sup>50</sup>

A more extensive social history of Southern religious ideas was Beth Barton Schweiger's *The Gospel Working Up*. Rather than looking into the writings of a few important church personalities or the official denominational reports, Schweiger focused her work upon the lives of nearly eight hundred Baptist and Methodist ministers in her case study of the ministry in Virginia. She found that those who entered the ministry throughout the nineteenth century viewed their new vocation as an opportunity for upward mobility. Not only did they view the gospel as a means of personal self-improvement, they also saw it as a help toward the improvement of society as a whole. The first half of *The Gospel Working Up* focused upon the antebellum period and the goal that ministers had to achieve an education and an urban pastorate. The latter portion of Schweiger's work looked at the way ministers impacted their society in the post-Civil War period. She noted that there was a greater emphasis upon temperance, but that many in society tended to look down upon ministers who were too emphatic against the liquor men because they became too involved in politics. She also noted that some of the Southern ministers during the postwar era began to have a concern for those who worked in the mills that sprang up along Virginia's rivers and called for shorter work hours and a more equitable distribution of wealth. While these ministers appeared to see the society of New South Virginia as problematic in some regards, they did not go to the extent that

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<sup>50</sup> Frederick A. Bode, *Protestantism and the New South: North Carolina Baptists and Methodists in Political Crisis, 1894-1903* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975). 8-9.

many of their counterparts in the North did toward the Social Gospel and a desire to save society instead of emphasizing the salvation of individuals.<sup>51</sup>

### Eschatology and the Social Gospel

The most conservative members of the Christian community tended to make up fundamentalism. Conservatives usually tended to view the social concerns of their liberal brethren with suspicion. The fundamentalist movement arose out of the Gilded Age, but really came to the forefront in terms of the national religious consciousness during the fundamentalist-modernist controversy that blew up just after the Progressive Era. In his *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, George Marsden discussed the background of the movement and focused upon the main factors within evangelicalism that led to the rise of fundamentalism. According to Marsden, the emphasis on dispensational premillennialism and the rise of the holiness movement contributed to the rise of the fundamentalists. The holiness movement tended to a more experiential and pietistic form of Christianity that was less concerned with doctrine than practical good living. Dispensationalism in its more extreme adherents led to a lack of concern for the plight of the poor because of a belief that the world was about to end. The only thing that mattered was getting as many converts as possible. The ministers of the Social Gospel, even though many still preached conversion, were too focused on this-worldly concerns to meet the approval of most fundamentalists.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Beth Barton Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York and Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>52</sup> George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).



Eschatological beliefs also dominated the discussion in James H. Moorhead's *World without End*. Moorhead discussed a postmillennial tradition that many Protestants held for much of the nineteenth century that actually had roots reaching back to the Massachusetts revivalist and theologian, Jonathan Edwards. Protestants divided over the nature of the millennium, with many of the liberals favoring a postmillennial eschatology, and conservative evangelicals holding to a premillennial eschatology. Moorhead discussed the dispensational brand of premillennialism, much as did Marsden. His coverage of postmillennial Protestantism focused upon the way that liberals came to see a lack of any teleology in their religion. The progressive spirit and its belief in continuous progress in an onward and upward direction, combined with new ideas related to universal salvation or, at the least, punishment that did not have an eternal nature, both contributed to the emphasis on temporal conditions in the here and now of early twentieth-century America.<sup>53</sup> It is hoped that a look at the era of the Social Gospel will provide students in the course on Religion in American Politics and Culture with an overview of a period in American history in which Protestant Christianity lent its support to the wider Progressive movement in politics. This era is one in which the culture wars were quite evident as the adherents of the status quo battled with those who supported the Social Gospel and the Fundamentalists battled with the Modernists. The eschatological understanding of the conservatives that viewed the world as going to hell in the proverbial hand basket in short order contributed to their relative lack of concern with social reform.

#### Race and Gender during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era

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<sup>53</sup> James H. Moorhead, *World Without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880-1925* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).

One of the most obvious subjects of study that concerns rapid industrialization and urbanization is socioeconomic class, and this topic has been important to even the earliest works on the Social Gospel. Many of the recent examinations of religion in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era have focused upon issues of race and gender. This shift in the focus of the historiography of religion around the turn of the twentieth century has largely mirrored recent changes in the general field of historical inquiry. Race and gender have become increasingly prominent in the literature. Among the more important discussions on gender have been books by Margaret Lamberts Bendroth and Clifford Putney.<sup>54</sup> Bendroth's study looked at fundamentalist attitudes toward gender, while Putney focused his study on the mainline Protestant churches. Both groups had major concerns over a "feminization" of the Christian church during the latter half of the nineteenth century that included the sentimentality that was popular during the Romantic period. Many Protestant leaders feared a takeover of America by Catholics and the lack of strong Anglo-Saxon men frequenting church services.

Putney noted the importance of groups such as the YMCA and the Boy Scouts of America in bringing into American religion a new emphasis on "the strenuous life" championed by Theodore Roosevelt. He noted several possible reasons for the rise of this emphasis on "muscular" Christianity and actually tied its rise to a similar literary movement that preceded it in England. Both had racial overtones and had concerns that "overcivilization" could lead weakness in the traditional Anglo upper class. Quoting Roosevelt himself, Putney noted that "there was 'a general tendency among people of culture and education...to neglect and even look down on the rougher and manlier

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<sup>54</sup> Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

virtues, so that an advanced state of intellectual development is too often associated with a certain effeminacy of character.” One of the leading problems associated with a lack of manliness was the increase in new office jobs that required no physical labor, and there was concern that the sons of immigrants were increasingly becoming stronger through manual labor than the sons of the Anglo-Saxon establishment who sat at desks. Another reason Putney cited as a contributor to “weakly” Christians was the antipathy that many denominations had toward sports as useless frivolities that had no spiritual value. Only work was an appropriate endeavor to these austere men. The sedentary work of many city dwellers contributed to this weakness and the urban-rural divide was in evidence. Many of the new summer camps and athletic institutions like the YMCA emphasized the building of character through sport that would instill traditional Christian values in young men who would otherwise be concerned with the cares of the world and become feminized. The camps allowed men to get back to nature. Those most influential in the Social Gospel, such as Josiah Strong and Washington Gladden typically supported the move toward a more muscular Christianity.<sup>55</sup>

Margaret Lamberts Bendroth also looked into the issue of gender during the era of the Social Gospel. Her *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* focused upon the more conservative wing of American Protestantism. Like mainstream Protestants, Fundamentalists bemoaned the feminization of American Christianity during the Gilded Age. Those held to be most responsible for this “weak” Christianity were the local pastors of congregations who were not manly enough. Fundamentalists looked at the evangelists who focused on saving souls as the real “manly men” of the day, and

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<sup>55</sup> Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 25-26.

emphasized their influence over and against more common pastoral ministries. Perhaps surprisingly to most uninformed readers, the more conservative branches of major denominations were as likely, if not more so, to allow women important roles in preaching and evangelism. Some of the earliest Bible schools, such as the one founded by Northern Baptist fundamentalist William Bell Riley in Minneapolis, permitted women to matriculate as students and even promoted women evangelists and missionaries. The spread of the message itself was more important in these instances than the sex of the messenger. It was not until after the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the mid-1920s that some ministers, like John R. Rice, began complaining about “bobbed hair, bossy wives, and women preachers.” Although it was not connected to the era of the Social Gospel, Bendroth continued her critique of Fundamentalist attitudes toward gender relations to the latter twentieth century and noted that the nuclear family of the post-World War II era saw a return to a more Victorian attitude toward the sexes that emphasized the godly housewife over women who worked outside the home, either by choice or by necessity.<sup>56</sup> Of course, those who were engaged in good deeds like Lottie Moon were exempted from this social norm.

The role of women in churches continues to the present. Many denominations ordain women ministers today. Women preachers were not unheard of during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. As noted above in the case of William Bell Riley, women evangelists were thought beneficial to the cause, even if there was a desire that more men would answer the call. Even a denomination as conservative as the Southern Baptist Convention accepted women who preached to evangelize on the mission fields. A recent

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<sup>56</sup> Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender*.

article by Elizabeth Flowers investigated the ministry of Lottie Moon, a single female missionary to China who served up until the Boxer Rebellion. While it is apparent that Moon preached extensively while in China, the Southern Baptists have not been quick to portray this side of her work, preferring rather to emphasize her Christ-centered, selfless life that ended due to malnutrition during the Boxer Rebellion. The differing depictions of Moon show that the topic of women ministers remains controversial.<sup>57</sup>

In America, the increasing acceptance of women ministers would not become nearly as evident as it would in years after the Progressive Era and during the 1920s with the rise of women preachers like Amiee Semple McPherson. While Sister Aimee was a missionary to China with her husband in 1910, her main claim to fame came in the 1920s with the building of her Angelus Temple and her widespread use of the radio to reach listeners. On the way to China, “she received another vision confirming God’s plan for her life. God had apparently not only chosen her to preach, but anointed her to battle the liberal trends enveloping Christianity.” Matthew Avery Sutton argues that McPherson’s work in California helped to “resurrect” the idea of a Christian America during the 1920s, although she was one of the few women ministers to attract such a massive following.<sup>58</sup>

Ronald C. White, Jr. focused his 1990 account of the Social Gospel upon race relations. He found the earlier studies of the Social Gospel as lacking in terms of their racial emphasis. White pointed out that most of the historical treatments of Gilded Age and Progressive Era religion had little concern for race, because the authors argued that

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<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth Flowers, “The Contested Legacy of Lottie Moon: Southern Baptists, Women, and Partisan Protestantism,” *Fides et Historia* 43, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2011): 15-40.

<sup>58</sup> Matthew Avery Sutton, *Amiee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 10-11.

race was unimportant to the ministers involved in propagating the Social Gospel. White disagreed with this assessment and looked into speeches and writings by prominent Social Gospelers like Washington Gladden, Josiah Strong, and Lyman Abbott that indicated this earlier marginalization of race relations by earlier historians was not entirely accurate. While much of the discourse concerning race by white American adherents to the social gospel was paternalistic, it was not as dismissive and racist as many had earlier suggested.<sup>59</sup>

Cornelius Bynum attempted to give agency to African Americans in the era of the Social Gospel by focusing upon the work of Reverdy Ransom in a recent article published by the *Journal of African American History*. Ransom, an African American minister in the African Methodist Episcopal denomination, used the new science of sociology to set up an institutional church for African Americans around 1900. Bynum understood that Ransom's version of Christian socialism was "part of the intellectual foundation that gave rise to distinct African American strains of progressive and radical thought in the World War I era and beyond." Ransom used the Social Gospel as a vehicle to show other Americans how blacks could achieve as much as their white counterparts in terms of social development in industrial society. Bynum's work continued in the tradition of White's work on the Social Gospel and race.<sup>60</sup>

Protestants were by no means the only religious observers in nineteenth-century America, in spite of the wide influence they had on social mores at the time. A growing

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<sup>59</sup> Ronald C. White, Jr., *Liberty and Justice for All: Racial Reform and the Social Gospel, 1877-1925* (San Francisco and New York: Harper & Row, 1990).

<sup>60</sup> Cornelius L. Bynum, "'An Equal Chance in the Race for Life': Reverdy C. Ransom, Socialism, and the Social Gospel Movement, 1890-1920," *The Journal of African American History* 93, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 1-20.

minority adhered to the Catholic, Jewish, or Mormon faiths (or no faith at all). These non-Protestant religious groups more frequently clashed with Protestants over issues such as the reading of the King James Version of the Bible in public schools<sup>61</sup> and, in the case of Jewish Americans, the strict observance of Sunday as a holy day. The use of Saturday as a regular workday was problematic for observant Jews, as well. A number of essays in Jonathan Sarna's edited compilation on minority faiths focused upon the importance of both accommodating American society and standing apart had on these religious groups in the years between the Civil War and World War I. Essays by Benny Kraut, Jay Dolan, Jan Shipps, and David W. Wills focused upon the survival strategies that Jews, Catholics, Mormons, and African Americans utilized during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. Dolan noted the attempts by Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul, Minnesota, to modernize American Catholicism. Rome opposed this effort and forced Ireland to desist in the process of Americanization that included greater lay involvement and democracy. Jan Shipps noted the abrogation of polygamy as an attempt by Mormons to in some ways repair the relationship between the Latter Day Saints and mainstream America. Studies such as these are a reminder that there was a great deal of competition in the American religious marketplace during this period of supposed Protestant hegemony.<sup>62</sup>

Catholics also attempted to deal with the spiritual and economic crisis of the Gilded Age. Authors such as Roger Fortin and others who have focused on Roman

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<sup>61</sup> Tracy Fessenden, "The Nineteenth-Century Bible Wars and the Separation of Church and State," *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 74, no. 4 (December 2005): 784-811; Mark A. Noll, "The Bible, Minority Faiths, and the American Protestant Mainstream, 1860-1925," in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana and Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1998), 192-231.

<sup>62</sup> Jay P. Dolan, "Catholicism and American Culture: Strategies for Survival" and Jan Shipps, "Difference and Otherness: Mormonism and the American Religious Mainstream," in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, 61-80, 81-109.

Catholic history have emphasized the importance of caring for the material needs of people that has long been a hallmark of Catholic activity. Fortin wrote a broad-based history of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati in celebration of that organization's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It should not be surprising that the main era in which Fortin noted the social service of the archdiocese began during the Gilded Age. To meet the urban problems associated with increased industrialization, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati began to build homes for the newly arrived single women who worked in the city and hospitals to care for an increasing number of ill Cincinnatians. Although most Americans have associated Catholicism with "wet" interests in regard to the imbibing of alcoholic beverages, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, like many other Catholic groups, supported temperance endeavors. One of the more famous archbishops to serve the district was John Baptist Purcell. While he did not support prohibition, Purcell lent his support to the Catholic Total Abstinence Union. The Catholics in Cincinnati such as Purcell believed that "intemperance, low wages, and general economic conditions contributed" to the terrible "living and working conditions of the Catholic poor." Although viewed as beyond the pale of good Americanism by many in the Protestant establishment, when it came to attitudes about social issues, the Catholics had much in common with their counterparts in the Social Gospel movement. Important clerics in Cincinnati came to support labor unions and improved working conditions as a means to alleviate the suffering of the poor working class. Peter Dietz established the American Academy of Christian Democracy in the Cincinnati area and "felt the unions were the surest means of securing justice for the workers of American and of preventing the growth of socialism." Catholic



businessmen soured on Dietz and his influence eroded, but his attitude toward labor was not outside traditional Catholic activism on the behalf of the poor.<sup>63</sup>

The period between 1865 and 1915 was a period in which many Protestants wanted to cement a Christian America that resembled their own religious and ethical beliefs. This move to support such movements as prohibition and mass evangelism were closely tied to the revivalism and the reform efforts of the first half of the nineteenth century. The Progressive Era can in some ways be seen as the high point in the attempt at a Christian America of the Protestant establishment's making, unless one counts the early Puritan experiment in Massachusetts. Richard Hofstadter noted in his important work on *The Age of Reform* that the Progressive Era and the reforms that it embodied received more in the way of support from the clergy than any other such movement in American history.<sup>64</sup> These efforts to deal with the spiritual and economic crises of the Gilded Age were not entirely successful, and they did not always enjoy the support of Americans who fell outside the Protestant mainstream. However, while many people today would consider the Progressive Era a time in America's history in which liberalism reigned (if for no other reason because of the use of the term "progressive" by the political left in current discourse) and brought important democratic and economic changes to society, some of the reforms, such as prohibition, were more geared toward improving morality as the dominant Protestant establishment defined the term. With the increased plurality in the ideological and religious landscape in twenty-first century

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<sup>63</sup> Roger Fortin, *Faith and Action: A History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 1821-1996* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2002), 126-127, 245-248.

<sup>64</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 5, 150-152, 175-176. See also George McKenna, *The Puritan Origins of American Patriotism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

America, it is unlikely that such an era could be repeated today, in spite of efforts on the part of some members of the new religious right to stamp their mark on American society and reclaim a “Christian America” that was never so real as they have imagined.

### Chapter III

#### The North Dakota Baptist State Convention

When looking at local history, the historian can choose to look at the immediate community, or he or she can expand the scope of a study and move out to the county or state level. While this expanded regional view might not be necessary in all studies, for groups that operate on a larger scale, a look at regional beliefs and trends might be advisable. One religious group in North Dakota history that has largely been overlooked by scholars is the Baptists. While they might not have had the number of adherents of larger groups in North Dakota like the Catholics and Lutherans, the Baptists are important because they give a view of the broader English-speaking Protestant establishment and how these religious believers on the Northern Great Plains were able to fit in with the larger Protestant bodies that to some extent dominated American society during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, although this attempt at a Protestant hegemony was not limited to this time period. This state-level study of Baptist beliefs and attitudes could also be inserted into a course on American religious history to introduce students to the possibilities that exist in the field of local religious history.

Many Americans have long discussed the mid-nineteenth century as the era of the nation's manifest destiny, using the term from John L. O'Sullivan's writings in the *Democratic Review* on what he and others believed to be the God-given right of the

nation to conquer a continent.<sup>65</sup> Many Americans agreed with O'Sullivan's assessment of the situation in the 1840s. After the war with Mexico ended in 1848, white settlers began to flood into the area made up by the Mexican Cession. Movement into the Great Plains that now includes North Dakota, which was a part of the earlier Louisiana Purchase in 1803, also accelerated with such legislation as the Kansas-Nebraska Act and, more importantly, the Homestead Act of the early 1860s that offered "free" land in exchange for living on it for five years, improving it, and paying a nominal filing fee. Among the earliest settlers to what would become North Dakota were missionaries who hoped to convert both the settlers and the increasingly displaced indigenous inhabitants to the Christian faith.

One of the earliest missionary emphases in what would become the Dakota Territory began nearly a decade before the organization of the region into a territory. The Baptists were among the earliest American missionaries, beginning their work in the region in 1852. At this early date, Elijah Terry and David Tanner began a mission among the Indians near Walhalla in what would later become North Dakota. This small work was among the earliest activity by Protestant missionaries in the northern part of what would later become Dakota Territory. Roman Catholics had already begun their involvement in the area as early as 1812, when they built a small church near Pembina. The Anglicans followed the Catholics to Pembina around 1820 and set up a parish.<sup>66</sup> Just three months after the arrival of the Baptist missionaries in 1852, a "band of Sioux

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<sup>65</sup> John L. O'Sullivan, "Annexation," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17, no. 1 (July-August 1845): 5-10, <http://web.grinnell.edu/courses/HIS/f01/HIS202-01/Documents/OSullivan.html>, accessed October 27, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> "Parishes of the Red River Settlement," *Canadian Wartime Experience*, [http://www.umanitoba.ca/canadian\\_wartime/grade6/module3/parishes.shtml](http://www.umanitoba.ca/canadian_wartime/grade6/module3/parishes.shtml) (accessed March 22, 2013).

Indians” killed and scalped Terry as he attempted to cut down trees for a crude log structure to “teach the Indians and half-breeds and conduct religious services.” Within two years, there would be two more “martyrs” as the Baptists continued their efforts among the Indians—the wives of missionaries Alonzo Barnard and D. B. Spencer. After these deaths, the work of the Baptists among the Indians ended for several years.<sup>67</sup>

The work of Baptists in North Dakota would begin anew in spite of the early difficulties. Following the Presbyterians and Methodists, the denomination would be the third Protestant group to organize a congregation in what would become North Dakota with the establishment of the First Baptist Church of Fargo in January 1879.<sup>68</sup> This early work by Baptists in Dakota Territory rapidly expanded to the point that the North Dakota Baptist State Convention was organized in 1881. A few Baptist churches existed at this early date, and met in convention on November 5, 1881. At this convention meeting, a certain “Brother Allyn” rose to make a motion that the churches assembled at the convention form an association. The motion carried unanimously, and the

Association thus constituted, was composed of churches at Fargo, Tower City, Lisbon, Jamestown, and Grand Forks, represented by delegates; Richland Church, represented by letter; Fuller and Tongue River Churches, whose letters were not received in time to be read at the Association, and the churches at Pembina and Mandan, not properly organized until a few days later, but making request through General Missionary [G. W.] Huntley, that when organized, they might have a place with us.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> T. M. Shanafelt, *Baptist History of North Dakota* (1904), 6-8. North Dakota Baptist State Convention Records, Collection 10468, roll 13691. North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, ND. Hereafter referred to as ND Baptist Convention Records.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Minutes of Organization, North Dakota Baptist Association, 5 November 1881. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

The association was set up, “in no sense to legislate for its churches, but to promote fellowship among them.” From this humbel start, the North Dakota State Baptist Association emerged as a largely unified force on the prairies of Northern Dakota Territory to become a relatively important religious body in the region. In 1884, the Association voted to organize the North Dakota Baptist Convention, and the next year voted to break the main body into district associations.<sup>70</sup> The early years of Baptist activity in North Dakota emphasized an ecumenical desire to maintain a perceived Protestant establishment and to evangelize the masses. This evangelistic impulse led to extensive fellowship among various ethnic groups, although by World War I, there was a move afoot to assimilate these brethren into the overarching American culture.

#### The Early History of North Dakota Baptists

Although some historians, such as Nathan Hatch,<sup>71</sup> have seen the nineteenth century as a period of an increased splintering within the ranks of the Protestant churches because of democratic forces, others have seen a generally monolithic Protestantism within American culture. Timothy L. Smith was one of the writers who argued that a generally Arminian<sup>72</sup> form of Christianity that emphasized revivalism and Christian perfection tended to define much of American religious life. Smith argued that it was this

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<sup>70</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association (1884)*, 61. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691; *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association (1885)*, 10. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691

<sup>71</sup> Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*.

<sup>72</sup> Arminianism refers to the theological understanding held to by followers of Jacobus Arminius, who formulated a Remonstrance against the teachings of John Calvin. Where Calvin argued for the absolute sovereignty of God, which extended itself into the realm of the election of a certain population to ultimate salvation, Arminians attempted allow for the possibility of salvation for all. Orthodox Calvinists feared that this was a step back toward Catholicism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but this association of Arminianism and Catholicism largely evaporated over time.

desire for Christian perfection (frequently called a second blessing, entire sanctification, or the baptism of the spirit), which led to many of the earliest Christian social concerns in the nascent industrial era that straddled the US Civil War.<sup>73</sup> Among the more recent authors to emphasize this Protestant establishment was Jean Miller Schmidt in her 1991 book *Souls or the Social Order*. Schmidt argued that nineteenth-century American Protestants “were very nearly of one mind on the role of the church and its ministry,” although this widespread agreement began to break down around 1880 as the result of external pressures brought about by the writings of Charles Darwin, higher criticism, and, especially, industrialization. American Protestants were largely agreed that evangelizing individuals was the way to effect change in society as a whole.<sup>74</sup>

The early growth of the Baptist work in North Dakota was largely the result of the effort of one man. In 1881 the American Baptist Home Mission Society (ABHMS) appointed G. W. Huntley to be a missionary along the line of the Northern Pacific Railroad. His territory was initially to include the area along the railroad line that stretched from Brainerd, Minnesota, to Miles City, Montana. By July of 1881, the ABHMS directed Huntley to focus his efforts on the northern half of the Dakota Territory, owing this move to the rapid increase in immigration to the region. Along with other early immigrants to the region, Huntley braved severe climatic conditions and the privations associated with new settlement. His efforts were quite successful between 1881 and July 1892, when he retired for health reasons. Over the course of his ministry

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<sup>73</sup> Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform in Mid-Nineteenth Century America* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957). Chapters 7-9 in Smith’s work detail the importance that the holiness movement had in a mostly urban environment. Smith saw the origins of social Christianity that would rise in importance during the later Gilded Age in these earlier evangelical stirrings.

<sup>74</sup> Miller, *Souls or the Social Order*, xxxv.

in the area, Huntley personally oversaw the organization of about forty churches and many Sunday schools. He then grouped the churches into associations and also helped in the organization of the North Dakota Baptist Convention.

Early activity of the Baptist denomination in North Dakota focused not only upon English speakers. Some of the earliest immigrants to North Dakota were Baptists of European extraction. Among the most numerous, as they were among other denominations such as the Lutherans, were the Scandinavians. The number of Scandinavian churches grew to such a degree that they left their home in the Red River Valley Association and formed ethnic associations. Both the Swedes and the Norwegians formed associations while remaining within the parent organization of the North Dakota State Baptist Convention. German speakers also formed their own conference at this early date. By 1904, North Dakota had the “only distinctively Russian Baptist Church in the United States,” the first Russian Baptist Church of Liberty. Altogether, by 1904, a denominational history compiled by T. M. Shanafelt indicated that Baptists had started around eighty churches in North Dakota, although about thirty had already ceased to exist. Baptists in North Dakota numbered just over 4,000, a ratio of about one seventy-sixth of the population according to Shanafelt’s computations.<sup>75</sup> In 1907, the North Dakota Baptists noted their approval of the newly formed Northern Baptist Convention and threw their support behind the new endeavor.<sup>76</sup>

### Evangelism Among North Dakota Baptists

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<sup>75</sup> Shanafelt, *Baptist History of North Dakota*, 16-20, 24, 30. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>76</sup> *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention, the Ministers’ Union, and the Baptist Young People’s Union* (Detroit, MN: Geo. D. Hamilton Printer, 1907), 18. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.



True to their evangelical roots, the first meeting of what was then known as the North Dakota Baptist Association in 1881 adopted a constitution that contained a stipulation that the churches would associate to “stimulate each other in evangelizing work...and, in general, to combine efforts, in whatever way may be deemed advisable for the glory of God.”<sup>77</sup> As early as 1884, Ladies Mission Circles met among the members of many churches in the Association. These groups took up offerings at their meetings that supported both home and foreign mission endeavors. The wife of the North Dakota missionary G. W. Huntley stated at the 1884 meeting that each church should have both “a Home and Foreign Mission Circle.” The importance given to these efforts at an early date in their history shows the primacy of an evangelistic focus upon the North Dakota Baptists.<sup>78</sup> The emphasis on mission work often made mainstream Protestants supportive of an activist foreign policy. President McKinley, taking up the mantle of the “White Man’s Burden” looked at the acquisition of the Philippines as an opportunity to “uplift and Christianize” the Filipinos, in spite of their living in the only Christian (albeit Catholic) nation in Asia. This aspect of American imperialism in which religion and politics intermingled in the aftermath of the war is an important topic to emphasize in a course on Religion in American Politics and Culture.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Minutes of Organization, North Dakota Baptist Association, 5 November 1881. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>78</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association (1884)*, 49-51. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>79</sup> “The Philippines,” *Digital History*, [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3161](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3161), (accessed March 15, 2013). The “White Man’s Burden” refers to a poem by that title that was penned by Rudyard Kipling.

This dual emphasis on home and foreign mission work made its way into the minutes of the 1885 meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Association, in which the delegates approved a resolution

That we should not allow the loud calls from our home field to make us deaf to the cries of the darkened heathen nations, and that we earnestly advise some uniform method of contributing regularly, not only to our Foreign Mission Society, but to the Home Mission and Publication Societies as well, and also for general benevolent purposes, either by giving a certain percentage of all receipts, or by taking upon the second (or some other) Sunday in each quarter, a special contribution for these respective objects.<sup>80</sup>

Whether the reference to the “darkened heathen nations” referred to a spiritual state that needed enlightening or skin color is not clarified, but with the current racial attitudes in late nineteenth-century America, it is likely that the concepts were conflated into one opinion of those of non-European stock.

The home mission field had an international flavor at a very early date in the history of the North Dakota Baptist Convention. As early as 1885, just four years after the initial organization of Baptists in Northern Dakota Territory, the Convention met and voiced “heartly approval” of the work then being done by “Brother J.A.H. Johnson and others among the Scandinavian population.” The delegates noted the great increase in the population of the territory and the fact that “Scandinavians, Germans, and many Icelanders” had requested “recognition and encouragement” of their work from the General Missionary, G.W. Huntley. There were, however, some dark clouds on the North Dakota horizon. The North Dakota Baptists feared certain “loose ideas” that were prevalent “in reference to the doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a fruit of the traditional teaching of the Roman Catholic church and its various branches.” While it is

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<sup>80</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association (1885)*, 9. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

not exactly clear what these “loose ideas” were, it is clear that the Baptist churches saw “a fresh sense of the necessity of the field [they occupied]” because of this early infiltration of Catholicism.<sup>81</sup>

There was concern at the 1887 meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Convention that the Scandinavian immigrants had little in the way of support. Some were at this early date encouraging their foreign-born brothers and sisters to worship in English churches. J. A. H. Johnson, pastor of the Fargo immigrant body, noted that this assimilation was “not practicable” because people tended to prefer their mother tongue. Johnson bemoaned the fact that there was only one Baptist minister for the 49,000 people of Scandinavian descent then living in North Dakota. He called for additional laborers that could speak the language of the people, as this would be the only way “these masses of Scandinavians are to be won for Christ.”<sup>82</sup> Of course, many Scandinavians tended to follow the Lutheran understanding of the Christian faith, although they tended to fragment into multiple synods along both national and doctrinal lines. Grand Forks had three separate Norwegian Lutheran churches for a period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>83</sup> Johnson’s calls for additional help did not fall on deaf ears. By the next meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Association in Jamestown, the Committee on Resolutions called for the appointment of “two additional missionaries to labor among...Scandinavians in North Dakota.” The committee recommended that Johnson be

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<sup>81</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (1885), 9-10. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>82</sup> *Minutes of the North Dakota Baptist Convention* (Fargo: The Republican Steam Printing House, 1887), 16. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>83</sup> For an account of the fragmentation of Norwegian Lutherans over doctrinal issues, see Christopher Price, *The Old Church on Walnut Street: A Story of Immigrants and Evangelicals* (Grand Forks, ND: Grand Forks Community Land Trust, 2012).

named as the General Missionary to Scandinavians in Northern Dakota Territory by the American Baptist Home Mission Society.<sup>84</sup>

While there was a great deal of concern for evangelizing the masses in North Dakota, there were periodic problems that would cut down on this evangelistic impulse. In the 1895 meeting of the North Dakota Baptists, General Missionary W. L. Van Horn noted some of the current problems that limited missionary efforts. Van Horn called the previous year “one of the worst” in relation to mission work. The Panic of 1893 caused many “good men” to look to serve elsewhere, and the current conditions had several churches without ministers for a lengthy time. Infrequent services were commonplace for these churches without pastors. In spite of the problems, Van Horn believed that “much of the land [was] yet to be possessed” and that there were “many needing the truth.” He felt that “if each one will do his part, the work will be done” and North Dakota thoroughly evangelized.<sup>85</sup>

The lack of qualified ministers and the great turnover of pastors in the various churches was a major concern throughout the years straddling the turn of the twentieth century. In 1903, the denominational board gave its annual address to the State Baptist Convention. To address the needs of the churches in the state, the Convention appointed a district missionary and evangelist. Rev. F. O. Lameroux was the first to be called, but after acceptance and a family bout with diphtheria that took his son’s life, Lameroux abruptly declined the position. Rev. Frank Sprague then became the district missionary

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<sup>84</sup> *Minutes of the Eighth Session of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (Mandan, 1888), 9. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>85</sup> *The North Dakota Baptist Annual*, (North Dakota Baptist Convention, 1895), 10-11. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

and evangelist and met with the approval of the board as it prepared its annual address. In addition to the calling of a state missionary, the board noted the great increase in pastoral stability over the previous year. Only five pastors left the state, while thirteen began ministering to churches in the area. The rural and widely scattered nature of the population in North Dakota, when combined with the relatively low pay of the ministers, no doubt contributed to these continual shortages.<sup>86</sup>

At the same meeting, Rev. C. C. Williams addressed the North Dakota Association on “How Can a Pastor Best Encourage the Evangelistic Spirit of His Church?” According to Williams, soul winning should be the main emphasis of the churches. Evangelistic pastors would have evangelistic services and sermons that would be “(1) Simple and clear, (2) Positive, not apologizing, (3) Tender and loving, not dogmatic, (4) Direct, (5) Biblical, (6) Aggressive.” The points in this address and the annual reports of the home and foreign mission societies note the evangelical emphasis of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention.<sup>87</sup>

In the spirit of developing the evangelical spirit, the Convention invited the noted pastor of First Baptist Church in Minneapolis, William Bell Riley, to speak to its delegates in 1911. Riley spoke on numerous occasions at this annual meeting. The Committee on Resolutions appreciated the work that he did and noted its gratefulness for his “helpful, soul-inspiring, and spiritually stimulating addresses.” It was hoped that the evangelistic impulses that Riley had discussed would “permeate” the churches in North

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<sup>86</sup> *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Convention, the Ministerial Union, and the Baptist Young People's Union* (Huron: SD, Huronite Print, 1903), 32-33. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

Dakota and “result in a great ingathering of souls into the kingdom.”<sup>88</sup> Riley would later found the World Christian Fundamentals Association as a rival organization to the more liberal Federal Council of Churches.

The social gospel idea of the salvation of society did not seem to have much success when it came to the attitudes of some North Dakota Baptists. Rev. P. W. Longfellow of the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks presented a paper to the Red River Valley Baptist Association in 1894 titled “The Regeneration of the Individual, the Hope of the Nation.” Longfellow’s paper included a discussion of “[f]inancial depression, labor agitations and Coxeyism.” As he saw it, the key to an “improved national life” depended upon the regeneration of individual Americans. This hope adhered to the traditional American view of the role of the church in dealing with individuals.<sup>89</sup> Rev. Harvey J. Moore, also of the First Baptist Church in Grand Forks addressed the North Dakota Baptist State Convention in the early days of American involvement in World War I in October 1917. Moore’s sermon during the convention was titled “What Must the Church do?” and noted serious concerns “that the church [was] in danger of turning away from its real work.” He warned that some of the problems that churches attempted to handle should be dealt with by other organizations. It was perhaps not coincidental that a panel followed with a paper read by Dr. W. P. Behan titled “Our

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<sup>88</sup> *Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention* (1911), 58. For additional information on Riley, see William V. Trollinger, Jr. *God’s Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991). For the division of American Protestantism in the early twentieth century, see Szasz, *The Divided Mind of American Protestantism, 1880-1930*.

<sup>89</sup> *Constitution and Proceedings of the Red River Valley Baptist Association* (Winnipeg, MB: 1894), 14. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691. Coxeyism refers to the activities of radical Ohio businessman Jacob Coxey. Many of the populist reforms encouraged by Coxey were adopted in the New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. A short discussion of Coxey’s Army can be found at “The Depression of 1893,” <http://projects.vassar.edu/1896/depression.html> (accessed November 10, 2012).

Times and the Social Gospel.” It is apparent that winning souls was the main goal, and that social work threatened to detract from that effort.<sup>90</sup>

Ironically, a difference in opinion was seen at the very meeting in which Moore gave his sermon. The Committee on Resolutions noted in 1917, “The social mission of the church is becoming increasingly urgent and obvious.” The reason that the church needed to be more involved in social issues was the fact that “[E]vil [was] well organized and alert.” It was feared that the nation’s moral compass was under attack by those who opposed the Protestant sense of public decency and that Baptists, who “had in the past a leading place” in “the work of social reform and moral betterment,” needed to remain vigilant and active in helping the nation improve its moral standing.<sup>91</sup>

In spite of early success in building churches, the great increase in the population of the state in its early decades was cause for concern. In 1908, North Dakota Baptist Convention President R. B. Griffith of Grand Forks arose to give the annual presidential address. Like many other such talks, Griffith’s speech focused upon evangelism. North Dakota would in twenty-five years, he argued, “have a population of two millions of people” because of the fertile and uncultivated land. His prediction was wrong, as over 100 years later the population of the state has never exceeded 700,000. His concern was over the many people who would come that were “a class of people with different religious thought—Scandinavian, German, Italian, Japanese and Chinese.” He wondered if his Christian brothers would “convert them” or rather have their own posterity converted to nonbelief. According to Griffith, the answer to this conundrum was the

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<sup>90</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention (1917)*, 31. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.

<sup>91</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention (1917)*, 33. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.

earnest preaching of the gospel to the heathen by the Baptists and other Protestant bodies.<sup>92</sup> The concern for evangelizing at home and abroad because of the relatively low percentage of American Protestant denominations (in relation to the Catholics and the Lutherans) in the area was a major emphasis in every meeting of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention throughout the Gilded Age and Progressive Era.

#### Ecumenical Cooperation among Baptists

While the Baptists no doubt wanted to see their influence and their churches in North Dakota grow, they were not opposed to working with those who were likeminded among North Dakota's Protestant population. The 1889 meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Association recognized two visitors in the official minutes of the annual meeting. These two visitors, "Rev. J. M. La Bach of the Congregational church, and Rev. J. W. Mower, of the Methodist church, at Wahpeton, being present, were invited to corresponding seats in the Association."<sup>93</sup> At the next annual meeting in 1890, the North Dakota Baptist Association officially recognized the pastor of the La Moure Presbyterian Church, Rev. J. S. Boyd, in its minutes. Boyd's attendance should not be surprising considering the use of his church building for the annual Baptist meeting. The association made a resolution thanking the Presbyterians for the use of their church building and asked that "heaven's richest blessing rest upon pastor and people."<sup>94</sup> Just a

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<sup>92</sup> *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention, the Ministers' Union, and the Baptist Young People's Union* (Detroit, MN: Geo. D. Hamilton Printer, 1908), 42-45. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>93</sup> *Minutes of the Tenth Session of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (Wahpeton, ND: Morrill, Publisher and Stationer, 1889), 11. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>94</sup> *Minutes of the Ninth Session of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (Bismarck, ND: The Settler, 1890), 7, 12-13. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.



few years later, in 1896, the Baptist Association meeting at the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks listened to an address given by a “Rev. Witham” of the local Methodist Church on “Winning the Scandinavians.” That the North Dakota Baptists would be willing to work with their Methodist brethren showed a spirit of ecumenical cooperation that was very common in late nineteenth-century Protestantism.<sup>95</sup>

In 1900, Sidney Clarke of Grand Forks gave an address at the annual meeting of the State Convention, in which he urged cooperation with other denominations on the home mission field. Clarke attempted to use reason in his speech, and included statistics that showed “the great waste of funds and energy” because of the overlapping efforts on the various fields of labor. This willingness to cooperate with other denominations on evangelistic work showed a lack of insularity among the North Dakota Baptists. The Convention threw its support behind Clarke’s findings and even went so far as to call for the publication of his speech and its distribution to all of the Baptist deacons in the state. Furthermore, the delegates to the State Baptist Convention adopted a resolution that established a committee that would “meet with other denominations” to assess the feasibility of some level of partnership.<sup>96</sup>

In 1902, the Convention met again and adopted two resolutions related to cooperation between religious groups. The Convention believed that joining with other denominations in common work would lead to “advantage to all and the furtherance of

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<sup>95</sup> North Dakota Baptist State Convention, *The North Dakota Baptist Annual* (Fargo, ND: Grant and Cook, Printers, 1896), 29. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>96</sup> *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Convention, the Ministerial Union, and the Baptist Young People’s Union* (Huron: SD, Huronite Print, 1900), 22-23. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

true religion.”<sup>97</sup> This spirit of cooperation would not have been as welcome in many Southern Baptist Congregations because of the rise of the Landmark Movement, which argued that only Baptist churches could claim the designation of true churches of Christ. For these Landmark Baptists, cooperation with those of other denominations, no matter how Protestant and how evangelical they might be, would be unthinkable.<sup>98</sup>

In terms of educational institutions, the North Dakota State Baptist Convention threw its support behind the seminary at the new University of Chicago. The committee acknowledged concerns that some of the members might have over the liberal seminary at Chicago (tied to the purse of John D. Rockefeller), but noted emphatically that “with the harsh criticisms which are sometimes raised against it we do not sympathize.” The Committee noted its support of the men at Chicago who were “engaging in the task of getting at God’s truth.” After an earlier attempt at a Baptist college in North Dakota at Tower City failed, the Committee on Education indicated that the denomination was not at a point at which it would be advisable to start a college in North Dakota. The committee reported that the state university was available for all students in the state and that there was no such thing as “Baptist mathematics or Baptist physics or Baptist political economy.” To start another school with the same subject matter would be “useless duplication,” so the committee encouraged Baptist students to patronize the state university. The fact that there were several Baptists on the faculty and the belief that the

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<sup>97</sup> *Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Convention, the Ministerial Union, and the Baptist Young People’s Union* (Huron: SD, Huronite Print, 1902), 17. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>98</sup> A recent historical discussion of the Landmark Baptist ecclesiology is available in James A. Patterson, “James Robinson Graves: History in the Service of Ecclesiology,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 44, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 72-83. See also Chad W. Hall, “When Orphans became Heirs: J. R. Graves and the Landmark Baptists,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 112-127.

“university [was] sympathetically and unquestionably Christian” did not hurt in leading to this endorsement. It was believed that a small school could work in conjunction with the university to teach religious subjects, but there was no call for a new college.<sup>99</sup> Not all Baptists would have agreed with this assessment of the seminary, but there was little concern over the state university.

Just five years after the vote of support for the University of North Dakota, the Baptists changed course and started to call for their own college to train their young people. The Committee on Education at the 1906 Baptist Convention argued that “a Christian school is one of the best missionary investments that can be made.” The movement of the Methodists to open a small college adjacent to the University of North Dakota probably had an impact on this change of sentiment. The committee noted that it would take nearly \$500,000 to endow such a school, but argued that the time was right to buy land near the university because twenty-five Baptists were students enrolled in the 1905-1906 school term and the numbers at the university promised to be higher the next year.<sup>100</sup> A special committee reported the next year that such a goal was not feasible and recommended that the Baptists merely attempt to provide “spiritual oversight” over the education of those attending the University of North Dakota.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Convention, the Ministerial Union, and the Baptist Young People's Union* (Huron, SD: Huronite Print, 1901), 16-17. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>100</sup> *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention, the Ministers' Union, and the Baptist Young People's Union* (1906), 43-44. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>101</sup> *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention, the Ministers' Union, and the Baptist Young People's Union* (Detroit, MN: Geo. D. Hamilton Printer, 1907), 113-114. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

At the 1909 annual meeting of the North Dakota Baptists, Convention President R. B. Griffith gave his annual address and provided a glimpse of the ecumenical outlook of the leadership of the body. He announced his gladness that the tendency of “the great evangelical denominations” to quibble over finer points of theology and “technicalities” seemed to be ending. He pointed out “with great satisfaction that in [North Dakota] representatives of the Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Baptists met together” to attempt to work together in their common cause of evangelizing every community in the state. The overlapping by denominations in small towns was a waste of effort, and Griffith was glad to see this problem coming to a close. In the same year, the by-laws for a new Inter-denominational Commission were presented at the Baptist Convention.<sup>102</sup>

This ecumenical and relatively liberal spirit among the North Dakota Baptists did not extend to Roman Catholics, however. The Committee on Resolutions that met in 1890 resolved

that [the Baptists] view with abhorrence the activity of the Roman Catholic church, in her endeavors to subvert our common school system, and the persistent schemes, both secret and open, to control political movements in our country; and that [they would] use every Christian endeavor to counteract any and every doctrine, political or religious, that endangers our liberty, educational system, or religious privilege.<sup>103</sup>

It was believed that the public schools were the “bulwark of liberty” and “essential to true progress,” so the North Dakota Baptists “condemn[ed] any attempt to undermine, and

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<sup>102</sup> *North Dakota Baptist Annual* (1909), 72, 85. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>103</sup> *Minutes of the Ninth Session of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (Bismarck, ND: The Settler, 1890), 7, 12-13. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

deem[ed] any organization who so attempt, an enemy to the public welfare.”<sup>104</sup> There is little doubt that Catholics were the target of these resolutions. These relatively early notes indicated that the North Dakota Baptists were not completely insular in their relationships with other evangelical denominations, but that there was a line that could not be crossed when dealing with Catholics.

Baptist antipathy toward Catholics was nothing new. The *Syllabus of Errors*, decreed by Pius IX in 1864 “condemned Protestants, religious liberty, freedom of the press, and public education” and contributed to the rise of nativist groups that attempted to “claim America as a Protestant nation and protect the country from a papist takeover.” While the *Syllabus* is not clearly the only, or even main, cause of Baptist opposition to Catholicism, this document seemed to confirm that the Catholics were against all that American Protestants (and even most religious skeptics) seemed to support in terms of religious and political liberties.<sup>105</sup>

The relationship between church and state also made an appearance in the minutes of the North Dakota Association in 1903. In that year, the associational delegates adopted a resolution related to Senator-elect Reed Smoot. Utah had elected Smoot as its United States Senator the previous year, and the Baptists of the North Dakota Association viewed his ordination as an apostle in the Latter Day Saints as a cause for concern and urged the state-level convention to adopt a similar resolution to ask the Senate to “use every proper means to prevent Reed Smoot...whom we regard as the representative of

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<sup>104</sup> *Minutes of the Twelfth Session of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (1892), 11. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>105</sup> Bill J. Leonard, *Baptists in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 164-167.

the Mormon hierarchy, from occupying a seat.”<sup>106</sup> Those who stood outside the bounds of Protestant orthodoxy were obstacles that could derail the goal of a Christian (Protestant) America.

The Lutherans were not a source of major concern—at least judging by the minutes of the Baptist Convention— in spite of their large numbers in North Dakota. Many of the early Lutheran settlers were recent immigrants. It is likely that the language and cultural barriers kept them from suspicion, as did the standing of the Lutherans within the tradition of the Protestant Reformation.

#### North Dakota Baptists and Larger Protestant Reform Efforts

The second annual meeting of the body that would become the North Dakota State Baptist Convention indicated its early sympathy with the reforming tradition of American Protestantism. The committee on resolutions came forth and provided a total of nine resolutions. Most of these dealt with mission work, but two discussed issues of moral importance for which many American Protestants frequently voiced support. The first of these dealt with the issue of prohibition. Earlier calls for temperance in the nineteenth century gave way to an emphasis on the outright prohibition of any and all usage of alcoholic beverages by many Protestants. The North Dakota Baptists adopted a resolution in 1882 in which they “emphatically place[d] [themselves] on record as in favor of the legal prohibition of the liquor traffic” and “rejoic[ed] in the success of temperance work throughout the country.” Progress toward the abolition of alcoholic beverages in Iowa and Kansas were especially heartening to the members assembled at

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<sup>106</sup> *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Convention, the Ministerial Union, and the Baptist Young People’s Union* (Huron: SD, Huronite Print, 1903), 51. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

the convention.<sup>107</sup> The initial meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Sunday School Convention met during the annual meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Association in June 1883 in Tower City. These same concerns for the moral direction of the nation related to drunkenness led to a resolution by Sunday schools represented that resolved “in view of the alarming influence of intemperance; intoxicating drinks; profanity; and the use of tobacco, in our land; that we use every influence to impress upon the minds of the children the evils of these prevalent sins.”<sup>108</sup>

The 1884 annual meeting got even more political in its official resolutions. The Baptist body endorsed “the work of the North Dakota Territorial Alliance” and encouraged the churches of the North Dakota Baptist Association to “use their influence and ballots to incorporate in the Constitution of the State an article prohibiting the manufacture, sale, or use of intoxicating drinks in the state.”<sup>109</sup> The next year, the North Dakota Baptist Association endorsed the activities of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in the state and directed that “each pastor in the Association shall, before September 1 of this year, present to his people some phases of the temperance cause and take up a special collection for that society.”<sup>110</sup> The importance of the temperance issue could be seen in the inclusion of a standing committee on temperance in the constitution

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<sup>107</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (Bismarck, Dakota Territory: Daily Tribune Book and Job Print, 1882), 12-13. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>108</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (1883). ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>109</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (1884), 47. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>110</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (1885), 9. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

of the Baptist Association.<sup>111</sup> Baptist interest and activity in the prohibition movement would continue quite far into the future.

Indoctrination into the temperance crusade was to begin early. In 1885, the North Dakota Baptist Sunday School Convention met in Tower City, but adjourned to meet at the local Methodist church. The purpose of this temporary adjournment was to listen to Mrs. H. M. Baker, who was a territorial organizer of the WCTU, and Rev. J. H. Hartman. Both of the speakers discussed the topic of prohibition. Hartman's goal in speaking to the assembly was to encourage the creation of "a temperance nation" that would raise "a generation of teetotalers" by using education from the cradle to public schools. This education would then culminate in colleges and seminaries. That temperance and prohibition was such a common topic of conversation at official meetings at such an early date indicates the prominence of the temperance movement in the work of the North Dakota Baptists.<sup>112</sup> The efforts of the Baptists and their co-laborers in the prohibition fight gained success by the November 1887 meeting of the state convention. By this date, there was a "Committee on Temperance" active in the denominational structure. During the 1887 meeting, this committee gave a report that noted, "Our work of the past year has exceeded the most sanguine expectations of any of our temperance workers." Twenty-one of twenty-five counties that had a local option to ban alcoholic beverages had voted in favor of the option in the previous election. The committee believed that this vote was God-ordained and argued that "God spoke to the farmers out in their prairie

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<sup>111</sup> North Dakota State Convention, *The North Dakota Baptist Annual, 1898* (Fargo, ND: Brown and Gage, 1898), 13. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>112</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (1885), 26. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.



homes, and impressed them that they now had an opportunity to say to the demon of destruction, ‘Thus far and no farther.’”<sup>113</sup> After a popular vote, Prohibition would become a part of the initial state constitution in 1889. The law survived a battle over resubmission in 1891, and North Dakota would be one of the driest states in the Union.<sup>114</sup>

At times, this desire for increased opposition to the liquor interest led to calls for greater political action. During the 1900 meeting of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention, the chairman of the organization’s committee on temperance, R. B. Griffith of Grand Forks, rose to give his report. Griffith argued that homes within the organization had been strengthened over the past year by “[c]ontinued agitation on the subject of prohibition, and the work of the North Dakota Enforcement League in obtaining the enforcement of the law.” The chairman continued to encourage “all Christians” to be judicious with their votes and cast ballots only for candidates who promised to enforce the current laws on the books in relation to the prohibition of intoxicating beverages.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *Minutes of the North Dakota Baptist Convention* (Fargo: The Republican Steam Printing House, 1887), 13-14. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>114</sup> *Journal of the Constitutional Convention for North Dakota, Held at Bismarck, Thursday, July 4 to Aug. 17, 1889* (Bismarck, ND: Tribune, State Printers and Binders, 1889), 394-397, [http://books.google.com/books?id=SI0IAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA397&lpg=PA397&dq=prohibition+in+1889+north+dakota+constitution&source=bl&ots=-sCgf5mUjY&sig=DtHLkwXE8L7EDFmTnU9\\_mTVwIVQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=Sx5FUaq9Iubq2gWL3oGwDA&ved=OCFwQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=prohibition%20in%201889%20north%20dakota%20constitution&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=SI0IAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA397&lpg=PA397&dq=prohibition+in+1889+north+dakota+constitution&source=bl&ots=-sCgf5mUjY&sig=DtHLkwXE8L7EDFmTnU9_mTVwIVQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=Sx5FUaq9Iubq2gWL3oGwDA&ved=OCFwQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=prohibition%20in%201889%20north%20dakota%20constitution&f=false) (accessed March 16, 2013); “A ‘Deal’ for Prohibition,” *New York Times* (February 17, 1891), <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=FB0610FB345F10738DDDAE0994DA405B8185F0D3> (accessed March 16, 2013); “National Affairs: In North Dakota,” *Time* (July 16, 1928), <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,787357,00.html> (accessed March 16, 2013).

<sup>115</sup> *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Convention, the Ministerial Union, and the Baptist Young People’s Union* (Huron: SD, Huronite Print, 1900), 27. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

The opposition to the liquor traffic led the North Dakota Baptists to oppose at least a part of the Progressive agenda in the state. In 1907, the State Baptist Convention came out in opposition to the Ueland Bill. It was believed that the passage of this legislation would not only open the door to a more democratic lawmaking process through initiative and referendum, but would also make it easier for those who wanted to overthrow the prohibitionist laws to do so. Under the Ueland Bill, a mere eight percent of the population of North Dakota could call for the raising of the prohibition question again. The Committee on Temperance called this possibility “unadvisable and unnecessary.” Their call for opposition failed, however, and the state adopted initiative and referendum to the legislative process shortly thereafter.<sup>116</sup>

It was not until the era of World War I and the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution led to the age of national prohibition that calls for a discussion of the liquor interests ceased to appear in the minutes of the annual meetings of the North Dakota Baptists. However, this end to discussion of alcoholic beverages was short-lived. In 1920, while discussing its support of the newly-adopted constitutional amendment, the Committee on Resolutions encouraged the membership to be “watchful lest the liquor interests nullify the effect of this great temperance victory in their efforts to make possible the sale of light wine and beer.” The North Dakota Baptists wanted to make sure that it was “Congress, and not the chemist” that would have the

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<sup>116</sup> *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention, the Ministers' Union, and the Baptist Young People's Union* (Detroit, MN: Geo. D. Hamilton Printer, 1907), 49. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

power to determine an acceptable level of alcohol in drinks so that they would not be intoxicating.<sup>117</sup>

When it came to poor health decisions that the Baptist believed to be symptoms of the poor moral trajectory of the nation, alcohol was not alone in arousing their ire. Tobacco also appeared in the annual minutes as a cause for concern. The banning of cigarettes, at least for minors, also occasioned a resolution in the 1903 North Dakota Association meeting. This resolution called for “the enactment and rigid enforcement of such laws” that would protect the youth by banning both the manufacture and sale of cigarettes in North Dakota. The resolution even went so far as to call for the same treatment of cigarette paper. Other uses of tobacco were not included, but it is quite possible that the Baptist would have found them equally problematic.<sup>118</sup>

The Committee on Resolutions also inserted itself into the debate over “white slavery” and agreed with the sentiments of the Northern Baptist Convention that supported the National Vigilance Committee and the Illinois Vigilance Committee. These bodies all called for the suppression of “the traffic in womanhood.” The Baptists hoped that they could “avoid the fearful evils of the iniquity known as the social evil” and keep their communities safe from its influence. They rightly saw the perpetrators of this crime against humanity as the “greedy and unprincipled men and women who make

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<sup>117</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention* (1920), 19. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.

<sup>118</sup> *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Convention, the Ministerial Union, and the Baptist Young People’s Union* (Huron: SD, Huronite Print, 1903), 51. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

profit out of the destruction of virtue.”<sup>119</sup> While they came out in opposition to the traffic of young females, the Baptists were not successful in seeing it eradicated.

In relation to public morals and saving the youth from a life of crime, the NDBSC adopted a resolution in support of an action taken by the North Dakota high school board. The educational board introduced a course on Bible Study in the high schools that would allow students to earn credit. The Baptists thought that this step would improve the young men and women as they prepared “for a life of service.” The support of this resolution came at the same time the delegates were in the process of discussing a perceived increase in crime. Those assembled at the 1912 Baptist Convention thought that the lack of proper training in the home caused young men and boys to turn to crime, and it is quite likely that the Baptists believed that this new class would make up for that deficit in moral training. Although unspoken, an ecumenical Protestant approach would be the expectation in this school activity, because doctrines from other religious groups would not have gained support from any American Protestants.<sup>120</sup>

In attempting to protect the moral compass of Baptist youth, the North Dakota Baptist Association endorsed Sioux Falls College in an advertisement published in the minutes of the annual meeting in 1903. The college pointed out its standing as the only Baptist institution of higher learning in the Dakotas and mentioned the classes on offer and that the “spirit of the school embodie[d] the highest Christian ideals. In trying to assure parents who might be considering sending their children to the school, Sioux Falls College argued that “[p]arents may safely entrust their children to this institution—

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<sup>119</sup> *North Dakota Baptist Annual* (1909), 81. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>120</sup> *Minutes of the Twenty-Ninth Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptists State Convention, The Ministerial Union and the Missionary Societies* (1912), 48. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.

assured that their education, morals, and health will be under careful, Christian supervision.”<sup>121</sup> This statement was in close agreement with the Baptists’ concern for moral reform in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era.

Another widespread cause for complaints among Protestants in the nineteenth century was a lack of respect for the Christian Sabbath. Sunday mail had led to complaints of Sabbath desecration in the early days of the republic,<sup>122</sup> and these frustrations only continued. The North Dakota Baptist Association made a resolution in the same convention as the initial resolution against alcoholic beverages that stated: “Resolved, That we deplore the alarming tendency in this country to desecrate the Lord’s Day, and we pledge ourselves, as churches and pastors, to do our utmost, by the help of God, to correct this evil.”<sup>123</sup> This frustration over a perceived increase in encroachments by business on Sunday aroused the displeasure of the convention in both 1891 and 1892 as the Columbian Exposition in Chicago planned to open on Sunday. The North Dakota Baptists complained that “such action would be highly reprehensible...violate state law, and run counter to all precedents in our country.” The resolution also professed concern for the workers who would have to engage in labor for the Sunday opening.<sup>124</sup> Of course,

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<sup>121</sup> *Proceedings of the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Convention, the Ministerial Union, and the Baptist Young People’s Union* (Huron, SD: Huronite, 1903), 91. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>122</sup> Frank Lambert, *Religion in American Politics: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 2-3.

<sup>123</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (Bismarck, Dakota Territory: Daily Tribune Book and Job Print, 1882), 12-13. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>124</sup> *Minutes of the Eleventh Annual Session of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (1891), 12. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

it is likely that many of these Christians felt no compassion for Jewish Americans who were forced to work on their Sabbath.

This concern of North Dakota Baptists for the moral compass of the entire population of the United States would continue into the twentieth century. The topic of Sabbath breaking came up again in 1904. This time, the culprit was Sunday baseball. The Committee on Resolutions noted their “disapproval of all Sabbath desecration, and especially of Sunday baseball.” Furthermore, the committee recommended that the churches use their “active influence in putting a stop to this growing form of godlessness” by boycotting teams that played on Sundays in spite of the opposition against them. In addition to this decrying of Sunday baseball, the committee recommended that Baptist pastors in the state help in “upholding the purity” of society by “refusing to marry divorced persons.”<sup>125</sup> In these areas, the North Dakota Baptists refused to shy away from political and social issues they deemed important.

This concern for social issues led to statements on global affairs. In 1909, the Red River Valley Association of the North Dakota Baptists adopted a “Special Congo Resolution” that called for the restitution of those who had been hurt by the Congo Free State. The Baptists of the Red River Valley Association appealed to the United States government and Secretary of State Philander C. Knox to “secure liberty for the enormous Congo territory” and to “restore to those natives the possession of the lands held by their forefathers.” This call came in response to the outcry over Belgian treatment of those

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<sup>125</sup> *Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the North Dakota State Convention, the Ministers Union, and the Baptist Young People's Union* (Huron, SD: Huronite Printing, 1904), 27. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

living in the Congo during the reign of Leopold II. The Baptists in this instance called for justice where there had been none.<sup>126</sup>

After the United States entered the Great War, the Baptists of North Dakota continued to express their concern over moral conditions. During the massive conflict, this desire to see morality in the youth of America spread to the military. The Baptists delegates assembled in 1917 “urge[d] upon the government the imperative need of safe guarding, by all proper methods, the morals of the men in the military camps.” It was concerning that “vice” and drink would be available to corrupt the morals of the men engaged in the conflict. The convention adopted this resolution calling for the protection of the unwitting young soldier unanimously.<sup>127</sup> Throughout the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, the North Dakota Baptist Convention officially threw its support behind many of the major reform efforts embraced by the leaders of the Protestant establishment in America and even broke into the arena of politics to achieve its aims when necessary.

#### North Dakota Baptists, Race, and Gender

Closely related to the evangelistic impulse that was evident among North Dakota Baptists in the early years of the denomination was a strong relationship to various ethnic groups that inhabited the state. This desire to work with Norwegians, Swedes, Russians, and Germans was evident in just about every annual meeting. Missionaries to these groups would stand up and give addresses that told of their work among the hyphenated

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<sup>126</sup> “Red River Valley Association,” *North Dakota Baptist Annual* (1909), 12. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691. For a fuller description of the atrocities committed by agents of the Belgian King Leopold II against the inhabitants of his “Congo Free State,” see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

<sup>127</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention* (1917), 34-35. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.

Americans. Additionally, the Baptists tasked colporteurs with preaching to the newly arrived immigrants on the North Dakota fields. At times, these colporteurs (those who peddled Bibles and other religious literature) spoke to meetings that had multiple ethnicities present. Colporteur E. P. Johnson told of one such meeting in which he spoke in a school house on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation along the Missouri River. The meeting lasted ten days, and Johnson spoke twice in Norwegian. After a request by those at the meeting, he then preached a sermon in English as well.<sup>128</sup>

Baptist work in the areas inhabited by Native Americans was not restricted to this one instance with Colporteur Johnson. During the Thursday night service at the 1915 North Dakota Baptist State Convention, Rev. W. A. Petzoldt arose to address the crowd. The speaker covered his work with the Crow Indians in Montana. The clerk charged with taking minutes of the meeting recorded that “His lecture was profusely illustrated with a great number of stereopticon views, showing typical scenes of Indian life and the transformation that the Gospel of Christ has brought about. The lecture was a demonstration of the transforming power of the gospel as it touched individual lives in the Crow Mission.” The idea that Indian ways of life that did not involve religious belief could be maintained by converts is nowhere in evidence in the notes taken on Petzoldt’s address.<sup>129</sup> The attitude that Christianizing necessarily involved Americanizing the

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<sup>128</sup> *Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the North Dakota State Convention, the Ministers Union, and the Baptist Young People’s Union* (Huron, SD: Huronite Printing, 1904), 14. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>129</sup> Minutes of the 1915 North Dakota Baptist Convention, dated October 7, 1915. ND Baptist Convention Records, Box 3, Folder 6.



indigenous inhabitants of the West was a common refrain among early twentieth-century Protestants.<sup>130</sup>

By 1909, the Norwegian Baptist Conference had sixteen churches in North Dakota. Two of these were self-supporting. In spite of the congregational nature of most Baptist churches, there was no apparent cause for concern over one of these self-supporting churches. In Powers Lake, Rev. Olaf Breiding served as pastor, and the annual minutes of the North Dakota State Convention meeting noted that he had “an empire of his own” in which he served as a sort of “monarch.” There were no calls for Americanizing these churches at this time, most likely because of their European backgrounds.<sup>131</sup>

In the next year, the Baptist Ministers Union gave a “Report on Amalgamation” at the annual meeting of the NDBSC. This report dealt with the issue of race relations among the Baptist churches in the state. The committee, made up of English and Scandinavian members, called for having preaching services in both English and Scandinavian languages in communities in which Baptists of both nationalities lived. There was no call for the Norwegians and Swedes to assimilate by speaking English, although there was a desire to have a greater unity among the Baptists in general at this time.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> For a discussion of this idea of evangelizing and Americanizing going together, see Gregory A. Wills, “The First One Hundred Years of Baptist Home Mission in North America: Civilization, Denominationalism, and Americanization,” in Ian M. Randall and Anthony R. Cross, ed., *Baptists and Mission: Papers from the Fourth International Conference on Baptist Studies* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007).

<sup>131</sup> *North Dakota Baptist Annual* (1909), 29. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>132</sup> *Proceedings of the of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention, Twenty-First Annual Meeting, the Minister’s Union, the Young People’s Union and Women’s Societies* (1910), 9. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

Oscar Handlin, a Harvard historian who studied immigration history, wrote about immigrants and their feelings of being uprooted after their travels to America in the mid-twentieth century. Handlin argued that these uprooted individuals would have attempted to maintain some attachment to their Old World ways of life and this attachment usually included some relation to previous religious practices and especially the language of the mother country.<sup>133</sup> Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the immigrant communities tended to build up churches and schools that preserved the language of their youth. In her book on Italian immigrants, Nancy Carnavale ventured into the world of other immigrant communities. She argued that most English speakers were content to allow immigrants to continue conversing in their native tongues until World War I and increased calls for 100% Americanism increased a demand for more rapid assimilation. To back up her claim, Carnavale looked at the proliferation of German schools in late nineteenth-century American life.<sup>134</sup> The records of the annual meetings indicate an increase in the number of calls for greater assimilation of the foreign element among the North Dakota Baptist Convention around the period of World War I.

Although the English-speaking Baptists did not see a problem in their relationship with their coreligionists who happened to speak a different language or have different ethnic backgrounds, the feeling was not completely mutual. When the Norwegian Baptist Conference held its own annual meeting in 1916, the delegates assembled voiced displeasure over the unequal treatment in terms of the pay of those who worked among

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<sup>133</sup> Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 3-6, 105-128. The first edition of Handlin's work appeared in 1951.

<sup>134</sup> Nancy C. Carnavale, *A New Language, a New World: Italian Immigrants in the United States, 1890-1945* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 46-47.

immigrant communities. The Committee on Resolutions at the 1916 meeting of the Norwegian Conference presented a resolution that “disapprove[d] of the distinction made between colporteurs and other workers who work among foreign speaking Americans and those who work among the English speaking.” The Norwegian Baptists called for having the pay of these workers based upon their ability and noted that this had not been the case previously. A minister who spoke multiple languages would frequently get a lower salary “just because his field is among the foreign speaking citizens.”<sup>135</sup> This discrepancy showed a likely example of preference for Anglo-Americans at the expense of those who came from other parts of Europe.

There was a strong German Baptist presence in North Dakota during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. While the North Dakota Baptists declared their support of German-speaking Baptists during World War I, after the war, they came to support a greater Americanization of the foreign-born population. The Committee on Resolutions “rejoice[d] to see the foreign-born among [them] become naturalized citizens, and encourage[d] them to study and inculcate in their lives the principles of true Americanism.” Such calls for quick assimilation in American life were nearly nonexistent in the official proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Convention prior to the war. After the war, the Baptists “heartily approve[d]” of the effort made by night schools to teach this foreign-born element. Presumably the goal was to more quickly assimilate them into American life and to promote their use of the English language.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Third Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention* (1916), 60. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.

<sup>136</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Fifth Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention* (1918), 13-15. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692; *Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention* (1919), 17. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.

The cause of woman suffrage did not seem to be much of a concern for the Baptists of North Dakota. There is no evidence in the official records of the annual meetings that would indicate that it was an issue that was frequently discussed. When the Nineteenth Amendment brought the franchise to women, the NDBSC “hail[ed] with glad acclaim the place which women ha[d] taken in [the] American Republic.” The committee noted its belief that the Christian traditions in America were the reason for this great achievement by arguing that “the spirit of the Gospel has so permeated society that she has been given her rightful place with men in our national franchise.” The Committee on Resolutions encouraged the newly enfranchised women to do their patriotic duty to make the voice of “Christian womanhood” heard by “earnestly recommend[ing] them to go to the polls” and vote.<sup>137</sup>

Women were very influential in the mission work of the North Dakota Baptists. The Convention maintained both a Women’s Home Mission Society and a Women’s Foreign Mission Society. Women led both of these societies and also frequently led the session at the annual meeting that conducted the business of the mission societies. Nearly every issue of the minutes of the annual meeting exhibited examples of how involved these women leaders were. One example can be noted in the minutes of the 1911 meeting. According to the official record, the women’s missionary session was “presided over by Mrs. N. J. Nelson, Grand Forks. Devotional exercises were led by Miss Jenson, Fargo.” Additionally, Miss Anna Knop, a “field worker of the society” discussed its operations, and “Miss Gerda Paulson, a returned missionary from Japan,

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<sup>137</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Seventh Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention* (1920), 19. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.

spoke of the work in which she is interested.” None other than William Bell Riley gave the closing address of this session,<sup>138</sup> showing his relative level of comfort with women evangelists.<sup>139</sup> Although women were suitable evangelists and missionaries, there is no evidence that North Dakota churches had any women as ordained full-time ministers at this date. The nationwide body that became the Northern Baptist Convention (now the American Baptist Convention) ordained its first woman in 1894. The Southern Baptists would not do so until 1964.<sup>140</sup>

While they did not have any women ministers in the Conference, the North Dakota Baptists did encourage evangelistic work by women within the state. The Department of State Mission held meetings on a regular basis, and it is evident from the record of these meetings just how involved women evangelists were in the work by around 1920. In May 1920, the minutes of the Department of State Mission made a motion and then “voted that Superintendent Stockton be authorized to communicate with Miss Lena Rhodes and Miss Hazel D. Greer of Chicago, relative to their entering upon a month of evangelistic work within the state.”<sup>141</sup> This use of women evangelists was not an isolated event. In 1923, two entries just over a month apart indicated that Miss Emma E. Anderson was heavily involved in the work of North Dakota Baptists across the state.

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<sup>138</sup> *Proceedings of the Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention, the Ministerial Union, Baptist Young People's Union, Women's Missionary Societies* (1911), 1917. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>139</sup> For a discussion of Riley's changing attitudes toward women in the ministry, see Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>140</sup> Barbara Brown Zikmund, “Gender Matters: How Second-Wave Feminism Shaped and Reshaped American Religion,” in Charles H. Lippy, ed. *Faith in America* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 135.

<sup>141</sup> North Dakota Baptist Department of State Mission Minutes, May 6, 1920. ND Baptist Convention Records, Box 3, Folder 6.

The first note from January noted that Anderson “gave valuable help at Conferences and Associations. She has also visited many churches.” The second from February indicated that Anderson was on the payroll of the North Dakota Baptist Convention for her work.<sup>142</sup> When it came to gender relations, North Dakota Baptists were more egalitarian than many of their co-religionists throughout the United States, even though they had no women ministers pastoring churches.

### The Great War and North Dakota Baptists

The North Dakota Baptists did not seem to pay much attention to the European activity in the Great War at first, if the minutes from their annual meetings were any indication. There was no indication that a war was even going on until the 1916 meeting. At that time, Dr. L. C. Barnes of New York gave an address on the “war crisis” that he said came from a “tap-root” that was two-fold. “The natural instinct to fight and the exaltation of those instincts” were the reasons for the war. To combat this natural predisposition to violence, Barnes argued that there should be an “exaltation of Personality, manhood instead of money, cooperation instead of conflict.” Above all else, he believed that “[p]ersonal loyalty to Christ [was] the only hope of the world.”<sup>143</sup> At this relatively early date in the conflict, this spokesman for the Home Mission Society did not take sides.

The Red River Association took up the topic of war in its 1916 annual meeting as well. The delegates assembled adopted a resolution that stated how much they “deplored

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., January 4, 1923; February 29, 1923.

<sup>143</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Third Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention* (1916), 36-37, ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.

the awful struggle now being engaged in by the nations of Europe and Mexico.” They continued:

We believe that such a conflict is in violation of the principles of the Prince of peace, inhuman and destructive to advancing civilization. We plead for a cessation of hostilities, for the arbitration of international misunderstandings, and for the establishment of an international court with full jurisdiction and with adequate power to enforce its decrees.

And we pledge our support to the President of the United States in every reasonable effort to bring about peace and urge that he use every opportunity to accomplish the same.<sup>144</sup>

The United States was not yet involved in the conflict, and the North Dakota Baptists appeared to be in no hurry to get involved, concurring with most other residents of their state and nation.

By 1917, conditions had changed radically, however. The United States had entered World War I before the annual meetings of the various Baptists associations of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention. After the United States’ entrance into the war, the Committee on Resolutions urged the Baptists across the state to “solemnly pledge to the government of the United States their most sincere and unqualified support in the present hour of peril and crisis.” It was believed that “intelligent patriotism” among the Baptists would “assist in bringing the war to a successful close and thus make the world safe for democracy,” echoing President Woodrow Wilson’s sentiments. Support for the war effort led the Baptists assembled in 1917 to go against one of their most cherished traditions. While freedom of conscience and the freedom of speech that it presupposes were longstanding Baptist tenets, the Committee on Resolutions nevertheless urged “that great caution and wise reserve be used in the exercise of this right during the

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 48

present critical period.” It was feared that “ill-advised or unguarded speech” might weaken the position of the United States government and make it look bad in the sight of its enemies.<sup>145</sup>

Once the war effort got into full swing, the churches felt its affect. Many of the young men who had been stalwarts in the church left because of the draft. The loss of so many young men led to discouragement with some of the church leaders. The Board of the North Dakota Baptist Convention reported that some of the ministers were ready to give up their work because of the lack of men, many of who had gone off to war. Additionally, as is often the case in war, there was an increased cost of living. The ministers had no increase in their salaries and found it ever harder to survive. Some of the pastors in the Convention actually left their churches to go to the front lines because of the improved pay.<sup>146</sup>

The war caused a great deal of trouble for many German-speaking Americans. There was a relatively large German community in North Dakota in the era of World War I. Many other Americans questioned the patriotism and loyalty of those of German descent who lived within the borders of the United States. The Baptists noted the questions they received from those concerned about their co-religionists who were of German ethnicity. The NDBSC noted its “close bond of fellowship” with the German Baptists. The Board noted its belief that these brethren were “not Germans, but simply German-speaking Americans.” Many of these ethnic Germans had actually spent

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<sup>145</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention* (1917), 34. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.

<sup>146</sup> *Minutes of the Thirty-Fifth Anniversary of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention* (1918), 13. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13692.



generations in Russia and tended to be apolitical. Because of Russian oppression and the attempt by the Czar to conscript them into military service , they migrated to America and supported Germany until the United States became involved in the war. The Baptist Convention argued that this initial support of Germany was more a result of opposition to the tyranny of the Russian czars that they had experienced firsthand. The Board noted that the war had actually led to a closer relationship with the German Baptists and encouraged the nominating committee at the Convention to nominate a German-speaking vice president to show their solidarity with their German brothers and sisters.<sup>147</sup> The war caused a great deal of upheaval in the work of the North Dakota Baptists.

Throughout the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, the North Dakota Baptist State Convention maintained an emphasis on evangelism that was worldwide in its scope. While they found the moral direction of the American nation a major reason for concern in many instances, the Baptists felt a great deal of satisfaction in the victory over the liquor interests in the battle to prohibit the use of intoxicating beverages. The Baptists in North Dakota also found a great deal of encouragement in the interaction with the other major Protestant denominations in operation in the state throughout the period between their initial founding in 1881 and the outbreak of the Great War. This cooperation did not expand beyond the bounds of orthodox evangelical Protestantism, however. In these ways, the North Dakota Baptist State Convention reflected the overarching Protestant culture of a large segment of Gilded Age and Progressive Era America.

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-15.

## Chapter IV

### The First Baptist Church of Grand Forks, ND

The men arrived in the meeting room one by one. The Advisory Committee of the First Baptist Church in Grand Forks, North Dakota, met frequently to discuss matters of important business related to the church. However, this meeting on February 17, 1918, would have a unique agenda. Just over a year earlier, the church had called Rev. Harvey J. Moore to pastor their flock. Within months, the biggest event in the early twentieth century would see the United States undertake military action in Europe. A strong patriot, Moore could not just sit by and do nothing while his American brothers were involved in his generation's greatest conflict. As the leaders of the Grand Forks church met, Moore informed them of his unusual request. He asked leave of his pastorate to become a chaplain in the army. The leadership committee promptly took a vote regarding their pastor's request. After their vote, the board announced that they would unanimously recommend that Moore be given between ten weeks and three months leave to follow his desire and undertake work as a chaplain in the army.<sup>148</sup> In the nation's biggest challenge since the Civil War, the members of the Grand Forks church showed their solidarity with the American nation.

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<sup>148</sup> Minutes of Advisory Committee Meeting, First Baptist Church, Grand Forks, ND, 17 February 1918. First Baptist Church, Grand Forks collection (Hereafter noted as First Baptist Papers), Folder 3. Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND.

The interesting incident mentioned above was not isolated. This chapter argues that throughout the Progressive Era,<sup>149</sup> the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks, North Dakota, exhibited attitudes and actions that fell in line with its belief in American exceptionalism and the nation's almost messianic destiny, even on a couple of occasions when these beliefs went against the grain regarding denominational and local attitudes. The church was very active in some of the more prominent moral causes of the Progressive Era. First Baptist also made its view of American exceptionalism evident through its nativist attitudes towards immigrants and Catholics, as well as its wholehearted support for World War I in spite of general ambivalence on the part of most North Dakota residents in relation to American entry into the war. These reasons, along with its relative importance among Baptist churches in North Dakota, make First Baptist a valuable case study of prevailing attitudes among white, middle-class North Dakotans during the Progressive Era. It is also an example of local history in its purest sense that can show students in a class on American religious history (or even a class on local history) one type of study that can provide a fruitful field of historical inquiry, as many libraries and archives would have holdings similar to the ones used in the compilation of this chapter. It can also complement a study on state-level Baptist activity to show how much the state convention and the local church reflected the values of each other.

#### First Baptist Church of Grand Forks

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<sup>149</sup> There is some debate over exactly what dates are included in the Progressive Era. Most historians argue that it ended by World War I at the latest. This paper discusses events that happened between the 1890s and the 1920s.

Baptist missionary G. W. Huntley of the American Baptist Home Mission Society organized the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks, Dakota Territory, in October 1881.<sup>150</sup> The 1882 meeting of the North Dakota Baptist Association received and read a letter from the Grand Forks church detailing its early growth. The letter exuded confidence and noted that a Mr. Boles had donated two lots and that they had already secured \$1,150 to build a sanctuary. Three individuals were awaiting baptism and there was a confident belief that “a strong Baptist cause can be established.”<sup>151</sup> The growth of the church was slow at first, with a charter membership of sixteen growing to only thirty-five within the first four years. After 1885, however, the church began to grow quickly. The church grew to a membership of 287 by the beginning of the twentieth century, and the roll grew to a high of 482 members in 1926, although many of these members were inactive and a purge of the membership list in 1930 dropped the number of official members to 334.<sup>152</sup> First Baptist was not an insignificant church in terms of size. An 1897 guide to the city of Grand Forks listed the size of several local congregations, and only St. Michael’s Catholic Church was much larger than the Baptist congregation’s membership of around 250.<sup>153</sup> Prominent members of the city regularly worshiped at the church, some serving

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<sup>150</sup> *Baptist Home Mission Monthly* (Temple Court, NY: American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1885), 150. available at [http://books.google.com/books?id=5O3OAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA34&lpg=PA34&dq=g.w.+Huntley+missionary+american+baptist&source=bl&ots=rKsXj\\_ovzy&sig=IE1U3Zf1bUWfSjg\\_uv1TWEt6WYM&hl=en&ei=I-PATi6cD4qrnQehgP30CQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=5&ved=0CCoQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=g.w.%20Huntley%20missionary%20american%20baptist&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=5O3OAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA34&lpg=PA34&dq=g.w.+Huntley+missionary+american+baptist&source=bl&ots=rKsXj_ovzy&sig=IE1U3Zf1bUWfSjg_uv1TWEt6WYM&hl=en&ei=I-PATi6cD4qrnQehgP30CQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5&ved=0CCoQ6AEwBA#v=onepage&q=g.w.%20Huntley%20missionary%20american%20baptist&f=false); internet; accessed 21 October 2010.

<sup>151</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (Bismarck, Dakota Territory: Daily Tribune Book and Job Print, 1882), 18. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>152</sup> J. Duane Squires, *A History of the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks, North Dakota* (1931), 28. First Baptist Papers.

<sup>153</sup> W. L. Dudley, *The City of Grand Forks Illustrated* (Grand Forks: The Herald, Printers and Binders, 1897), 18-19.

in leadership capacities. While multiple members appear in the church record with the title of Professor or Dean, one of the most influential members of the church was R. B. Griffith. Griffith served the church as a long-time deacon and Sunday school superintendent.<sup>154</sup> He was also an influential citizen in Grand Forks society. A 1914 article in the *Grand Forks Daily Herald* referred to Griffith as one of the “city builders.” His Ontario Store was the “largest department store in North Dakota” and occupied “a four story building with basement.” The article referred to Ontario as “the great trading emporium of its territory,” and concluded by saying that “Mr. Griffith is president of the Law Enforcement League and a leader in everything that makes for the up-build of Grand Forks, the Red River Valley, and North Dakota.”<sup>155</sup> While it might seem that monetary gain might have been a motivator for Griffith’s religiosity, his apparent sincerity and position of influence among his fellow Baptists is evident in several state level documents. It is possible (and maybe even likely) that his generous financial support led to Griffith’s high position in the leadership of First Baptist and the North Dakota Baptist Convention. However, his frequent support of foreign mission work does not seem to belie a desire for personal gain.<sup>156</sup>

Of course, not everyone held such a high view of Griffith. Albert Gray, who would later become a leading figure in the Church of God movement headquartered at

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<sup>154</sup> Squires, 10-11. By the writing of Squires book, Griffith had the title of “Honorary Educational Superintendent.”

<sup>155</sup> “The City Builders,” *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, 26 April 1914.

<sup>156</sup> R. B. Griffith appears prominently in the minutes of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention held at the North Dakota State Archives in Bismarck. In these documents, it is apparent that he frequently held the position of presiding officer for both the state-level convention itself and its Committee on Missions.

Anderson, Indiana, remembered his mother getting angry when First Baptist decided to honor Griffith with a chair. He recalled, “Mother was disgusted that the children should be asked to buy a chair for this rich man so she said to me, ‘I don’t care if you never go to that Sunday school again.’”<sup>157</sup> First Baptist was also an important member of the North Dakota Baptist Association, and was referred to as the “metropolitan church of the state” during a statistical analysis given in a January 1915 address at the church’s annual meeting by North Dakota state missionary C. E. Tingley.<sup>158</sup> Due to the church’s position in the city of Grand Forks and the state Baptist association, First Baptist provides a good starting place for an analysis of North Dakota Baptists in the Progressive Era.

#### Progressive Era Christian Ideology—A Review of the Literature

Many scholars have written about the Progressive Era and its leading figures. Much of the historical writing of the Progressive Era has focused upon either political or social history,<sup>159</sup> although there is a great deal of agreement that the Social Gospel movement had an impact on the calls for reform. *The Age of Reform* by Richard Hofstadter, although written in 1955, continues to maintain a place among the most influential accounts of the Progressive Era. Hofstadter argued that the “general theme” of Progressivism “was the effort to restore a type of economic individualism and political democracy that was widely believed to have existed earlier in America and to have been destroyed by the great corporation and the corrupt political machine.” According to

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<sup>157</sup> Albert F. Gray, *Time and Tides on the Western Shores: An Autobiography of Alfred F. Gray* (Springfield, OH: Reformation Publishers, 1966), 10-16. The Church of God, Anderson should not be confused with the Church of God headquartered at Cleveland Tennessee. Both groups originated from the nineteenth-century holiness movement, but the latter is more Pentecostal in its teachings.

<sup>158</sup> Annual Meeting Minutes, 20 January 1915. First Baptist Papers, folder 3.

<sup>159</sup> Steven J. Diner, “The Historiography of the Progressive Era: Linking Politics and People,” *Magazine of History* 13, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 5-9. See Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different World: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).

Hofstadter, Protestant clergymen came to concern themselves with reform and the social gospel because of the decline in their economic status and community influence among the well-off beginning around 1895. Regarding the Progressive movement, he argued that “[n]o other major movement in American political history had ever received so much clerical sanction.” Much of Hofstadter’s book emphasized the conflict between the considerations of the rural (referred to as “Yankee-Protestant”) and urban regions of the nation. He pointed out that the Progressive movement was made up largely of middle class urbanites that fused together with the rural Populist movement of the 1880s and 1890s. The rise of industry in the late nineteenth century led to a rise in immigration and occasioned the use by the urban political machines, for their own political purposes, of these new immigrants. By 1910 one in seven Americans was foreign-born.<sup>160</sup>

According to Robert Handy, the political aspect of progressivism drew from other diverse reform efforts “such as the populism of the 1890s, social scientism, and social Christianity.”<sup>161</sup> Religion was an important part of the Progressive Era that lent a moral and spiritual aspect to the reform effort. Elton J. Eisenach argued that the “intellectual framework” for international intervention during the Progressive Era “shared a biblical-historicist and social-evolutionary view of America” that viewed “the American nation...[as] a ‘world-historical’ people whose political and institutional history was only the overt expression of the unfolding of a covenantal and prefigured destiny.” Those who wanted progressive America to be an international power saw the nation “as the dominant

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<sup>160</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 5, 150-152, 175-176.

<sup>161</sup> Robert T. Handy, “Protestant Theological Tensions and Political Styles in the Progressive Period,” in *Religion and American Politics*, ed. Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford, 1990), 289.

force for justice in the world community.” The belief system of progressives was closely tied to the Social Gospel, and terms such as “to democratize,’ ‘to Christianize,’ ‘to Americanize,’ ‘to nationalize,’ and ‘to internationalize’ were largely interchangeable.”<sup>162</sup> After discussing the largely ecumenical Protestant missionary movement, Eisenach also pointed out that at least one Englishman advocated the “Americanization of the World” and urged Great Britain to emulate the consumer economy that was then rising in America. Progressives believed that America had a “civilizing mission” in the world.<sup>163</sup> Many in Protestant churches had a moral problem with “materialism and religious excess” which led to a desire to “supplement the laws” with a heightened sense of conscience.<sup>164</sup>

Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore also mentioned the “alarm” that many white urbanites felt because of the new migrants who flooded into the cities. Some “young social activists, mostly college-educated white women” joined the immigrants in their communities to attempt to Americanize them. Immigrants and organized labor concerned many Americans with their supposed radicalism. Therefore, “Instead of turning to radical alternatives such as anarchism or socialism, Progressives sought to reshape the system that rapid industrialization had so haphazardly imposed upon them.” The Social Darwinist view of “survival of the fittest” worried many of the Progressives because of its lack of concern for any but the most successful and led them to embrace the Social

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<sup>162</sup> Eldon J. Eisenach, “Progressive Internationalism,” in *Progressivism and the New Democracy*, ed. Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 226-233.

<sup>163</sup> Eldon J. Eisenach, *The Lost Promise of Progressivism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 232-253.

<sup>164</sup> Wilson Carey McWilliams, “Standing at Armageddon,” in Milkis, *Progressivism and the New Democracy*, 104-105.



Gospel. Progressives viewed the Social Gospel as a “bridge...between individual rights and collective responsibility.”<sup>165</sup> Religion could be used to combat forces that acted against America and its place in the world.

Roman Catholics were one of the potentially subversive groups that worried many Progressive Era Americans. Many distrusted Catholics because their supposed all-encompassing allegiance to the pope in Rome theoretically precluded their ability to be patriotic American citizens that put the interests of the nation first. In his 2006 work titled *Danger on the Doorstep*, Justin Nordstrom investigated the impact that anti-Catholic periodicals had upon Progressive Era Americans. One such paper, *The Menace*, based out of Aurora, Missouri, boasted a subscription list of nearly 1.5 million readers in 1915, a circulation only exceeded by the *Ladies Home Journal* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Many Protestant Americans believed that Catholicism and true patriotism were incompatible, and papers like *The Menace* contributed to this fear by insinuating that priests used confessional booths and convents to seduce or kidnap unsuspecting young American girls. The influence of these papers waned during World War I due to increased printing costs and worries about external threats, rather than internal ones. The rise of the second incarnation of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1920s supplanted these periodicals in the field of anti-Catholic propaganda.<sup>166</sup>

North Dakota had a very small number of black residents. Only 617 African Americans (0.1 percent of the total population), a number that would not be exceeded

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<sup>165</sup> Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, “An Overview of the Progressive Era,” in Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, ed., *Who Were the Progressives?* (New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2002), 3-17.

<sup>166</sup> Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 11, 56-57.

until the 1960 United States Census, called North Dakota home in 1910.<sup>167</sup> In spite of the very small population of African Americans in North Dakota, the Ku Klux Klan was active in the Grand Forks area, although its main bogeymen would be the Roman Catholic Church and the radical agrarians who made up the Nonpartisan League (NPL). The Protestant establishment even provided the main leader of the Grand Forks chapter. Rev. F. Harley Ambrose of the First Presbyterian Church was the town's main Klan spokesman, and his "Sermon on Applied Socialism," written in opposition to the NPL, "was published with the help of the [Grand Forks] Herald and sold 5,000 copies in two weeks."<sup>168</sup> This history of the Ku Klux Klan unfortunately provides students in a course on Religion in American politics and culture an opportunity to see how the worst characteristics of nativism, couched in religiously motivated political activity, influenced the local community in Grand Forks.

Baptists had similar ideas about negative influences in America. Gregory Wills recently argued that "Baptist mission leaders proclaimed the Americanizing imperative as the heart and soul of home missions." The increased immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries concerned many Americans, including Baptists, because the new immigrants were not white, Anglo-Saxon, nor (often) Protestant. Many of these immigrants migrated to the American West. The goal of mission leaders was to

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<sup>167</sup> "North Dakota – Race and Hispanic Origin: 1870-1990," *Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For The United States, Regions, Divisions, and States*, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/tab49.pdf> (accessed March 16, 2013).

<sup>168</sup> D. Jerome Tweton, "The Ku Klux Klan in North Dakota: Investigative Report," *North Dakota Studies*, [http://www.ndstudies.org/articles/the\\_ku\\_klux\\_klan\\_in\\_north\\_dakota\\_investigative\\_report](http://www.ndstudies.org/articles/the_ku_klux_klan_in_north_dakota_investigative_report) (accessed March 16, 2013).

evangelize so that these immigrants could be Americanized, and thus “safe for democracy.” The rationale behind this was closely tied to the idea of what Harry Stout referred to as American messianism. “Since divine providence indicated that America would become the most influential nation on earth, by saving America, home missions would save the world.” An investigation of Grand Forks’ First Baptist Church makes these beliefs regarding America quite evident.<sup>169</sup>

In general, the scholarly literature has ignored the work of North Dakota Baptists. Most historical writing on the denomination, with the exception of a graduate thesis on the Swedish Baptists, has been written by denominational writers.<sup>170</sup> In his 1966 work, the eminent North Dakota historian Elwyn B. Robinson rarely mentioned Baptists, although he considered them one of the “leading Protestant denominations,” along with the Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians. In 1916, non-Lutheran Protestant congregations averaged a membership of 48, which was about one-tenth the membership of First Baptist at about that time.<sup>171</sup> It is likely that the rural and sparse nature of the population in North Dakota led to this low number. The study of North Dakota Baptists

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<sup>169</sup> Gregory A. Wills, “The First One Hundred Years of Baptist Home Mission in North America: Civilization, Denominationalism, and Americanization,” in Ian M. Randall and Anthony R. Cross, ed., *Baptists and Mission: Papers from the Fourth International Conference on Baptist Studies* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 132. For a discussion of American messianism, see Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006), xvi-xxii.

<sup>170</sup> A denominational history was produced by the North Dakota Baptist State Convention in commemoration of their centennial in 1984. JoAnne Shoemaker and Don Shoemaker, *North Dakota Baptist State Convention 1884-1984* (Barre, VT: Northlight Studio Press, 1984). A 1968 master’s thesis looked at the Dakota Baptist Conference, a German body. Henry B. Nelson, “A History of the Dakota Baptist Conference, 1869-1920,” (M.A. thesis, State University of South Dakota, 1968).

<sup>171</sup> Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 294; Squires, 28.

is open for new interpretations, and can tell much about how these people were active during the Progressive Era.

Regarding World War I, Robinson pointed out the antipathy that most North Dakotans had for the war in Europe before American involvement began in 1917. Also in 1917, the Nonpartisan League (NPL), a political movement with socialist tendencies, took control of the state's government through success in the previous election. The NPL viewed the preparedness campaign of Woodrow Wilson as an attempt by big business to enrich itself at the expense of the common folk. Before the United States declared war, many German and Norwegian immigrants believed this argument and felt themselves subject to exploitation by the "financial and industrial capitalist classes." Once America embroiled itself in the war, however, the people of North Dakota generally fell in line with support of the effort, with the exception of a few individuals who were tried under the Espionage Act. Among those convicted was John Fontana, a German Evangelical pastor from New Salem. The patriotism of First Baptist was evident well before the war started, however, as will be shown in the pages that follow.<sup>172</sup>

Throughout the Progressive Era, professional historians tended to focus upon "unity, stability, and continuity" in American history, which "was the story of 'freedom realized and stabilized through the achievement of national solidarity.'" Schools called for textbooks that promoted this unity. Many historians at this early date tended to be racist in their orientation. This racism did not just involve African Americans; it also extended to the different white nationalities. Some scientific racists viewed the Anglo-Saxons as superior to the Irish, the French, and those from Southern or Eastern Europe,

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<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 352-367.

most of whom were Catholic. The consensus at which the Progressive Era historians arrived regarding the superiority of America and its Anglo-Saxon inhabitants tended to legitimize the traditional views regarding America and its founding and destiny.<sup>173</sup> It was within this intellectual environment of ultra-patriotic nativist nationalism that the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks came of age.

The Progressive Era saw many social and political changes in American life. Evangelical Protestants were often at the forefront of these calls for change. Social problems such as drunkenness and living conditions in urban areas caused concern for many people. The Panic of 1893 led to concern over social problems for many Protestants. Many evangelicals supported the prohibition of alcoholic beverages. Evangelism was an important endeavor to most Progressive Era Protestants, who hoped for the coming Kingdom of God.<sup>174</sup> Patriotism was another important component of Progressive Era Christianity. In 1900, “the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church voted...permanently to display the American flag on its platform” to advance a love of America, which was seen as a part of loyalty to God because of America’s special place in God’s plan. Many Christian denominations saw a surge of patriotism during the Spanish-American War and World War I. Closely related to a love of America was an attitude of antipathy toward Roman Catholics, who were one of the leading “others” of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>175</sup> Baptists often viewed

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<sup>173</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 72-85.

<sup>174</sup> Many Christians during the Progressive Era were postmillennialist. This terminology has to do with the timing of the return of Christ. Postmillennialists believed that through the expansion of Christianity and the social change that this would bring, the world would be made ready for the return of Christ through worldwide revival. This eschatological viewpoint was most popular in the era before the world wars, after which there was less emphasis on human progress.

Catholicism with suspicion because of its alleged allegiance to the pope, and many Protestants argued that Catholics could not be good Americans as a result.

### First Baptist and Social Issues

One of the first and most influential proponents of what came to be known as the Social Gospel was Walter Rauschenbusch, a Baptist minister who worked with the disadvantaged in the part of New York City known as Hell's Kitchen. Rauschenbusch argued that the transformation of souls would lead to a transformation in society. In concert with his ideas, many Baptists "addressed a variety of social issues, urging the state to intervene in certain matters, many of which related to personal moral issues such as alcohol use, prostitution, and gambling." It was argued during the Progressive Era that Baptists should "encourage those forces in our nation which made for righteousness." These righteous forces included "patriotism...prohibition, the crusade against poverty, disease, illiteracy, vice, and crime."<sup>176</sup> These social issues figured very prominently when viewed in relation to the concerns of progressivism previously mentioned.

First Baptist of Grand Forks had a long-standing distaste for drunkenness, and this attitude led to its support for the prohibition of intoxicating liquors. During the late 1890s, the Baptist Young Peoples Union began publishing a monthly paper through the Grand Forks church, known as *The Baptist Bulletin*. One of the frequent topics for discussion in the pages of the *Bulletin* was the activities of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Some discussion of the WCTU activities or history

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<sup>175</sup> These progressive concerns of American Protestants are listed in Handy, "Protestant Theological Tensions and Political Styles in the Progressive Period," 283-288.

<sup>176</sup> Bill J. Leonard, *Baptists in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 162-164.

appeared in nearly every issue of the paper during 1896 and 1897, although it was not affiliated with the Baptists or any other particular denomination, for that matter.

The WCTU involved itself in evangelistic activities during January 1896, and the Red River Valley Total Abstinence Association was created on January 13 and 14. *The Baptist Bulletin* included a short discussion of this endeavor in its January 1896 edition. An article titled “A Saloon-Keeper’s Fear” followed the monthly article on the WCTU. The article was a satire written from a bar owner’s point of view. The fictional saloon keeper bemoaned the loss of his customer base, pointing out that boys used to come in thinking that the saloon was “pleasanter than the church.” The WCTU, “those persistent women,” and the YMCA earned the blame for taking away the saloon keeper’s business.<sup>177</sup>

Also in 1896, there were calls for a new constitutional convention in North Dakota just seven years after the state became a member of the union. First Baptist’s publication implicated liquor interests in the call for a new state constitution. *The Baptist Bulletin* discouraged members of First Baptist and other readers from voting to allow for resubmission of the constitution. The *Bulletin* argued, “The coming election is of vital importance to the homes of North Dakota. Our fair young state is now free from the curse of the legalized liquor traffic. Our people are more sober, our homes are happier and safer because this is so.” The newsletter argued that the constitutional changes, which would cut the number of seats in the state legislature, would “make it easier to corrupt the legislature.” *The Baptist Bulletin* took this attempt to corrupt the legislature as merely an attempt to throw out the prohibition then in effect in North Dakota and

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<sup>177</sup> “A Saloon-Keeper’s Fear,” *The Baptist Bulletin*, January 1896, 62.

called for “every patriotic citizen” to “vote only for those candidates...who are pledged to vote against resubmission [of the constitution] and any measure that tends to weaken our prohibitory law.” In closing the article, the anonymous author of the piece stated that “God holds every man responsible for his ballot” and encouraged voters to avoid voting based on “party or other considerations,” but rather to vote “for the right, as God gives him to see the right.”<sup>178</sup> There was no indication that woman suffrage was on the agenda for First Baptist at this point, however.

The support of First Baptist for prohibition was not just evident in the attendance of its women at meetings of the WCTU or in articles written in the church’s newsletter. The hatred for alcoholic beverages also appeared as a sermon topic. In 1900 Rev. J. P. Mills preached a Thanksgiving sermon titled “God in History.” During the sermon, the Grand Forks parson argued that saloons provided “the spirit of anarchism,” which was one of the “adverse elements which threaten the unity of the republic.”<sup>179</sup> In May 1917, during World War I, Harvey J. Moore preached a sermon titled “Prohibition a Moral Law Demanded,” which implored the banishment of “the twin devils of defeat.” The first devil that could lead to the defeat of the American armed forces was the drinking of alcoholic beverages by servicemen. To combat this threat, Moore urged “that as a war measure our nation shall prohibit the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors at least for the duration of the war.” The second devil of defeat that concerned Moore was prostitution. Moore suggested that the army should have a “sanitary zone” around

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<sup>178</sup> “A Plea to Voters,” *The Baptist Bulletin*, October 1896, 45. There was no approval of a new state constitution in 1896. Elwyn Robinson’s influential history of North Dakota did not even see fit to include the call for a new constitution.

<sup>179</sup> “God in History,” *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, 2 December 1900.



mobilization camps. He never specifically mentioned women or sexual impropriety, but that this was his topic is evident. As an example in favor of these sanitary zones, Moore looked at Great Britain's track record and stated that they had more men disabled over an eighteen month period from "diseases contracted through vice" than were disabled in actual military action. Though he did not cite his source, his intent was no doubt clear to his listeners. Prostitution was a dangerous vice that threatened the servicemen, and as such, needed a quick and enforced end.<sup>180</sup> Interestingly, the sermon showed no concern for the plight of the women involved.

First Baptist also encouraged its members to abstain from certain worldly amusements, such as "card playing, dancing, and theatre going."<sup>181</sup> The Progressive Era saw the advent of the motion picture and the movie theater. Many members of First Baptist saw a big threat to morality in some of the movies of the day. Concern over one early movie star caused the church to send a formal resolution to Grand Forks theater owners. Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle was the subject of an encouraged boycott. Arbuckle was a well-known part of a 1921 scandal related to the death of a woman in a San Francisco party that involved sex and alcoholic beverages during Prohibition. Arbuckle would eventually be acquitted of the charges against him.<sup>182</sup> While this resolution fell outside of the Progressive Era chronologically, its concern with morality hearkened back to the morality of the reform movement. The church's resolution "express[ed] the hope

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<sup>180</sup> "Prohibition a Moral Law Demanded," *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, 29 May 1917.

<sup>181</sup> "A Dozen and One Facts Concerning Worldly Amusements," *The Baptist Bulletin*, October 1896, 43.

<sup>182</sup> Stephen Vaughn, "Morality and Entertainment: The Origins of the Motion Picture Production Code," *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 1 (June 1990): 39-65.

that none of the theater owners or managers in Grand Forks [would] show any film featuring ‘Fatty’ Arbuckle.” Arbuckle was seen as a “degrading influence,” and the church wanted to protect “against the influence of one whose past conduct” was “so disgraceful as to make him unworthy to hold up before” their children.<sup>183</sup> The concern over motion picture morality was just one more example of First Baptist’s activity in support of the public morality that was so evident during the Progressive Era. They were not isolated from the rest of the nation, but rather acted in concert with like-minded national organizations.

Closely related to Progressive Era moral issues was the status of women in society. Baptist historian Bill J. Leonard pointed out that many Baptists supported the WCTU until they found out that it supported women preachers. While the ordination of women among Baptists began in the nineteenth century it “did not become a significant movement in most Baptist communions until after the Second World War.”<sup>184</sup> Some Baptist churches have not even permitted public prayer by women, much less permitted them to preach. In its relation to women, First Baptist was very early in supporting them in leadership roles, and as a result, apparently had no problem with the WCTU’s stand on women preachers. As early as 1898, a certain Miss Frye led the prayer at the weekly Wednesday evening prayer meeting.<sup>185</sup> Not only were women acceptable leaders for public prayer, they were acceptable preachers and evangelists in the view of First Baptist. In 1898, while the church was without a pastor after the resignation of Rev. Perry

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<sup>183</sup> January 1923 Resolution to Grand Forks Theater Owners. First Baptist Papers, Folder 3.

<sup>184</sup> Leonard, 162-164, 214.

<sup>185</sup> Church Minutes, 12 January 1898. First Baptist Papers, Folder 2.

Longfellow, “Miss Eliza Frye” supplied the pulpit “regularly from January to March.” Apparently, the church enjoyed Frye’s preaching. At an October 1898 business meeting, “A letter of the church recommending Miss Eliza Frye as evangelist was granted on motion.”<sup>186</sup> Not only did the church support Frye’s preaching, they also wanted others to hear her. In addition to its support for the WCTU and women preachers, the Grand Forks church had at least three prominent male leaders<sup>187</sup> who were listed as leaders in “the organization of an older girls conference” which was formed to support “the general uplift of the work of girls.” While this activity was not related to the church, it nonetheless showed support for women working at something other than child rearing.<sup>188</sup>

#### First Baptist and Nativism

One common attitude among Americans during the Progressive Era was nativism, which was evident in anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic beliefs. Protestants and Catholics have traditionally had an antagonistic stance in relation to each other. Catholic numbers in America grew rapidly in the nineteenth century and there was great “fear of the Romanist peril.” Between 1870 and 1910, an estimated five million Catholics arrived in the United States. “Catholics were frequently labeled un-American, and it was said they opposed the tradition of religious freedom.”<sup>189</sup> Some scholars have argued that there have been three major waves of nativism: the era of the Know-Nothing Party in the mid-

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<sup>186</sup> Church Minutes, 26 October 1898. First Baptist Papers, Folder 2.

<sup>187</sup> Scrapbook, unidentified newspaper clipping dated about 8 June 1914, Grand Forks Federated Church Records. Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND. The leaders involved in this organization that supported working girls were Sidney Clarke, church clerk, R. B. Griffith, former church clerk and long-time Sunday School superintendent, and V. P. Squires, a dean at the University of North Dakota.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Handy, 287-288.

nineteenth century, the era of the American Protective Association in the 1890s, and the era of the second incarnation of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1910s and 1920s.<sup>190</sup> Anti-Catholicism was evident in each case. Lynn S. Neal recently investigated artistic propaganda produced by the Klan in the early 1920s that had a distinct anti-Catholic message. In a picture titled “The Men Who Are Refusing to Bow to the Great Image,” Branford Clarke pictured robed Klansmen walking away from a statue of the pope, Bible and American flag in hand, while the masses worshiped the image. Members of the masses had labels on their backs such as K of C (for Knights of Columbus), Tammany, and Booze, which differentiated them from good Americans. To the Klan and other nativists, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Christianity represented all that was good in America.<sup>191</sup> First Baptist Church was at the height of its influence during the late 1890s to the 1920s, and nativism is evident in its records.

Baptists, too, have traditionally had distrust for Catholics. The *Syllabus of Errors*, which Pope Pius IX promulgated in 1864, did nothing to alleviate Baptist fears. This document “condemned Protestants, religious liberty, freedom of the press, and public education” and led some Baptists to join nativist groups “to claim America as a Protestant nation and protect the country from a papist takeover.” It is unlikely that this statement by the pope affected Grand Forks directly because the town did not even exist for several years after its dissemination. However, the *Syllabus* did seem to go against all that Protestant America supported in terms of religious and political liberty. Many

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<sup>190</sup> A good synthesis of this topic is Tanis Lovercheck-Saunders, “Our Duty, Our Rights, Our America: Women in American Nativism 1830-1930,” (D.A. Thesis: University of North Dakota, 2001).

<sup>191</sup> Lynn S. Neal, “Christianizing the Klan: Alma White, Branford Clarke, and the Art of Religious Intolerance,” *Church History* 78, no. 2 (June 2009): 350-378.

Protestants were concerned when the Democrats nominated Al Smith for the presidency in 1928. Many Baptists opposed Smith because of his Catholicism, fearing “that a Catholic president could not protect and defend the constitution from enemies foreign and domestic,” because of his supposed subservience to the pope.<sup>192</sup> These same fears were common among many Baptists as late as John F. Kennedy’s election in 1960. “Conservative Baptists reacted negatively...because of [Kennedy’s] Roman Catholic identity, fearing that a Roman Catholic in the White House could not avoid following the dictates of the pope”<sup>193</sup> because his “eternal salvation was dependent upon Catholic commitments.”<sup>194</sup> From this brief overview, it becomes quite clear that Baptists have had a longstanding opposition to Catholicism.

First Baptist was very typical in keeping close fellowship with Baptist churches in North Dakota. However, their fellowship with other churches extended not only to sister churches of the Baptist faith. There is extensive evidence in the church records that First Baptist held fellowship with a number of churches and ministers from a wide variety of orthodox Protestant denominations. Many Baptist churches in the mid-nineteenth century began to hold to a view of the Baptist Church known as Landmarkism. This belief held that Baptists were the true church that Christ founded in the New Testament, and that baptisms in non-Baptist churches were invalid. Those holding to a Landmark

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<sup>192</sup> Leonard, 164-167.

<sup>193</sup> Everett C. Goodwin, *Down By the Riverside: A Brief History of Baptist Faith* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2002), 52.

<sup>194</sup> Leonard, 164-167. See also J. David Holcomb, “A Millstone Hanged About His Neck?: George W. Truett, Anti-Catholicism, and Baptist Conceptions of Religious Liberty,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 43, no. 3 (Summer/Fall 2008): 68-82. A case study of *The Baptist Standard*, a Texas denominational paper illustrates the anti-Catholicism that was still a common Baptist attitude as late as 1960. See Ricky Floyd Dobbs, “Continuities in American Anti-Catholicism: The Texas *Baptist Standard* and the Coming of the 1960 Election,” *Baptist History and Heritage* 42, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 85-93.

ecclesiology refused to have non-Baptists speak in their churches, as well. This view was more common in the South, although there were some churches in the North that held this view, especially in regard to baptism.<sup>195</sup> There is no evidence that the Grand Forks body held to Landmark doctrines, in spite of at least minimal contact with a minister from the South. The church attempted to call Rev. C. E. W. Dobbs of Columbus, Mississippi, as pastor after he preached during a morning and evening service in October 1890. He did not come, in spite of the church's vote.<sup>196</sup>

As early as 1885, First Baptist "extended the right hand of fellowship" to Miss Maggie Milne after they received a letter of recommendation from the "M. E. Church." While this was not a terribly specific description of the church that Milne left, M. E. was a common abbreviation for Methodist Episcopal.<sup>197</sup> This acceptance of a former Methodist without a re-baptism taking place would indicate that some doctrinal differences were not a large barrier to fellowship. The vast majority of Methodists have commonly held to an Arminian view of salvation, which is in opposition to a Calvinistic view that holds the sovereignty of God and predestination as the main impetus of salvation. First Baptist used the Philadelphia Baptist Confession<sup>198</sup> as its original doctrinal statement.<sup>199</sup> It would be difficult to find a document more Calvinistic in its

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<sup>195</sup> A recent historical discussion of the Landmark Baptist ecclesiology is available in James A. Patterson, "James Robinson Graves: History in the Service of Ecclesiology," *Baptist History and Heritage* 44, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 72-83. See also Chad W. Hall, "When Orphans became Heirs: J. R. Graves and the Landmark Baptists," *Baptist History and Heritage* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 112-127.

<sup>196</sup> Church Minutes, 26 October 1890. First Baptist Papers, Folder 2.

<sup>197</sup> Church Minutes, 11 January 1885. First Baptist Papers, Folder 1.

<sup>198</sup> The Philadelphia Baptist Confession, available from <http://www.spurgeon.org/~phil/creeds/phila.htm>; Internet; accessed 10 October 2010.

<sup>199</sup> Church Minutes, 16 October 1881. First Baptist Papers, Folder 1.

content. The church's statement of faith remained the Philadelphia Confession until 1925, when it was replaced by the slightly less Calvinistic New Hampshire Baptist Confession.<sup>200</sup>

First Baptist frequently held joint meetings with the other local churches. In March 1907, the church minutes recorded a motion to hold evangelistic services that month and appointed a committee to confer with the Methodists regarding these services.<sup>201</sup> At the 1916 annual meeting of the church, there was a recommendation that an evangelistic campaign be held, either alone or with other churches in the city. In 1923, the Advisory Board recommended that the church join with the Methodist Episcopal Church on April 8 for a presentation by the Gideons. In the same meeting, the Board also recommended meeting with the Methodists in a joint service on Sunday evening, April 22.<sup>202</sup>

*The Baptist Bulletin* often had articles on the "neighbors" of First Baptist, which included news from other local congregations. The churches most often listed were the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists.<sup>203</sup> Lutherans and Catholics, although active in Grand Forks from a very early date, do not appear in the paper, most likely because of language barriers in terms of the Lutherans and a fear of papist superstition in

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<sup>200</sup> "Rules of Order of the First Baptist Church, Grand Forks, N. Dak.," 1925, art. VII, sec. 5. First Baptist Papers, Folder 3. The church "Rules of Order" called for the J. Newton Brown Manual for Baptist Churches to be used. This manual referred to the New Hampshire Baptist Confession.

<sup>201</sup> Church Minutes, 17 March 1907. First Baptist Papers, Folder 2.

<sup>202</sup> Advisory Board Minutes, 2 April 1923. First Baptist Papers, Folder 3.

<sup>203</sup> These articles are included in each of the available issues of the *Baptist Bulletin* that are housed in the First Baptist Papers, excepting an issue that was entirely dedicated to the memory of Jennie Longfellow, the wife of one of the early pastors of the church.

relation to the Catholics. In an issue dedicated to the memory of Jennie Longfellow, the recently deceased wife of Rev. P. W. Longfellow, ministers from other denominations were listed as taking part in the funeral services that took place in March 1896. William Gill, a local Episcopalian minister, read from I Corinthians 15. Methodist minister H. Witham provided “words of comfort.” W. H. Spence, the Presbyterian pastor, concluded the service with an invocation. This funeral service was obviously a very ecumenical affair.<sup>204</sup>

Funerals were not the only occasion in which members of the local pastoral community met together. Another example of pastoral cooperation was the dedication service celebrating a “new and enlarged church building” for First Baptist on December 15, 1901. After a message by O. A. Williams of Minneapolis, “a Christian fellowship meeting was held at 3 p. m. at which addresses were made by” a Methodist, two Presbyterians, a representative from the State University, two missionaries from the Home Mission Society. In addition to the speakers, “Rev. Burleson of the Episcopal Church was also present on the platform.”<sup>205</sup>

While Lutherans were not on stage at these community meetings, *The Baptist Bulletin* referred to them in relation to the Sunday School movement. George Carpenter, Will Carpenter, and R. B. Griffith attended the “eighth annual convention of the State Sunday School Association” on behalf of First Baptist. They numbered among the “about 100 delegates in attendance.” Of the 868 schools that the report included from North Dakota, over 400 were Lutheran. There is no evidence of condemnation of

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<sup>204</sup> *The Baptist Bulletin*, May 1896. This edition of the *Bulletin* was composed entirely with information related to the death and funeral of Jennie Longfellow.

<sup>205</sup> Church minutes, 15 December 1901. First Baptist Papers, Folder 2.



Lutheran schools, and there was evidence of a desire to spread the Sunday School movement to every child in the state. It is evident that First Baptist had reasonably cordial relations with most orthodox<sup>206</sup> denominations in the area.<sup>207</sup> Evidence from the 1918 the North Dakota Sunday School Association conference confirms this assertion. In 1918, the association held its annual meeting in Grand Forks. R. B. Griffith served as an officer of the organization, and the program stated “[t]his is a family gathering. We are all children of the Heavenly Father and need no introduction.” Among the groups listed in attendance were the English Lutherans, which likely indicates some linguistic and/or anti-German bias in light of the fact that many North Dakota Lutherans were Scandinavian or German.<sup>208</sup>

The only major Christian denomination that was not in any fellowship that the church held was that of the Roman Catholics. Catholics were often suspect because they were a part of the New Immigration and often spoke a different language (with the notable exception of the Irish). There is no discussion of Catholicism in the official records of the church. This would lead one to wonder if Catholics were active in the Grand Forks area. The Church of Rome was actually active in the Grand Forks area shortly before many of the other denominations in town. “St. Michael’s Church was

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<sup>206</sup> For the purposes of this paper, orthodox is held to mean a denomination that holds to a traditional view of general Christian doctrines related to the Trinity, sin, man, etc. With this definition, Catholics would fall under the orthodox umbrella. However, groups like the Christian Scientists and Unitarians would not.

<sup>207</sup> “Sunday School Notes,” *The Baptist Bulletin*, June 1897.

<sup>208</sup> *Twenty-Ninth Annual North Dakota Sunday School Association Program* (Fargo: North Dakota Sunday School Association, 1918), 3, 4.

organized in 1877,” and by 1897, nearly 400 families were located within the parish.<sup>209</sup> While the official records do not mention Catholicism, the absence of fellowship with and even discussion of one of the largest denominations in town are telling. Furthermore, a sermon that the *Grand Forks Herald* published in December 1900 gives evidence of an anti-Catholic bias by J. P. Mills, the pastor of First Baptist. In the sermon titled “God in History,” Mills asked “What but the hand of God gave to Protestantism the controlling influence in America?” He then argued that if France, Spain, or Italy (all Catholic nations) had gained the upper hand in America, “superstition and infidelity would have done for America what it has done for European states, Mexico and lower Canada.” Mills saw the new immigrants in the West bringing in “the skepticism, the Sabbath breaking, and the drinking customs” along with “the spirit of anarchism,” which was “fostered in the saloons, two-thirds of which are kept by the foreign population” (many of whom would have been Catholic).<sup>210</sup> In 1928, North Dakota Baptists opposed Al Smith, the Roman Catholic Democratic nominee for president. There is debate as to the reasons why Smith lost North Dakota to the eventual winner, Herbert Hoover. While his Catholicism may have been a factor, his lack of support for prohibition concerned many. More likely, his party affiliation contributed to his defeat. North Dakota, as did most of the rural Midwest, historically voted Republican in presidential elections, with the exceptions of the 1912 and 1916 elections, both of which had very unusual backdrops.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> W. L. Dudley, *The City of Grand Forks Illustrated* (Grand Forks: The Herald, Printers and Binders, 1897), 18.

<sup>210</sup> J. P. Mills, “God in History,” *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, 2 December 1900.

<sup>211</sup> Eugene Olaf Holen, “The Election of 1928 in North Dakota,” (M. S. Thesis: University of North Dakota, 1959), 124-125.

Elwyn Robinson, author of the most influential history of North Dakota, only mentioned Baptists in any sense three times. In one of these three instances, “Grand Forks Baptists” were specifically discussed because they “condemned Al Smith, a Roman Catholic, for his Tammany Hall connections and his support of the saloon.” Robinson argued the effect of Smith’s Catholicism in North Dakota was inconclusive, however, because of the large Catholic population in the state.<sup>212</sup> The twin evils of Rum and Romanism concerned many at the time. Closely related to their view of Catholicism was the view of First Baptist regarding America as a bastion of Anglo-American Christianity.

#### First Baptist and the Great War

Americans have long seen themselves as a special people who have come from many different regions. As noted previously, many famous American figures, from John Winthrop to Ronald Reagan, have seen America as a “city upon a hill” that would aid in the salvation of the world.<sup>213</sup> In a 2006 work that he referred to as a moral history of the Civil War, Yale historian Harry Stout discussed the ways in which the participants in that conflict had a strong belief in American “messianism,” which is “the attribution of sacred status to the place North America.” Stout argued, “The rhetoric of messianism or ‘exceptionalism’ is often summarized by the term ‘jeremiad.’” Jeremiads refer to the prophecies of doom contained in the Biblical books of Jeremiah and Lamentations. God gave these prophetic messages to the chosen nation. The concept that Stout argued is that

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<sup>212</sup> Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 391.

<sup>213</sup> John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity” (sermon preached aboard the *Arbella* in 1630), available from <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html>; Internet; accessed 18 October 2010; Ronald Reagan, “Remarks Accepting the Presidential Nomination at the Republican National Convention” (speech given in Dallas, Texas, on August 23, 1984), available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=40290>; Internet; accessed 18 October 2010.

Americans viewed themselves as a sort of chosen people amongst the nations of the world.<sup>214</sup>

This idea of America as God's chosen nation for the modern era influenced Baptists, as the previously mentioned work by Gregory Wills about Baptist home mission work argued.<sup>215</sup> This messianic view of America was prevalent among Progressive Era Baptists in North Dakota. In his 1900 Thanksgiving sermon, J. P. Mills not only argued that God had given America to the Protestants, but that "a horde of immigrants" was infiltrating this special land. Furthermore, he warned of certain "adverse elements that threatened the unity of the republic," such as "anarchism, socialism, the saloon, the negro problem, etc." The answer to the nation's problems was evangelism, and America must be at the forefront of evangelism because God had given the task of world evangelism to the Anglo-Saxons. More to the point, Americans would "soon... become the major part of that race." Mills ended his sermon by proposing that America's "whole history seems to show that God has a particular mission for this people, a spiritual mission, not a material."<sup>216</sup>

The leadership of the Grand Forks church was not alone in this view of America's place in the world. At the September 1911 meeting of the North Dakota State Baptist Convention, an organization of which First Baptist was a constituent member, Mrs. A. L. Blades gave the address for the Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society. Blades argued that "the women of America have wonderful opportunities... we have

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<sup>214</sup> Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006), xvi-xxii.

<sup>215</sup> Wills, 132.

<sup>216</sup> J. P. Mills, "God in History."

come to realize that our country has a destiny.”<sup>217</sup> She related this destiny to the promise given to Abraham in the book of Genesis that through him all nations would be blessed,<sup>218</sup> and argued, “In the Providence of God our walls are breaking down and alien and inferior races are flocking to our shores to find homes. We are entering in among the nations as a great world-power...Our pressing and immediate duty is the evangelization of our own land.”<sup>219</sup>

This view of America’s role in the world led First Baptist to lend extensive support to the nation’s efforts during World War I. While there is no evidence in the existing church records that First Baptist officially supported the Spanish-American War at the end of the nineteenth century, the church records give extensive evidence related to support for the Great War just two decades later. Much of the excitement for the war effort came from the church’s pastor, Harvey J. Moore. J. Duane Squires, who wrote a fiftieth anniversary history of the church, pointed out that Moore “was almost beside himself with war-enthusiasm, and with difficulty carried out his pastoral duties.”<sup>220</sup> While this statement may indicate some dismay on the part of Moore’s former parishioners, there is evidence that at least some church members similarly supported the war effort and that this patriotism pre-dated the arrival of Moore as pastor. In 1915 Rev.

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<sup>217</sup> Mrs. A. L. Blades, “Report of the W. A. B. H. M. Society,” in *Proceedings of the Twenty-eighth Annual Meeting of the North Dakota Baptist State Convention Held with the First Baptist Church of Grafton, September 19-22, 1911*, 65.

<sup>218</sup> Genesis 12:3.

<sup>219</sup> Blades, 65.

<sup>220</sup> J. Duane Squires, *A History of the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks, North Dakota* (1931), 23.

R. G. Pierson preached a Memorial Day sermon on “True Patriotism” with members of three patriotic societies in attendance as guests.<sup>221</sup>

Official support for the war began in September 1917, when the church minutes recorded an approved motion that the church would “take up a special collection for the War Fund”.<sup>222</sup> At a January 1918 meeting of the Advisory Board, there was a recommendation to set up a committee to oversee contributions to the Red Cross “arising on account of the war.”<sup>223</sup> In February 1918, Moore made his request to become an army chaplain, which the board subsequently approved.<sup>224</sup> In March of the same year the “church raised \$1,000 toward the Million Dollar War Fund instituted by the National Committee of Baptist Laymen.”<sup>225</sup> While this may not seem like a huge sum in current figures, the total church budget for all of 1918 was only \$6,310.<sup>226</sup> The church’s annual business meeting even had a patriotic flair in 1918. Patriotic decorations adorned the inside of the building. “The tables had our national colors displayed,” and “the profusion of forceful and pointed wall posters added to the patriotic effect.” Rev. Moore himself had been responsible for much of the decoration and fanfare, and at this meeting, the church approved his leave after singing “The Star Spangled Banner.”<sup>227</sup> The support of

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<sup>221</sup> Church minutes, 23 May 1915. First Baptist Papers, Folder 3.

<sup>222</sup> Church minutes, 26 September 1917. First Baptist Papers, Folder 3. Underline is in the original source.

<sup>223</sup> Advisory Board minutes, 4 January 1918. First Baptist Papers, Folder 3.

<sup>224</sup> Church minutes, 17 February 1918.

<sup>225</sup> Church minutes, March 1918. First Baptist Papers, Folder 3.

<sup>226</sup> Church minutes, 10 April 1918. First Baptist Papers, Folder 3.

<sup>227</sup> Church Minutes, 10 April 1918. First Baptist Papers, Folder 3.

the war effort continued as the church gave a long-time member, Harry H. Tuttle, a farewell reception just before he embarked upon work for the YMCA in France in June 1918.<sup>228</sup> There is no evidence from the church minutes of any casualty count in relation to the Grand Forks church, but its backing of the United States' war effort was quite evident.

Moore argued that American involvement in the war should be supported in a published April 1917 sermon titled "US Justified in Entering War." According to Moore, America should have been involved in the war even earlier than it did because German aggression against Belgium was an affront to democracy. Furthermore, he pointed out to his listeners that "Germany [had] proved conclusively that her plans and ideas [were] entirely opposed to democracy and the freedom and progress of the human race. If Germany should emerge from this struggle entirely victorious...it would mean the reestablishment of autocratic governments and the defeat of democracies throughout the world." Moore continued his sermon by encouraging his listeners to avoid speaking against the war effort because America was already at war and those questioning the conflict would be in danger of committing treasonable acts.<sup>229</sup> Although most Baptist historians argue that freedom of conscience is a historic Baptist principle, apparently this right was abridged during time of war for Moore.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Squires, 23.

<sup>229</sup> "US Justified in Entering War," *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, 10 April 1917.

<sup>230</sup> Baptist leaders were even more against freedom of conscience against the war effort in World War II, although some have pointed out that this is a "strange inconsistency" for a denomination that prides itself in supporting freedom of conscience. See J. Bradley Creed, "Freedom for and Freedom from: Baptists, Religious Liberty, and World War II," *Baptist History and Heritage* 36, no. 3 (Summer/Fall 2001): 28-43.

During the war, Moore himself gave war lectures, and First Baptist hosted war lecturers. In July 1917 the patriotic pastor gave a “well-attended” lecture at the University of North Dakota on the “Mobilization of America’s Resources.”<sup>231</sup> Noted speaker Harry C. Evans spent five months in the trenches of Europe and became “one of the most popular war lecturers in America.” First Baptist invited Evans to give a speech at the church in October 1917.<sup>232</sup> Support for the war effort by the church and its leaders could hardly have been more evident, and this support even extended to the church’s dealings with parachurch organizations such as the North Dakota Sunday School Board. The Board held its 1918 annual meeting in Grand Forks and had a patriotic song festival and an address titled “The Sunday School War Time Program” presented by speaker W. C. Pearce.<sup>233</sup>

After the war, the wave of extreme patriotism seems to have abated quickly. However, in the most traumatic event of the early twentieth century, members of the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks were every bit as involved as their fellow countrymen. This support related to the idea that American involvement in the war and the spread of American democracy and freedom would help secure America’s place as a blessing to all people.

### Conclusion

Although scholars have conducted few studies regarding Baptists in North Dakota, the First Baptist Church of Grand Forks provides an excellent case study for

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<sup>231</sup> “Last of University War Lectures Given by Rev. H. J. Moore,” *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, 26 July 1917.

<sup>232</sup> “Harry C. Evans Speaks Tonight,” *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, 9 October 1917.

<sup>233</sup> *Twenty-Ninth Annual North Dakota Sunday School Association Program*, 14, 16.



Baptist attitudes and activities during the Progressive and World War I Eras. First Baptist took up as their own Progressive causes related to public morality such as the battles against saloons, prostitution, and public indecency in films. A belief in American exceptionalism also heavily influenced the church. To many Americans, the nation had a special place in bringing a God-ordained democracy and freedom to the rest of the world. However, there were forces active in the world that opposed this plan. Amongst these anti-Christian (and, therefore, anti-American) forces were the saloons, Catholics, and the autocratic Germans. First Baptist attempted to do their part in making sure that their Protestant version of Christianity and democracy maintained control of America's direction. For these reasons, the church took the lead in their community in advocating prohibition, supporting the US government during WWI, and propagating a Protestant worldview to their congregants and community.

## Chapter V

### Using Local Religious History as a Teaching Tool: A Case Study

As noted in the introduction, most courses on American religious history tend to ignore the local historical record when emphasizing national trends. Utilizing local history during such a course can impact students in two very important ways. First, it can emphasize the important fact that local history can be a fertile ground for historical investigation. Many undergraduate students may ignore the possibility of utilizing local sources in the answering of important historical questions. Giving the examples covered in Chapters 3 and 4 will give students a very clear example of how local history can be utilized in this way. Second, the use of local history can engage students in their local milieu and help them understand the importance that local trends and beliefs have on their everyday lives.

The syllabus for my class on American religious history indicated a focus on the broad categories of how religious belief has tended to impact the political and cultural development of American history. This process started immediately after the arrival of the first Europeans who decided to plant roots in this new land (that was new only in the context of their discovery by Europeans, not in the context of human inhabitation). A discussion during the first class meeting focused solely upon introducing students to the scope and objectives of the course, in addition to the standard introductory fare of assignments and grading criteria. One of the primary course objectives discussed on the

first day of class was the importance of understanding how local history can be used to answer some of the big “how” and “why” questions of historical inquiry. A discussion of the major topics of the lectures, readings, and assignments for each week of the class followed at the end of the introductory meeting. Part of the discussion of the course schedule informed students that they would be learning about local religious history and that they would have the opportunity to utilize such resources should they choose to do so.

The major project in this course involved the writing of a report of approximately five pages. I gave the students a great deal of leeway in the process of formulating their project in an attempt to foster a learning environment in which adult students take greater control of their learning.<sup>234</sup> An additional goal in allowing students the opportunity to choose their project had root in the hope that the ability to choose a major project would increase the likelihood that students would have an actual interest in their topic, and thus do better in the actual completion of the project. When going over the possibilities of the major project, I encouraged students to give at least some thought in regard to the use of some local resources in the carrying out of the aims of the project. Some of the major project options included a scholarly book review, a research proposal, an encyclopedia entry, or even a short research essay. These topics could cover either local or national history as long as they related to the major course topic (the impact of religious belief upon the politics and culture of the United States) and had the approval of the instructor.

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<sup>234</sup> Androgogy and Self-directed Learning refer to concepts that grew out of the work of Malcolm Knowles, Cyril Houle, and Allen Tough. For a short overview of these concepts, see Sharan B. Merriam, “Androgogy and Self-Directed Learning: Pillars of Adult Learning Theory,” *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 89 (Spring 2001): 3-13.

All students opted for either a standard academic book review or a short research paper. After additions to and withdrawals from the class, the number of students stood at ten.

To further achieve the goals of informing students of the possibilities and benefits of using local history, I dedicated portions of a series of lectures in this special topics course to the coverage of local religious history during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. I scheduled the first of these lectures for the second half of the semester, because this course was a broad survey-style overview of American religious history that began with the early explorers who came to the Americas from Europe. I scheduled two weekly class meetings that were each two hours and thirty minutes in length to cover the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, as this broad period is important in American religious history because of the crises that the Civil War, Darwinism, industrialization, urbanization, and the social gospel engendered for people of faith. Additionally, the influx of new immigrants who were not of Protestant Western European stock led to a great deal of concern amongst the Protestant establishment of the day.

The first class on the Gilded Age and Progressive Era that introduced local religious history included a review of my own work on North Dakota Baptists and a description of how this research fits into the broader understanding of nativism among American Protestants during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era. I began the class by discussing a number of crises (mentioned above) that were quite evident to those living during the Gilded Age. The main topic for this particular lecture was nativism and the relationship that Protestant Americans had toward Catholic immigrants. I went back to show that this phenomenon was nothing new, as animosity toward Irish Catholics in the antebellum period led to the rise of the Know-Nothing Party in the 1840s and 1850s. The

lecture then noted the new immigration that began around 1890 and the opposition to these new arrivals that culminated in the rise of the second Ku Klux Klan in the 1910s and 1920s.

To bring the local aspect into this discussion, I asked students to take a few minutes in small groups to think of what sources they would need to successfully find out whether nativism was prevalent in North Dakota during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The students came up with a variety of good ideas that might give information as to the influence (or lack thereof) of nativism in the local community.

Included in the recommendations were:

1. Court records that would show if criminal activity had a racial bias.
2. Death notices that would show the cause of death in such cases.
3. Newspaper accounts that would deal with either riots or political events that might have a relation to anti-immigrant or anti-black rhetoric.
4. Local church records that might show any bias against minority or ethnic groups (this recommendation kept with the theme of the course).

I was relatively impressed with the ideas, as the majority of the students present at this class period were not history majors.

After this period of interaction, I then described my personal research questions that dealt with nativism and proceeded to share the examples I found in the course of my research. I gave three examples to give students an idea of how this process worked. I noted a resolution by the North Dakota Baptist State Convention that noted their fear of

Catholics trying to subvert public education and American values.<sup>235</sup> I also noted a sermon preached by J. P. Mills that announced his relief that it was Anglo-Protestants who founded America, rather than the superstitious Spaniards or Italians whose superstition was rooted in their Catholicism according to Mills.<sup>236</sup> The final example was the Klan activity of the Grand Forks Presbyterian minister, F. Harley Ambrose, who preached his anti-socialist nativist message against the rise of the Nonpartisan League.<sup>237</sup> Ambrose's standing as both a Protestant minister and a Klan lecturer fit well with Brian Farmer's assertion that two-thirds of lecturers for the KKK were Protestant ministers.<sup>238</sup>

The students responded well to this lecture and exercise. I asked them before adjournment if they believed that it was necessary to study important national figures to learn about history. Their answers indicated an understanding of my point that local figures can provide a fertile field for historical research. As a whole, the class went quite well. I would change little from the syllabus as a whole, but there is one area that I would definitely excise from future opportunities to teach this class. I assigned students to lead discussions each week, thinking that the activity would allow students to take more control of their learning in a self-directed manner. Even after directing students to come up with open-ended questions about course readings, there was little improvement. In future incarnations of this or other upper-level classes, I would moderate the

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<sup>235</sup> *Minutes of the Proceedings of the North Dakota Baptist Association* (1885), 9. ND Baptist Convention Records, roll 13691.

<sup>236</sup> J. P. Mills, "God in History," *Grand Forks Daily Herald*, 2 December 1900.

<sup>237</sup> D. Jerome Tweton, "The Ku Klux Klan in North Dakota: Investigative Report," *North Dakota Studies*.[http://www.ndstudies.org/articles/the\\_ku\\_klux\\_klan\\_in\\_north\\_dakota\\_investigative\\_report](http://www.ndstudies.org/articles/the_ku_klux_klan_in_north_dakota_investigative_report) (accessed March 16, 2013).

<sup>238</sup> Brian Farmer, *American Conservatism: History, Theory and Practice* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005), 208.

discussions myself. I rethink course texts each time I teach a course, but the change regarding the discussions would be the only major difference.

## Appendix

### Course Syllabus for Religion in American Politics and Culture

#### **HISTORY 399: Religion in American Politics and Culture University of North Dakota Spring 2013**

Instructor: Christopher Price

Class Meetings: Thursdays 6:00-8:30 pm

Office: 217 O'Kelly

Phone: 777-2704

Email: [Christopher.Price.2@my.und.edu](mailto:Christopher.Price.2@my.und.edu)

Office Hours: Monday 11-12, 1-2, Thursday 5:00-6:00 pm, and as needed

Please note: If you have emergency medical information to share with me, if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, or if you need accommodations in this course because of a disability, please make an appointment with me. My office location and hours are posted above. If you plan to request disability accommodations, you are expected to register with the Disability Support Services (DSS) office (190 McCannel Hall, 777-3425).

#### **Course Description**

Welcome to Religion in American Politics and Culture!

As Stanley Fish recently reflected upon the death of a fellow literary critic, a caller asked him what he thought would replace race, class, and gender at the pinnacle of historical inquiry. His answer was the study of history. Recent studies by the American Historical Association have largely confirmed this interest in the study of religious belief.

This course will give a bird's eye view of religion and its impact on American politics and culture. The first colonists to what would become British North America had economic and religious motives in coming to the "New World." Throughout the early national period, a Protestant hegemony attempted to impact the intellectual and cultural life of American citizens. While pluralistic in the finer points of doctrine, this Protestant establishment began to bifurcate in the latter nineteenth century and also started to lose some of its influence. The concern over this loss of political and cultural power and the increasing pluralism that extended beyond the traditional milieu of "Protestant, Catholic, and Jew" led to the culture wars that dominated much of the latter twentieth century.

NOTE: This course is not intended as a theology or philosophy course, although these topics will be discussed by necessity from time to time. It is mainly intended as a history course that investigates how religion impacted and continues to impact the cultural and political atmosphere in America. I will discuss Christianity more than most other religions (because even today over 80 percent of Americans self-identify as Christian or Jewish) and will refer to Christianity in a



very broad context. Hopefully, the course will provide a great opportunity to more clearly understand American history.

### **Course Objectives**

Through their engagement in this class, students will develop a greater understanding of:

how religious beliefs have impacted the cultural and political character of the United States in the 400 years since initial colonization in Jamestown.

change over time in relation to the influence of the religious establishment.

the nineteenth-century Protestant establishment and the threats to this establishment.

the crisis in religious belief during the Gilded Age.

the rise of fundamentalism and the New Religious Right in the twentieth century.

the increasing pluralism in the American religious landscape.

One additional learning goal of this course is to show students some of the ways in which local history can be used to illustrate national trends in American religion. Hopefully, this segment of the course will allow you as a student to expand your horizons when it comes to possible research questions that will guide any future scholarly endeavors you may wish to undertake.

### **Course Readings**

Hankins, Barry. *American Evangelicals: A Contemporary History of a Mainstream Religious Movement*.

Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009.

Lambert, Frank. *Religion in American Politics: A Short History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

Press, 2008.

Marty, Martin E. *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America*. New York: Penguin,

1985.

Moore, R. Laurence. *Touchdown Jesus: The Mixing of Sacred and Secular in American History*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003.

The weekly reading assignments not included in the textbooks will be posted in Blackboard, as will links to additional primary and secondary readings. Be sure to check Blackboard on a regular basis. Please note that I reserve the right to add or deduct readings if necessary, but will give at least one week's notice.

### **Course Structure and Assessments**

This course will take the form of a modified lecture/seminar course. Approximately one-half of each class meeting will consist of a traditional lecture that will provide a general survey

framework of the course topic. The second half of the class each week will consist of a discussion over the common readings for the week in a seminar format. We will take a short 10 minute break between the lecture and discussion portions of each class period.

There will be two major examinations in this course that will include both objective-type multiple choice and essay questions. There will be a few choices when it comes to the essay on each test. Attendance is not mandatory for this class, but students will be evaluated based upon their contributions to the class each week. It is extremely difficult for students to contribute to class if they are not present in class, so attendance is important. Discussion will also be difficult if required readings have not been read. To encourage students to read the material each week, I will incorporate occasional prompts in the class that will require a short summarization of one of the course readings for the week. These will not be a weekly feature, but will occur at unannounced intervals. Also, much of the information from the lectures and discussions will be important for the exams. Each student will be required to lead the discussion for one week of the class.

Students will also have the opportunity to show their improved understanding of a more specialized topic of study that is related to the main course topics. I will allow students to choose what type of project they would like to complete to improve their skills in the historical profession, as long as their project reaches approximately five pages in length. Some ideas that you may want to consider would include a book review, an encyclopedia entry, or a research proposal that you could conceivably expand upon in the future. The choices that you have are not limited to these ideas, but you will need to clear your intended project with me before beginning work to ensure that it would be appropriate for the class. You should choose your intended project by February 7. I will then create a rubric that will detail the grading expectations and share it with you within one week. These projects will be due on April 18. I will accept substantially completed drafts if you desire to get early feedback, but please get these submitted by April 4 at the latest. Students will have the opportunity to present their work to the class on the final day of class (this will be a part of the grade for the project).

### **Assignment Weights and Grading**

Midterm Exam	25%	90-100	A
Final Exam	25%	80-89	B
In-class Discussion	10%	70-79	C
Leading Class Discussion	10%	60-69	D
Prompts	10%	<60	F
Individual Project	20%		

### **Make-ups and Extra Credit**

Make-up assignments may only be completed for a legitimate excuse. Simply missing class does not qualify as a legitimate excuse. If you know that you are going to miss an assessment, it is your responsibility to contact me for alternate arrangements beforehand. Students may, if they so choose, complete an additional book review for extra credit. Reviews that achieve an A level will earn an additional 2% for the final course grade. B reviews will earn an additional 1.5% and C reviews will receive 1%. There will be no extra credit awarded for students who do not submit a review that earns a C.

## Academic Integrity

Students are, of course, expected to maintain the highest levels of academic integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be subject to disciplinary action. For a more detailed explanation of what constitutes academic dishonesty, I would direct you toward the Code of Student Life.

### Anticipated Course Schedule and Topics of Discussion

January 10	First day of class and course introduction
January 17	Europe in 1500—the Protestant Reformation Marty Chapters 1-4
January 24	The Puritans Marty Chapters 5 and 6, Perry Miller “Errand into the Wilderness” (available on J-Stor)
January 31	Ideas in the Colonies—Awakening and Enlightenment Marty Chapters 7 and 8, Hankins Chapter 1
February 7	The American Founders and Religion Marty Chapter 9, Lambert Intro and Chapter 1 <b>Due:</b> Project Proposals
February 14	Protestantism in the Early National Period Marty Chapter 10, Wood “Republican Religion” (available on Blackboard)
February 21	Protestantism in the Early National Period, part 2 Marty Chapters 11 and 12, Howe “Awakenings of Religion” (available on Blackboard)
February 28	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
March 7	No class—Instructor at Conference
March 14	No class—Spring Break
March 21	Religion and the Civil War Stout excerpts (on Blackboard), Charles Reagan Wilson “The Religion of the Lost Cause: Ritual and Organization of Southern Civil Religion, 1865-1920” (on J-Stor)
March 28	Religion in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era Marty Chapters 13 and 14, Lambert Chapter 3, Neal “Christianizing the Klan” (on Blackboard)
April 4	Religion in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era and Local History in a National Context Marty Chapters 15 and 16, Lambert Chapter 4 <b>Due:</b> Drafts of Projects (optional)

April 11	The Age of Billy Graham and Civil Rights Marty Chapters 17 and 18, Hankins Chapter 4, Lambert Chapter 5
April 18	The Rise of the Religious Right Gut Marty Chapters 18-20, Hankins Chapter 6, Lambert Chapter 7 <b>Due:</b> Final Projects
April 25	Religion in America in the Twenty-first Century Gut Moore, Lambert Chapter 8
May 2	Student Presentations
May 9	<b>Final Exam (7:45 p.m.—note the change in time)</b>

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