

## ABSTRACT

### Patriotic Piety: The Ideals and Experiences of Conservative Protestant Women on the American Home Front During World War II

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Rosie the Riveter remains the most iconic image of the United States home front during World War II. However, not every American woman subscribed to the ideals set forth by the mainstream media, patriotic femininity. Instead, conservative Protestant women embraced the ideal of "patriotic piety." This paper argues that patriotic piety was different from patriotic femininity as it sought to combine conservative morality and spirituality with democratic values. Conservative Protestant women embodied the ideal of patriotic piety as they entered the public sphere (including the work force and the military). Still, in the midst of all of these changes, patriotic piety maintained its emphasis on domesticity and the home despite the larger cultural shift represented by Rosie the Riveter.

Patriotic Piety: The Ideals and Experiences of Conservative Protestant Women  
on the American Home Front During World War II

by

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A Thesis

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This thesis is dedicated to my Mom and my brother Taylor. Although you will never read this, I know you would be so proud. You are missed every day. I love you.

DEDICATION

To Mom and Tay

*Even the darkest night will end, and the sun will rise.*

—Victor Hugo

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The iconic images of the American home front in World War II are permanently etched on the nation's collective memory. Rosie the Riveter, Red Cross nurses, victory gardens, and gold stars hanging in the window all harken back to a day when women were united in their shared pain and work ethic on behalf of the war effort. But in the twenty years before the war, division among Americans seemed to be far more common than unity. Denominations were splitting along "fundamentalist" and "modernist" lines. The Scopes Trial captured news headlines across the nation. Suffrage, prohibition, and even the New Deal were hotly debated political issues. Many of these issues would again come to the forefront during the culture wars of the 1970s and 1980s, but World War II seemed to initiate a period of relative calm among white American Protestants.

How did this occur? Did the differences between modernists and fundamentalists simply dissolve because of the war effort? Did conservative Protestants soften their rhetoric of Biblical fundamentalism? Were conservative Protestant women accepted into the sisterhood of Rosie the Riveter, or did the strong domestic ideology of the 1950s simply mask differences in gender role convictions during the war years? By seeking to understand the ideals of conservative Protestant women during World War II, we will begin to answer these questions. The ideals of conservative Protestant women did differ from those of mainline women and the secular press, but in contrast to the years before the war, commonalities were emphasized rather than the differences. This allowed



conservatives to resume a hesitant dialogue with the larger culture that would eventually become the full-blown neo-evangelical movement.

*A Brief History of American Conservative Protestants, World War I and II*

The close of World War I left American churches reeling. According to Gerald Sittser, they had turned the war into a “holy crusade.”<sup>1</sup> As war’s true atrocities became known, members of the media began to criticize Christian leaders who had so unblinkingly offered their support. Duly chastised, Christian writers and Protestant clergy expressed remorse for their hasty words and actions. The start of World War II then, left Christians in a tough position. How would they approach another war without sacrificing their patriotism or their spiritual convictions?

In the interwar period churches in the United States experienced radical theological and denominational divisions. These divisions, rising from conflicts between conservatives and liberals, or fundamentalists and modernists, had pushed conservative Protestants out of the mainstream of American theology. As the Second World War began there were two major coalitions within American Protestantism. In his book, *A Cautious Patriotism*, Sittser argues that both groups of Protestants were determined not to repeat the mistakes of World War I. As a result, they chose a path of “cautious patriotism,” a sober and matter-of fact stance that acknowledged the war but did not prioritize it over spiritual concerns.

This common stance did not mean that Christians were united in response to the war effort, however. Conservatives, who had the most to gain and lose due to their

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Lawson Sittser, *A Cautious Patriotism : the American Churches & the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 17.

outsider status, tried to peg modernists as “anti-Bible pacifist” agitators.<sup>2</sup> But conservatives themselves did not profess unbridled patriotism. Instead, as an editorial in the *Baptist Standard* articulated, they embraced a role that was both “prophetic” and “patriotic.”<sup>3</sup> This gave conservative Protestants the ability to unite with their fellow Americans under the auspices of “patriotism” while maintaining their separate identities as “prophetic” truth-tellers. The national propaganda of a “Christian America” fighting fascism provided a public platform for conservatives who already embraced the idea of America as a chosen nation, and reaffirmed their commitment to the Christian home, a home maintained primarily by women.<sup>4</sup>

### *A Survey of Related Historiography*

#### *American Women and World War II*

The historiography of American women during World War II is varied topically and vast in its breadth. In some cases, women are studied as simply one facet of a larger survey of the U.S. Home front such as in Allan M. Winkler’s *Home Front U.S.A.: America during World War II*. Winkler’s observations are astute, but he does not focus on women exclusively.<sup>5</sup> In a similar manner, Robert Westbrook’s *Why We Fought: Forging American Obligations in World War II* evaluates women only as one aspect of

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<sup>2</sup> Dan Gilbert, *What Really Happened at Pearl Harbor?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1943), 43.

<sup>3</sup> L.L. Carpenter, “The Baptist Paper in a World at War,” *Baptist Standard*, March 18, 1943, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Gerald Lawson Sittser, *A Cautious Patriotism: the American Churches & the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Allan M Winkler, *Home Front U.S.A.: America during World War II* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: H. Davidson, 1986).

its larger argument. Unlike Winkler, however, Westbrook spends an extensive amount of time discussing the roles of women. He argues that soldiers were primarily motivated to fight for their families, wives, and girlfriends. Thus Westbrook investigates what it meant to be a “woman worth fighting for.”<sup>6</sup>

There are also several works that specifically study women and World War II. Some works focus more explicitly on women in the private sphere. Karen Anderson’s, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II*, evaluates both the private and public experiences of women in that era.<sup>7</sup> D’Ann Campbell goes a step further in *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era*. She studies wartime housewives who did not work, although the cultural pressure to do so was great. She argues that these women experienced many difficulties maintaining the home, and may have experienced “status anxiety” as a result. In the war years, women who did not step out of their traditional roles were faced with condescension by the press and by war workers, Campbell asserts.<sup>8</sup>

Many Historians have studied the propaganda used to encourage women to enter the public sphere, which brought about social, economic, and gender role changes. One of the earliest to do so was Leila J. Rupp, whose *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* argues that the two countries addressed women in fundamentally different ways. While Germany valued its women for their ability to bear

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<sup>6</sup> Robert B Westbrook, *Why We Fought : Forging American Obligations in World War II* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women : Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981).

<sup>8</sup> D’Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America : Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984).

Arian children, the United States saw women as valuable for what they could do for the war effort.<sup>9</sup> Maureen Honey's *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class Gender and Propaganda during World War II* also evaluates such propaganda, but focuses on American media. She asserts, "The role allocated to women in wartime propaganda, then, was a complicated mixture of strength and dependence, competence and vulnerability, egalitarianism and conservatism."<sup>10</sup> John Bush Jones also studied propaganda, focusing on magazine advertising in his *All-Out for Victory!: Magazine Advertising and the World War II Home Front*.<sup>11</sup> Finally, Nancy Walker's, *Women's Magazines, 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, contains an excellent collection of primary sources, but it also provides insightful analysis of the context of those articles.<sup>12</sup>

While some study propaganda, other Historians place the experience of women during World War II within the broader scope of the twentieth century. Susan M. Hartmann's *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* argues that the war years contained developments which "sharply set off that decade from the preceding one and which established patterns that would shape women's lives for some years to

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<sup>9</sup> Leila J Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War : German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

<sup>10</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter : Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 7.

<sup>11</sup> John Bush Jones, *All-Out for Victory! : Magazine Advertising and the World War II Home Front* (Waltham, Mass.; Hanover [N.H.]: Brandeis University Press ; Published by University Press of New England, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Nancy A Walker, *Women's Magazines, 1940-1960 : Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998).

come.”<sup>13</sup> In particular she argues that World War II changed the economy, gender roles, and social arrangements on a broad scale. *Homeward Bound* by Elaine Tyler May explores the intersection of politics, national security concerns, and economic factors that led to the domestic ideals of the 1950s. May argues that domestic ideals often followed the policy of “containment,” a policy intended for foreign relations but adopted by American citizens as well. In order to combat the fear and uncertainty caused by the triple-threat of The Depression, World War II, and then the Cold War, people sought security within home and marriage. Although May does not focus particularly on World War II, her study sheds light on how gender roles in World War II led to the gender roles of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>14</sup>

Lastly, many Historians have studied women and sexuality in World War II. One of the earliest to do so was John Costello, who wrote *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* in 1985. His “sexual” history of Britain and the United States does not attempt to answer questions of causation or motivation, however, making his study valuable when asking “what?” but not “why?”<sup>15</sup> A pair of books published in the last twenty years has added a great deal more depth to the historiography of World War II sexuality. Leisa Meyer’s *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women’s Army Corps during World War II* uses the WAC as a means of evaluating “the discussions and debates over men’s and women’s ‘proper’ roles during

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<sup>13</sup> Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s*, American Women in the Twentieth Century (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), ix.

<sup>14</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound : American families in the Cold War era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> John Costello, *Virtue under fire : how World War II changed our social and sexual attitudes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985).

wartime.”<sup>16</sup> Marilyn Hegarty’s *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* investigates sexuality for women on the home front rather than those in the military.<sup>17</sup>

Although the historiography of American women during World War II is extensive, it is not without its holes. The study of home life is thin, with most historians focusing on women who entered the public sphere rather than housewives. Also, very few studies of religion and World War II have been done, not to mention studies focused on women and religion. In fact, this is an issue for all of women’s history, not just the scholarship focused on World War II. The December 2012 edition of the *Journal of American History* featured a “state-of-the-field” essay on US Women’s and Gender History. The essay and the five responses included no mention of religion, showing the lack of concern among women’s historians for issues of faith. Therefore, in order to understand the importance of this thesis and the arguments surrounding religious history, the historiography of conservative Protestants must also be evaluated.

### *Conservative Protestants, Fundamentalists, and Evangelicals*

In 1980, George Marsden inspired a new generation of historians with his classic work *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. It was one of the first times fundamentalists were studied in their own right. Instead of assuming *Inherit the Wind*’s picture of fundamentalists as backwards, rural and anti-intellectual, Marsden argued that they were and are a legitimate cultural and religious group with historical significance.

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<sup>16</sup> Leisa D Meyer, *Creating GI Jane: sexuality and power in the Women’s Army Corps during World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>17</sup> Marilyn E Hegarty, *Victory girls, khaki-wackies, and patriotutes : the regulation of female sexuality during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

Unfortunately, the scope of Marsden's work prevented him from delving deeply into all of the cultural issues at stake during the rise of the fundamentalists. One of the major topics left virtually untouched was the role of women in fundamentalism. In the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition of the book, Marsden acknowledges,

The book would have been better balanced if it included accounts of fundamentalist distress over changing sexual standards, the new woman, women's suffrage, women's ordination, flappers, birth control, divorce rates, and the decline in family authority. It should also have included much more on fundamentalist views concerning women and the roles of women who were fundamentalists.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, many other studies of fundamentalism overlook women in similar ways. Joel Carpenter's works on fundamentalism, including *Fighting Fundamentalism*, contain almost no mention of women.<sup>19</sup> Jean Miller Schmidt does not include much analysis of women in his basic exploration of the differences between fundamentalism and modernism, *Souls or the Social Order: The Two-Party System in American Protestantism*.<sup>20</sup> Fortunately, these omissions set the stage for extensive further research on conservative Protestant women, some of which will be evaluated later in this section. In 1987 Marsden published another groundbreaking book about American conservative Protestants. *Reforming Fundamentalism* traces the transition from fundamentalism to neo-evangelicalism through the lens of the development of Fuller Seminary in

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<sup>18</sup> George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 241.

<sup>19</sup> Joel A. Carpenter, *Fighting Fundamentalism : Polemical Thrusts of the 1930s and 1940s*, *Fundamentalism in American Religion, 1880-1950* ; 32. (New York: Garland Pub., 1988).

<sup>20</sup> Jean Miller Schmidt, *Souls or the Social Order : the Two-party System in American Protestantism*, *Chicago Studies in the History of American Religion* ; V. 18. (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson, 1991).

California.<sup>21</sup> *Reforming Fundamentalism* introduced this topic to the study of conservative Protestants, but Darren Dochuk's recent book fleshes out Marsden's thesis more thoroughly.

Darren Dochuk's *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt* traces two important historical movements among American conservative Protestants. First, he documents the move of many conservatives from the South to Southern California between 1930 and 1950, where they "forged a vigorous cultural force, one that melded traditionalism into an uncentered, unbounded religious culture of entrepreneurialism, experimentation, and engagement."<sup>22</sup> Second, he argues that southern evangelicalism's rise in California coincided with a political conservatism that coalesced during the Cold War and rose to prominence in the 1970s. Dochuk's work is painstakingly researched and brilliantly argued, but except for an acknowledgement that wartime jobs drew people to the West, does not take into account the impact of World War II on the transition from fundamentalism to evangelicalism. In addition, Dochuk understandably does not focus on the experiences of women who were not political or religious leaders. Although *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt* is a masterpiece, there is more to the story.

One of the first important works regarding fundamentalism and women was Betty A. DeBerg's *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of Fundamentalism*, published in 1990. Studying primary prescriptive literature, DeBerg grapples with the gender theory inherent in fundamentalism. She argues that fundamentalists did not develop their ideas of submission and headship from doctrine but by fortifying Victorian norms they

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<sup>21</sup> George M Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism : Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: plain-folk religion, grassroots politics, and the rise of evangelical conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), xviii.



saw to be under siege by the turn of the century and then carrying those values into the early twentieth century and beyond.<sup>23</sup>

R. Marie Griffith's major contribution to the study of gender theory in the conservative Protestant subculture is the book *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*. This is a study of Women's Aglow Fellowship International, an interdenominational organization with a membership of over 20,000 evangelical women. Griffith calls Aglow a "zesty potpourri of moral austerity, cheerful pragmatism, and apocalyptic urgency."<sup>24</sup> Griffith analyzes the ways women used the doctrine of submission to gain power and influence for themselves. She argues that by seeking biblical ideas of authority, they also sought freedom and self-empowerment. In addition to this empowerment, women found that submitting to their husbands often resulted in a compromise, thus changing the power structure of marriage.

Griffith also helpfully articulates why the study of conservative Protestant women is so needed within the historiography of women's history. She writes,

Historical treatments of women's piety have tended to present a flattened version of modern religious nonfeminists, as if choosing to believe in "absolute" morality, theology, and gender roles in today's world renders them unworthy of the careful analysis ordinarily accorded women from the past who professed similar religious certainty.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, complicating the story of conservative women in the twentieth century is a worthy task.

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<sup>23</sup> Betty DeBerg, *Ungodly Women : Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press,, 1997), 65.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

There is also a sub-group of works focused on the study of the public ministry of evangelical women. The most significant of these is Michael S. Hamilton's article "Women, Public Ministry, and American Fundamentalism, 1920-1950."<sup>26</sup> In this study, Hamilton asks what roles women occupied within fundamentalism. By asking this question, he seeks to establish the place of fundamentalism within broader cultural trends of the inter-war period. His conclusions are surprising. Hamilton argues that fundamentalism was comparatively open to public ministry for women. He claims that historians had missed this fact because they were more focused on the rhetoric of the men than the actions of the women.

This survey of scholarship on conservative Protestants helps to place this thesis in context of the wider field of American religious history. There are some works, however, that address both World War II and conservative Protestants. Unfortunately, there are no scholarly projects studying conservative Protestant women during World War II. Therefore the following works, although more closely related to this topic, provided background historical and theoretical context for this thesis, but its argument is not opposed to or dependent upon any of these works individually.

#### *Conservative Protestantism, World War II, and Women*

Joel Carpenter's *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* explores similar territory to Marsden's *Reforming Fundamentalism* with one major difference; it directly addresses World War II. Women are still not a major topic of discussion, but Carpenter writes of conservative Protestants' ability to build effective organizations and to communicate to a popular audience. Carpenter argues that

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<sup>26</sup> Michael S. Hamilton, "Women, Public Ministry, and American Fundamentalism, 1920-1950," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 3, no. 2 (July 1, 1993): 171-196.

these were results of a “yearning to restore evangelical Christianity’s respectability and cultural influence.”<sup>27</sup> How conservative Protestants acted on those yearnings, and their ability to communicate to a popular audience, are both documented in this thesis.

There is only one serious published historical work focused on conservative Protestants and World War II, *A Cautious Patriotism: The American Churches & the Second World War* by Gerald Lawson Sittser. Sittser acknowledges that historians have largely ignored the topic of American religion and the American home front, and sees his work as “flying a reconnaissance mission over vast stretches of uncharted territory.” Therefore he does not attempt to ask or answer every question but to “read the terrain in only one way and sketch only one kind of map.” The question Sittser asks is “What was the nature of the church’s patriotism during the war?”<sup>28</sup>

He argues that the churches during the war were “cautiously patriotic.” Instead of the fanatic patriotism of World War I, churches during the Second Great War were loyal to the war effort but moderate in their involvement.<sup>29</sup> Sittser’s thesis provides a backdrop for the argument of this paper. The response of conservative Protestants to the war was moderate even as they debated the changes in gender roles that were a result of the war effort. This moderation allowed conservative Protestants to reengage with the larger American culture, beginning to fulfill the goals Joel Carpenter elucidated in *Revive Us Again*.

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<sup>27</sup> Joel A Carpenter, *Revive Us Again : The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 12.

<sup>28</sup> Sittser, *A cautious patriotism*, 8.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

Margaret Bendroth's study of women and religion also informs much of the theory behind this thesis. In her work *Fundamentalism & Gender: 1875 to the Present*, Bendroth arrives at a different conclusion than that of Betty DeBerg in *Ungodly Women*.<sup>30</sup> Instead of seeking to fortify Victorian gender norms, Bendroth sees fundamentalists reacting against them. She argues that in an effort to counter the feminization of Christianity inherent in Victorian culture, fundamentalists asserted a militantly masculine brand of Protestantism. Coupled with this masculinity was a push for orthodoxy and order. In the process of doing so, fundamentalism became pro-masculine and defensively antifeminist.

She argues that after WWII the contradiction between theology and practice became untenable to fundamentalist male leaders. Threatened by the significant numbers of women working within the church, fundamentalists thus placed a priority on women as homemakers. The 1950s, then, provided a time of continuity between cultural gender ideals and fundamentalist gender roles, but fundamentalists stressed a difference in emphasis. According to Bendroth, "The key difference between a conservative evangelical household and the average American home, [fundamentalist] spokesmen explained, was the presence of an ordered hierarchy."<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, Bendroth focuses on fundamentalism from 1875 to 1925, and merely sketches the period afterwards. In doing so, she does not grapple with any of the changes in practice or ideals for conservative Protestant women that occurred during

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<sup>30</sup> DeBerg, *Ungodly Women*.

<sup>31</sup> Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present*. (New Haven: Yale Univ Press, 1993), 29.

World War II. This paper will not argue with Bendroth's main thesis, but will problematize her narrative by reintroducing the complex war period.

Bendroth's later book, *Growing Up Protestant: Parents, Children, and Mainline Churches*, does address World War II, and argues the war brought a "new sense of moral emergency to Protestant churches with a deepening commitment to American civil religion."<sup>32</sup> Her study differs from this one in several ways, however. She argues that mainline Protestants diligently pursued family issues in the twentieth century, while fundamentalists diverged from a "pro-family" agenda.<sup>33</sup> This thesis will trace the family and home-oriented rhetoric of conservative Protestants during World War II, not necessarily contradicting Bendroth's thesis, but adding nuance to it. Her study focuses much more on mainline Protestants than conservatives, and looks at parenting rather than the experiences of women. This makes *Growing Up Protestant* different in emphasis than this thesis, although its topic is the most similar of all published historical work.

The most recent scholarship on this subject matter is the 2011 dissertation by Danielle DuBois Gottwig, *Before the Culture Wars: Conservative Protestants and the Family: 1920-1980*. In it she argues that contemporary conservative Protestant views of family are a result of a half-century of intentional efforts to adopt the "modern, middle-class view of family." This "reveals the coherence of the religious ideals of salvation and holiness with middle-class American faith in progress and self-improvement."<sup>34</sup> When addressing the war, DuBois Gottwig argues that World War II "exacerbated"

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<sup>32</sup> Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Growing Up Protestant: Parents, Children, and Mainline Churches* (Rutgers University Press, 2002), 81.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Danielle DuBois Gottwig, "Before the Culture Wars: Conservative Protestants and the Family: 1920-1980" (PhD, Notre Dame, 2011), 6-7.

conservative Protestant social concerns while reinforcing their belief in the importance of the Christian family. The evidence presented in this thesis reinforces DuBois Gottwig's argument, but it also complicates it by studying women individually instead of families as a unit.

It should be evident that none of these works directly address the questions asked in this thesis. No one has sought to understand the experiences of conservative Protestant women during the war years, nor has any scholar sought to understand the role women played in the larger transition from fundamentalism to neo-evangelicalism. Therefore, this work is breaking new ground in two fields, the field of women's history, and the field of religious history. Like Carpenter's *Revive Us Again* and Sittser's *A Cautious Patriotism*, there is no way this short thesis could answer or even ask every question. Therefore, this project should be seen as a preliminary investigation of the evidence and historical questions relating to conservative Protestant women during World War II. It will build on previous scholarship, but its ultimate goal is to inspire much more.

### *Defining Terms*

The World War II-era Christians studied in this paper are labeled "conservative Protestants" rather than "fundamentalists" or "evangelicals" for several reasons. George Marsden defines fundamentalism as "militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism." Indeed, during the 1920s and 1930s, fundamentalist identity primarily formed in conflict with and in reference to "modernist" theologians and thinkers.<sup>35</sup> In 1941 the explicitly fundamentalist American Council of Christian Churches formed, and

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<sup>35</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 4. Modernism can be defined adjusting Protestant theology to modern thought, especially evolution and textual criticism. William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1992), 2.

the more socially moderate National Association of Evangelicals followed in 1942. The NAE included a wide variety of denominations including Baptist, Presbyterian, independent fundamentalists, Evangelical Free, Free Methodists, and Southern Baptists.<sup>36</sup> During World War II, the two parties began to split, but the division did not crystallize until 1950 when Bob Jones, a leader within the traditional, separatist, fundamentalist movement officially repudiated all involvement in the NAE.<sup>37</sup> Because of this separation, which eventually created clear distinctions between the parties, the terms “evangelical” and “fundamentalist” cannot necessarily be used to describe all conservative Protestants during this period. Therefore, it is more accurate and inclusive to use the term “conservative Protestants” to encompass both groups during World War II. Conservative Protestants during this period had in common David Bebbington's quadrilateral of conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism, regardless of any growing internal divisions.<sup>38</sup> Although “conservative Protestant” will be the official term used in this paper, “fundamentalist” or “evangelical” will sometimes be used when emphasizing traits associated with one term or the other. It should be noted that these Protestants were conservative theologically, not necessarily politically.

In addition, the reader should note that the use of the term “Christian” does not imply that conservative Protestants can lay claim to the term, or that other groups such as Catholics or liberal Protestants are not Christians. Conservative Protestants had and still

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<sup>36</sup> Joel A Carpenter, “The renewal of American fundamentalism, 1930-1945,” 1984, 184–185.

<sup>37</sup> William R Glass, *Strangers in Zion : Fundamentalists in the South, 1900-1950* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2001), 27.

<sup>38</sup> David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain : a History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 3. “Crucicentrism” is a focus on the cross and the atonement of Jesus Christ.

have a tendency to call their own beliefs or practices “Christian,” even when other Christian groups would disagree strongly with their position. For example, in the book published by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1943, *Alcohol the Destroyer*, author Aubrey Hearn argues for total abstinence as the Biblical definition of temperance. Although many Christians would disagree with this statement, Hearn calls it “the Christian viewpoint.”<sup>39</sup> Examples such as this could be multiplied endlessly. Thus the use of the term “Christian” when referencing conservative Protestants simply underscores their self-identification as the bearers of Biblical truth.

#### *A Note on Sources and Methodology*

A note on sources: very few conservative Protestant women’s periodicals existed during the war period. Those few titles directed at women focused on missions and Sunday school teachers, and even then men were often the authors and subjects of the articles.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps it is for this reason that conservative Protestant women during this period have received so little scholarly attention. For my study, I chose fourteen conservative Protestant periodicals to survey for articles written by or for women. Surprisingly, there are very few articles aimed directly at the female readership. One is left to wonder what, if any, periodicals conservative women were in fact reading. The large circulation of secular women’s magazines, and the lack of any conservative Protestant admonitions against reading them, implies that conservative Protestant women

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<sup>39</sup> C. Aubrey Hearn, *Alcohol the Destroyer* (Nashville, Tenn.: The Sunday school board of the Southern Baptist convention, 1943), 40.

<sup>40</sup> Examples of these include *The Women’s Press*, which is entirely devoted to international missions and *The Sunday School Times*. One Baptist periodical, *The Better Home*, may be more explicitly directed at women, but it was not accessible for this study.



turned to secular periodicals for practical advice.<sup>41</sup> Since there were no conservative alternative sources for practical advice, what secular periodicals said is especially significant. Another possible explanation for the dearth of articles about women is the conservative Protestant editors' assumption that women read the Christian periodicals whether or not they explicitly targeted women. Many of the advertisements in the various Christian newspapers and magazines directed at women provide evidence they did indeed read the conservative periodicals, or at least that advertisers believed women did. Nevertheless, the articles written by or to women in the Christian press provide sufficient evidence to begin framing the media's ideals for conservative Protestant Women during WWII.<sup>42</sup>

The conservative Protestant periodicals used in this study were chosen with several factors in mind. First, they had to represent a denomination or organization known to be conservative Protestant in nature. Second, I selected periodicals with geographic variety in mind. Third, they were chosen based on the availability of sources in the time allotted. With each periodical I surveyed the months of January, February, March, May, June, July, August, November and December, if available, in the years

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<sup>41</sup> In addition to high circulation numbers, women's magazines also had a broad geographical reach. Edward Bok, "The Magazine With a Million," *The Ladies' Home Journal* (1889-1907), February 1903; This question is addressed in the article "Must We Reject Magazines as Well as 'Movies?'," *The Sunday School Times* (Philadelphia, PA, February 5, 1944), 86. The answer? The Christian must practice discernment when choosing what magazines to read.

<sup>42</sup> Both conservative Protestant periodicals and secular women's magazines had high readerships. The major secular women's magazines could boast of subscriber bases of two to eight million. (Walker) The subscription numbers for conservative Protestant magazines are more difficult to find, but Joel Carpenter notes the influence of the *Sunday School Times* in *Modernism and Foreign Missions*, while the Calvary Baptist Church Centennial history noted that during the war years, 600 of its 2,076 members received the *Baptist Standard*. Ellison, Ronald C. *Calvary Baptist Church, Beaumont, Texas: a Centennial History, 1904-2004*. 1st ed. Austin, Tex: Nortex Press, 2004, 127-128.

1941-1946.<sup>43</sup> I chose these months in order to get a broad sampling of each year. For the few periodicals that had indexes, I surveyed every issue during this time.

In addition to these periodicals, interviews with women who lived during the war era served as a major source for this paper. These women identified themselves as conservative Christians during the war, and were active in their local churches. I also considered geography when choosing interviewees; I interviewed women who lived in both rural and urban areas. Because of practical constraints, however, many grew up in Minnesota and Texas.<sup>44</sup> These interviews were used to flesh out the realities of life that cannot be accessed through the lens of prescriptive literature.

### *The Thesis*

This thesis will seek to answer three primary questions. First, what, if any, were the differences between the ideals communicated to conservative Protestant women and the ideals presented in mainstream culture and the media? Second, how did the ideals for conservative Protestant women change or remain stable amidst the larger changes in gender roles in World War II? Finally, how did these ideals affect the way conservative Protestants interacted with mainstream Americans and mainstream culture?

The first body chapter will wrestle with the first question. It will do so by examining the ideals of the secular media (which I call “Patriotic Femininity”) and the ideals of conservative Protestant women (which I call “Patriotic Piety”). Secular

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<sup>43</sup> I realize it may seem strange that I only skipped April and September. Originally I planned on studying only six months out of the year, January, March, June, August, October, and December. However, it soon occurred to me that November was Thanksgiving and periodicals would be publishing special features on families. Then, I realized that February was Valentine’s Day, and May was Mother’s Day. I still wanted to include a survey of months without holidays, and thus wound up with only April and September skipped.

<sup>44</sup> I have lived in both Minnesota and Texas, and thus had connections to meet these interview subjects.

women's magazines were unabashedly patriotic during World War II. "Rosie the Riveter" was ubiquitous in secular advertisements and articles. This was partly due to a push by the Office of War Information, through the publication of the *Magazine War Guide*, for stories and fiction that would help satisfy the need for five million new war workers.<sup>45</sup> In addition to addressing this demand the magazines encouraged women to be "A Woman Worth Fighting For." This sometimes meant sending husbands and sweethearts homemade pin-ups, but more often it was an encouragement to maintain the integrity of the home while a husband or son was away.<sup>46</sup> Women in the mainstream of American culture were advised to maintain their femininity while also manning an assembly line. For secular women's magazines, patriotism was as much an ideal as a practical matter of business. Thus patriotic femininity encouraged women to be stalwart supporters of the war and addressed moral issues in a pragmatic way.

Conservative Protestant periodicals, on the other hand, approached the war years in a manner that strove to marry prophetic messages with patriotic ideals. In the minds of Christian leaders, national Christianity and morality began and was maintained within the home, the woman's sphere. The ideal of patriotic piety would combine democratic values with conservative morality and Christian spirituality. Thus, patriotic piety was focused on the influence of women in the home, as spiritual and physical nurturers. Because of the centrality of the home in both ideals, the first chapter will investigate the

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<sup>45</sup> Maureen Honey, "Maternal Welders: Women's Sexuality and Propaganda on the Home Front During World War II," in *The American People at War: Minorities and Women in the Second World War*, ed. Walter L. Hixon, vol. 10, *The American Experience in World War II* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 37.

<sup>46</sup> Westbrook, *Why we fought*, 85.

differences between patriotic femininity and patriotic piety in regards to the private sphere of home, family, and marriage.

Despite this emphasis on the home, conservative Christian women and the conservative media adapted patriotic piety to apply to many different situations of wartime life. Thus the second and third body chapters will seek to answer the question: how did the ideals for conservative Protestant women change or remain stable amidst the larger changes in gender roles in World War II? The second chapter will focus on what I have termed the “religious public sphere.” Although religion had traditionally been a part of the private sphere, men were its primary public face, especially among fundamentalists. During the war years, conservative Protestant women were particularly active within the churches, in roles that were both public and supportive. The wartime ideal of patriotic piety articulated the need for women to enter the religious public sphere for democratic and spiritual purposes. The third chapter investigates the language of patriotic piety and the experiences of conservative Protestant women who entered the traditionally male-dominated public spheres of school, the military, and the workforce. These women held a more precarious position within the ideal of patriotic piety. Their roles were still described using the language of domesticity and spirituality, but the press often felt the need to reassure readers that they had not abandoned her spiritual duties as a Christian mother. The ideal of patriotic piety proved flexible enough to accommodate conservative Protestant women who went into the public sphere during the war years, but it was not definitive in its acceptance of that movement out of the home.

Finally, the question, “how did these ideals affect the way conservative Protestants interacted with mainstream women and secular culture?” will be addressed

throughout the paper, although it will be discussed primarily in the second and third chapters. As previously explored, the war provided conservative Protestants with the opportunity to work towards a common cause with mainstream Americans. In the minds of conservatives, the importance of Christian women, and their influence in the home, were finally being recognized by the larger American culture. Because of this, the political language of patriotism and democracy was often used to describe conservative Protestant women's spiritual roles and duties such as missions work. At the same time, such an emphasis on patriotism led conservative Protestants to support women who were entering the public sphere for the sake of the war effort, using them as evidence of conservatives' patriotism as a whole.

In his work *Fighting Fundamentalists*, Joel Carpenter argues, "Fundamentalists' cultural alienation and separatism in the 1930s masked deeply conservative social and political values and an entrenched belief that America was an elect nation. Both of these items held potential action." He then points to the rise of the New Religious Right in the late 1970s as the "release of the movement's latent political energy."<sup>47</sup> What Carpenter and even Dochuk miss is that these traits were also the means conservative Protestants used to communicate with mainstream Americans during World War II. Since women were positioned perfectly at the intersection of patriotism and spirituality, patriotic piety became a means for fundamentalists to emerge from the separatism of the 1930s and 1940s, eventually igniting the neo-evangelical movement.

This thesis argues that patriotic piety was different from patriotic femininity as it sought to combine conservative morality and spirituality with democratic values.

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<sup>47</sup> Carpenter, *Fighting Fundamentalism*, np.

Patriotic piety was in fact a new form of rhetoric for conservative Protestants. Through their adoption of the ideals of patriotic piety, conservative Protestants were suddenly advocating for the public good (articulated as patriotism). This rhetoric diverged strongly from the single-minded focus on doctrine and evangelism that had defined conservative Protestants during the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. Still, in the midst of all of these changes, patriotic piety maintained its emphasis on domesticity and the home despite the larger cultural shift represented by Rosie the Riveter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Patriotic Piety: A Domestic Ideal?

#### *Introduction*

In the midst of World War II, the *Seattle Times* expressed the distinctiveness and value of a woman's contribution to the war effort: "Men fight the war with bayonets, long hours at defense jobs, 'leisure' hours at air-raid drills. Women fight the war with stewpans, knitting needles, alarm clocks that go off at 4 o'clock in the morning, rudely awakened babies, unelastic budgets, fast-rising prices."<sup>1</sup> The advertisement suggested a man might receive more glory for his efforts, but "women's work" was just as important to America's effort to win the war. For the *Times*, a woman's service in the private sphere was as essential, and as patriotic, as a man's sacrifice in the public sphere.

On the United States' home front, every aspect of private life was connected to the war effort. Since the rise of the "cult of domesticity" in the nineteenth century, cultural ideals stressed the influence of women within the private sphere, the sphere of the home.<sup>2</sup> Although the cultural and economic changes that occurred during the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression challenged many of those ideals, World War II witnessed a return to, or revival of, domestic culture for many women according to some

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<sup>1</sup> As cited in Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 87.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 152. She defined the Cult of Domesticity as, "The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues-piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity."

Historians.<sup>3</sup> In her book *Women at War with America*, D'Ann Campbell argues motherhood became a stronger ideal and reality for American women during the war. Between 1943 and 1948, the ideal family size rose dramatically, especially among college-educated women.<sup>4</sup> War propagandists and advertisers appealed to these domestic desires when targeting women. A Swift's Premium Beef advertisement in *Better Homes and Gardens* presented seven different jobs an American woman could perform to help the war effort. They were "wife, mother, purchasing agent, cook, salvage expert, war worker and war bond buyer."<sup>5</sup> Of these seven jobs, five existed exclusively within the private sphere. Wartime media repeatedly reminded women to live out their private lives just as patriotically as the public life of a soldier or wartime factory worker.

As the media proclaimed the values of domesticity, public voices also emphasized the importance of Christianity as an American strength when fighting the forces of fascism. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt drove home this point when he said,

There comes a time in the affairs of men when they must prepare to defend not their churches alone but the tenets of faith and humanity on which their Churches, their government, and their very civilization are founded. The defense of religion, of democracy, and of good faith among the nations is all the same fight.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For diverging arguments relating to the ideals of women during the 1920s and 1930s, see Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward bound : American families in the Cold War era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988); Leila J Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War : German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America : Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 94.

<sup>5</sup> As cited in Nancy A Walker, *Women's Magazines, 1940-1960 : Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 80.

<sup>6</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress," *The American Presidency Project*, January 4, 1939, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=15684>.



As secular leaders linked the success of democracy with the values of Christianity, Christian periodicals emphasized this connection more forcefully. *The Womans Press* called for a mobilization of spiritual forces. The editors argued, “Military victory is imperative, but it is only one element.... The answer of our Christian faith to nationalistic fears is that God is the God of all nations and all men.”<sup>7</sup> According to the voices of the media, domestic roles of women and Christianity were both essential elements to the mobilization of the United States’ home front.

Historian Margaret Bendroth argues the war brought “new sense of moral emergency to Protestant churches and a deepening commitment to American civil religion.”<sup>8</sup> However, for conservative Protestants, civil religion was not the answer but traditional, fundamentalist Christianity. Thus, women who identified themselves as conservative Christians experienced wartime propaganda on two levels. The media highlighted both domesticity and Christianity as essential to the war effort. Christian periodicals reflected this dual importance by spiritualizing domestic duties and emphasizing the patriotism of spiritual duties. *Moody Monthly* framed domestic duties as “Living creatively for Christ in the home.” This was “the acid test for any Christian woman.... Your grocer, your mail carrier, your milk man, your newsboy, and all others who serve your home, will know that you are a devout Christian woman.”<sup>9</sup> However, the moral influence of Christian women was more essential than their domestic duties. As

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<sup>7</sup> Kathleen W. MacArthur, “Winning the War on the Spiritual Front,” *The Womans Press* (New York, October 1943).

<sup>8</sup> Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Growing Up Protestant: Parents, Children, and Mainline Churches* (Rutgers University Press, 2002), 81.

<sup>9</sup> Susam M. Ostrom, “Christian Women: Stewardship in the Home,” *Moody Monthly* (Chicago, IL, April 1944).

the center of the Christian family, women were responsible for planting deep roots of morality that would sustain the nation. *Banner* magazine touted “family life steeped in the fear of the Lord” as the “foundation of both church and nation.”<sup>10</sup> Thus the media spiritualized and politicized the roles of Christian women, encouraging their patriotism, but also urged them to maintain and foster a culture of Christian morality. Christian periodicals called for a line of moral defense to begin in the home. The roles of sweetheart, wife, and especially mother, became critical in order to preserve not only democracy, but also American Christianity itself. Christian women were to embody a sense of patriotic piety that would combine Democratic values with conservative morality and Christian spirituality. These women would also take this sense of patriotic piety into the public sphere, but their primary focus and place of impact was the home.

### *The Secular Ideal of “Patriotic Femininity”*

The secular press emphasized an ideal of “patriotic femininity” largely based on a woman’s actions. The authors of these articles considered American women valuable because of what they could do, say, or produce (within the realm of accepted femininity). This can be contrasted sharply with the German ideal of a perfect housewife, put forth by Nazi Propaganda, in which a woman was valuable solely because of her ability to bear Aryan children.<sup>11</sup> Instead of simply bearing children, the ideal of American patriotic femininity encouraged women to juggle the roles of mother, wife, and sweetheart stoically, patiently, and selflessly.

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<sup>10</sup> J.J. Steigenga, *Banner* (Grand Rapids, MI, May 15, 1942).

<sup>11</sup> Jill Stephenson, “Propaganda, Autarky and the German Housewife,” in *Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations*, ed. David Welch (Beckenham, UK: Croom Helm, 1983), 117–43.

The roles of “mother” and “wife” brought with them many burdens made heavier by the reality of war. Housing was a major issue for camp-followers or women who worked at factories in newly developed areas. Women with children often encountered sharp discrimination when looking for housing. One woman, who placed an ad requesting housing in a local newspaper, resorted to sarcasm to show her frustration. Her ad read,

WANTED BY A NAVAL OFFICER'S WIFE-whose husband is serving overseas-and THREE MONSTERS in the form of my little children-TO RENT-a 2-or-3 bedroom house, apartment, barn or cage or whatever is supposed to serve as shelter when such terrible creatures as children have to be considered...<sup>12</sup>

Even women able to find a place to live often encountered double work shifts, discontented children, and exhausted or distant husbands, in addition to standard rationing and other war inconveniences. A mother often had to take in her daughter-in-law due to the extreme housing shortages for wives of soldiers. Even upper class magazines such as *House Beautiful* assumed this situation as they featured articles showing young women how to deal with it.<sup>13</sup> These circumstances forced mothers to become a source of strength for their daughter-in-laws while sacrificing their own homes in the process. When an unmarried soldier came home wounded or disabled for life, it was usually up to his mother to care for him.<sup>14</sup> Despite these hardships, the secular press hardly sympathized.

Members of the press argued for almost purely sacrificial and selfless role in motherhood and marriage during the war. The image of a wartime mother promoted in

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<sup>12</sup> Leder, Jane Mersky. *Thanks for the Memories: Love, Sex, and World War II*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006. page 68

<sup>13</sup> Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 277.

<sup>14</sup> Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 301.

the press was usually polished, organized, and selfless.<sup>15</sup> Motion pictures promoted these ideals in films such as “First Comes Courage” and “Tender Comrade” starring Ginger Rogers.<sup>16</sup> Negative examples were made of women who did not measure up, including baby abusers, those with the “mom” syndrome, and the mothers of the far right.<sup>17</sup>

It was also a woman’s job to provide a backbone of strength for her exhausted husband, never mind the pain she may have been enduring herself. Women’s magazines focused on motivating women to hold down the fort at home, not providing solace to women who may have been hurting as well. Ethel Gorham, in her famous pamphlet titled “So Your Husband’s Gone To War,” gave women advice about how to write a proper letter to their husbands. She advises,

One of the best rules to remember, if you want to spare yourself the unhappiness of wishing you hadn't sent yesterday's letter, is to leave out all personal upheavals. Did you run into a bit of in-law trouble? You have before, you know, and will again. Why mention it? Are you feeling lonely and upset and vaguely suicidal? Don't put it into written words unless you're prepared to jump out of the window and this is your last message on it all.<sup>18</sup>

A woman writing into *Redbook* disparaged the magazine for placing such high expectations on women. She wrote,

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<sup>15</sup> For a great example, see Betty Hannah Hoffman, “How America Lives: Meet a Model Mother,” *Ladies Home Journal*, October, 1945, 160.

<sup>16</sup> . Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 100.

<sup>17</sup> Alfred Toombs, “War Babies,” *Woman's Home Companion*, April 1944. In *Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, ed. Nancy A. Walker (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 50-56. Amram Scheinfeld, “Are American Moms a Menace?” *Ladies' Home Journal*, November, 1945. In *Women's Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, ed. Nancy A Walker, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 108-114. Glen Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right: The Mothers' Movement and World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1-9.

<sup>18</sup> Ethel Gorham, “So Your Husband’s Gone to War!,” in *American Women in a World at War: Cotemporary Accounts from World War II*, ed. Judy Barrett Litoff (Willmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997), 149.

Good heavens! Where is a woman supposed to get all the strength and vitality to be a leaning-post for the stronger sex? To whom does she go to boost her morale, to tell her troubles? After eight to fourteen hours of housework and child-care a day, where can she turn for a sympathetic ear? Please won't some kind-hearted man write some articles on how to hold a woman, how to please her and build up her morale? Won't some one inform the men that women are human and that they need a little of the same treatment?<sup>19</sup>

This livid writer understood the ideals of patriotic marriage and motherhood, but she rejected them because they did not line up with the realities of her life. Despite this disconnect, however, periodicals encouraged strength and patience, no matter a woman's circumstances, and most women did not complain. Dolores Leathers's reminiscences of her wartime experiences perfectly embody the reality and ideal of patriotic femininity as it related to marriage and motherhood.

While he was gone I grew up in more ways than one. He had left a 23-year-old girl really and came home to a 25-year-old woman who had to make decisions on her own for the first time in her life, keep things going while he was away and raise five children, take care of an invalid mother and, on the small allotment from the army and my mother's S.S.I. check, feed and clothe seven people and deal with rationing, shortages and the worry of not knowing what was happening to him.<sup>20</sup>

Dolores Leathers and many other women embraced these traits as the ideal of patriotic femininity.

The second mark of patriotic femininity also emphasized the needs of men over the needs of women themselves. This was the call to be alluring sexually and physically, as embodied in the role of sweetheart. Magazines encouraged wives, girlfriends, and even single women to send soldiers pin-up photos of themselves in bathing suits to

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<sup>19</sup> "What's On Your Mind?," *Redbook*, July 1945, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Dolores Leathers to Tom Brokaw, n.d. In *An Album of Memories: Personal Histories from the Greatest Generation*, by Tom Brokaw, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2001), 289-292.

improve “troop morale”.<sup>21</sup> Features in women's magazines such as “Do You Make These Beauty Blunders?” from *Good Housekeeping* and “What Is a 'Well-Dressed' Woman?” also emphasized this aspect of patriotic femininity.<sup>22</sup> Even in letter writing, an activity apparently fraught with societal expectations, women were called to be alluring and charming. Gorham addressed this too in her pamphlet, telling women “It is hard to practice seduction a thousand miles away, but that's what your letters should do. A kind of mental, spiritual, companionable seduction.”<sup>23</sup> A patriotic woman was a woman worth fighting for, and coming home to.

Understandably, these ideals created some moral quandaries when patriotic seduction happened in person rather than on paper. Wartime propaganda proclaimed the dangers of loose women, but secular women's magazines took these moral quandaries in stride.<sup>24</sup> *Better Homes and Gardens* printed a feature article teaching women how to talk to their daughters about sexual boundaries. The article acknowledged the surprise of the mother who was asked these questions, but the author expressed sympathy with the daughter, rather than judgment or fear. She wrote, “But it was easy to understand how upsetting pity, patriotism, and that tragic sense of the shortness of time which besets youth today could be, even to firmly rooted ideals.” The language of the article is

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<sup>21</sup> Robert B Westbrook, *Why We Fought : Forging American Obligations in World War II* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 85.

<sup>22</sup> Sally Berry, “Do You Make These Beauty Blunders?” *Good Housekeeping*, April, 1944, in *Women's Magazines 1940-1960*, Walker, 202-203; Elizabeth Pope, “What Is a 'Well-Dressed' Woman?” *Redbook*, July, 1945, in Walker, 204-205.

<sup>23</sup> Ethel Gorham, “So Your Husband's Gone to War!,” 153.

<sup>24</sup> Marilyn E Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes : the regulation of female sexuality during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

extremely frank, using words such as “petting” and “sexual acts.” Even when summing up the impact of moral changes on the entire generation, the *Better Homes* article gives these young women the benefit of the doubt. It does not assume fundamental immorality or a neglecting of the duties of patriotic femininity. The author concluded, “This I know—the present younger generation is as decent and fine and idealistic as any that ever was. If our sons and daughters get into trouble under the stresses to which we, their elders, have subjected them, it will not be their fault but ours.”<sup>25</sup> The secular press believed moral questions were the result of the confusion of war, not a general decline in the virtues of society. The sexual components of patriotic femininity did not pose a threat to society but simply defined the way in which a woman could use her private sphere for the good of the war effort. There is no indication of any systemic moral failure; only individual mothers failing to attain the ideals of patriotic femininity. Conservative Protestant magazines, on the other hand, understood these questions as a symptom of a greater problem, if not the cause of the war as a whole. Thus the ideal of patriotic piety, which resembled patriotic femininity in some ways, strongly differed on the issue of morality. For conservative Christians, reinforcing and establishing a sense of Christian morality was the core of the definition of a Christian woman.

### *Patriotic Piety*

Christian periodicals expressed concern about the changing morality they saw as endemic within American culture. The editors of the *Watchman-Examiner* expressed dismay with a perceived “exploitation of our American young womanhood on the grounds of patriotism.” They pointed to the sexual ideals of patriotic femininity as well

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<sup>25</sup> Gladys Denny Shultz, “A Mother Answers A Moral S-O-S From Her Daughter,” *Better Homes and Gardens*, March 1944, 103–105.

as the practice in England of removing of women from their “cultural settings” and sending them to work as evidence of this “threat to morals.”<sup>26</sup> Unlike secular magazines, conservative Christian periodicals did not take these changes in stride, or attribute them to patriotism or the confusion of war. Instead, they reminded Christians “the highest privilege of every American girl in this trying hour is to maintain that dignity and modesty which is the foundation of true Christian womanhood.”<sup>27</sup> Concerns about protecting the morality of Christian women appear more often in the pages of conservative Protestant magazines than worries about soldiers on the front lines, reinforcing the idea that feminine virtue was essential to the health of the nation.

For conservatives this true Christian womanhood, and morality in general, was built upon the stability of the Christian family. As an article in *The Watchman-Examiner* stated, “A Christian home is an anteroom to heaven where husband and wife ‘submit themselves one to another in the fear of God,’ where parents rear their children in nurture and admonition, where Children obey their parents, where God's Word has a place....”<sup>28</sup> The family was the ideal foundation and example of Christian morality. Conservative Christians did not simply accuse the secular media or culture for the decline in morality. They saw morality, and likewise the family, as the center of the entire war. Reverend Harold G. Sanders articulated this belief in an article in the *Alabama Baptist*:

God's first institution stands today in peril of its very existence. Along with the home goes family morality and Christianity.... The Communists are saboteurs of both the sacredness of marriage and the efficacy of religion. Hitler and Stalin have pitted themselves against the family circle, seeking to pre-empt the family of

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<sup>26</sup> “Sound a Warning,” *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], December 18, 1941), 1286.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Robert G. Lee, “The Influence of the Christian Home,” *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], June 7, 1945), 554–5.



its inherent loyalties and to incorporate the same into the unitary loyalty of the totalitarian state....<sup>29</sup>

Since Christian women were at the center of the home, they bore the most responsibility for preserving and encouraging Christian morality in their children and husbands.

Women embraced this as a duty to their country and to their God, and patriotic piety became their ideal. The same roles patriotic femininity embraced, those of sweetheart, wife, and most importantly, mother, were for conservative Christians endowed with a deeper spiritual meaning.

Conservative Christian women began to seek the ideal of patriotic piety through maintaining high moral standards in their role as sweethearts. For the most part, these standards did not keep Christian teenagers from having fun, or engaging in culturally normal dating practices. Pat Williams (a conservative Protestant teenager in Texas during the war) recalled how military trucks would come through her very conservative town and the soldiers would throw pieces of paper with their addresses on them for the high school girls. The girls would then write letters to the boy she had never met.<sup>30</sup> The religious members of the community saw these actions as patriotic support, playing the role of sweetheart with a high moral standard.

Being a sweetheart with high standards also did not preclude a Christian girl from dating a number of different boys during the war years. Virginia Woodbury, a 16-year-old Baptist in Minnesota when the war began, dated several different boys before she

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<sup>29</sup> Harold G. Sanders, "The Pastor's Ministry to the Home," *Alabama Baptist* (Birmingham, AL, December 18, 1942), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Pat Williams, "Oral History of Pat Williams" interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 16, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.

eventually “married a Navy boy.”<sup>31</sup> She remembered looking at rings with a boyfriend when she was 18, but feeling too young to get married. High standards did not necessarily mean young Christians rushed into marriage, as Elaine May argues in her analysis of post World War II domestic ideology, *Homeward Bound*.<sup>32</sup> Instead, they dated slowly and intentionally, having fun in the process. A *Womans Press* article affirmed this fact, arguing the war made some women rush to get married, and others move more slowly.<sup>33</sup> Velma Ray Huggins, a college student at the Baptist Baylor University during the war years, recounted that students did not marry while enrolled, and it was not until after the war a married Sunday school class was even needed at her church.<sup>34</sup>

The ideals of patriotic piety affected the process of dating itself. Huggins remembered the social norms that dictated dating during her years at Baylor during the war.<sup>35</sup> She recalled that in order to be considered “on a date” you had to put on silk hose. This simple item of clothing differentiated a date from a study session. Woodbury remembered she was not allowed to attend the movies with her dates “until I was 16

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<sup>31</sup> Virginia Woodbury, “Oral History of Virginia Woodbury” interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 10, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.

<sup>32</sup> May, *Homeward bound*.

<sup>33</sup> Emily Hartshorne Mudd and Charlotte Hume Freeman, “Some Effects of the War on Young Women,” *The Womans Press* (New York, March 1945), 24–7.

<sup>34</sup> Velma Ray Huggins, “Oral History of Velma Ray Huggins” interview by L. Katherine Cook and Katy Jennings Stokes, August 27, 1982, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

because, movies, well movies were giving money to Hollywood and that was just a no-no.”<sup>36</sup> For these women, moral standards defined every aspect of their dating conduct.

However, the high standards were not just an outward act. Many teen girls who lived in conservative Protestant households did not sense any change in morality during the war. Pat Williams, Mary Ellen Nix Bullock, Virginia Woodbury, and Audrey Perkins, all conservative women who dated during the war, remembered no changes in moral codes for themselves or their friends in those years.<sup>37</sup> As Virginia Woodbury said so memorably when asked if she sensed any change, “Oh no kid, we were strict. I was Baptist, you know.”<sup>38</sup> The ideals of patriotic piety first became evident when conservative Protestant girls entered the dating world. Their time as “sweethearts” reinforced the moral expectations placed upon them as conservative women.

Contrary to the experiences of conservative sweethearts, for many conservative Protestant women, the ideal wife did not differ too much from that of a patriotic wife. She was expected to maintain an inviting home while providing stoic, patient support to her husband. The Christian magazine the *Women’s Press* declared the “definite responsibility” of wives to “make those homes literally a refuge to the weary and a warm haven of rest for the men who are bowed down under heart-breaking responsibility today.”<sup>39</sup> In the same vein, conservative women were encouraged to write their husbands

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<sup>36</sup> Virginia Woodbury, “Oral History of Virginia Woodbury.”

<sup>37</sup> Pat Williams, “Oral History of Pat Williams”; Virginia Woodbury, “Oral History of Virginia Woodbury”; Mary Ellen Nix Bullock and Lois E. Myers, “Oral History of Mary Ellen Nix Bullock,” June 27, 1995, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University; Audrey Perkins, “Oral History of Audrey Perkins” interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 10, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.

<sup>38</sup> Virginia Woodbury, “Oral History of Virginia Woodbury.”

<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth Eastman, “Back to the Home!,” *The Womans Press* (New York, June 1942), 288.

and boyfriends letters of support that did not reveal any of their own struggles. Christian advice columns were not as harsh as Gorham's famous pamphlet, however. When urging women to write letters to soldiers, authors of Christian advice columns wrote of the value of the letter rather than the things that should be left out. "Letters from the members of the church are that added something which proves to the man in the service that the church really cares [*sic*]. Your acquaintance may be limited; you need not have known the man to whom you write, that you are interested is introduction enough."<sup>40</sup> Clearly, Christian periodicals saw letters depicting pride and courage in the future, rather than mourning the struggles of the present, as the most patriotic and the most Christian way to support men overseas.<sup>41</sup>

Christians embraced many aspects of patriotic femininity, especially when it came to the ideals of marriage, but their ideals of motherhood varied considerably from the secular women's magazines. Secular magazines framed motherhood as a practical necessity to be endured despite the difficulties of war. Patriotic piety, however, spiritualized the significance of motherhood. Women encouraged each other to "be faithful in presenting [sons] to the heavenly father for salvation and preservation."<sup>42</sup> Advertisements asking women to be "Spiritual Mothers" to troops by sending New Testaments overseas reinforced the centrality of motherhood in the war effort.<sup>43</sup> These

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<sup>40</sup> Wayland Zwyer, "Letters from Home," *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], November 5, 1942), 1090-1.

<sup>41</sup> Sittser, *A cautious patriotism*, 51-57.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Andrews Houghton, "From One Mother to Others," *Moody Monthly* (Chicago, IL, March 1943), 403-404.

<sup>43</sup> "Will You Be a 'Spiritual Mother' to a Soldier Boy?," *Moody Monthly* (Chicago, IL, February 1944), 331.

periodicals frequently cited negative examples of the consequences of families who did not have a Godly mother. A letter from a soldier to a pastor appeared in one issue of the *Alabama Baptist*. A soldier, lamenting the lack of spiritual guidance he received from his mother during a leave from the military, wrote the letter. In it he pleaded with other mothers not to make the same mistake:

The Mother that I thought would pray with me and help me to be saved, never once mentioned religion to me. Tell the Mothers wherever you can, that for God's sake and for the sake of their boys, they should get right with God and quit this foolish sinful way in which they are going, and get down to business in praying for the boys and girls of this nation.<sup>44</sup>

More often, however, Christian periodicals actively supported and promoted spiritual motherhood. This role of a spiritual mother was not dependent on having biological children but could be fulfilled by any woman choosing to care for and nurture others.

Prayer was the primary call of duty for spiritual and biological mothers, and they took it seriously. Even women who did not have a child overseas were known to pray faithfully for soldiers. Conservative Protestant periodicals printed the numerous poems mothers of soldiers wrote, declaring their commitment to prayer during their sons' time overseas.<sup>45</sup> Soldiers, praising their mothers for their piety and faithfulness, wrote poems as well. One chaplain wrote effusively and reverently of his mother. A small section of his poem alludes to Proverbs 31:

You have done me good all the days of your life.  
Your children shall rise up, and call you blessed.

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<sup>44</sup> "How a Soul-Burdened Soldier Was Disappointed," *Alabama Baptist* (Birmingham, AL, December 9, 1943).

<sup>45</sup> Constance Brown, *Baptist Courier* (Greenville, SC, July 8, 1943), 1; Julia G. Olds, *Baptist Record* (Jackson, MS, May 11, 1944), 3.

Many of your children have done virtuously, but thou excellent them all [sic].  
Strength and honor are your uniform; and you shall rejoice in time to come.<sup>46</sup>

Other poems reminded mothers of God's faithfulness and the efficacy of their prayers.

But you know God, and so with steady beat,  
Your murmured prayers will march along beside your soldier's feet.  
Come, dry your tears; you sobbing smother. [sic]  
You know God hears a praying mother.<sup>47</sup>

Poetry provided solidarity for women who otherwise said surprisingly little to each other in these periodicals. Prayer also provided a means for women to care for soldiers in a concrete way. Pat Williams remembered a night when her mother woke up and felt the need to pray for her brother, who was serving in the South Pacific. She prayed for an hour and a half, and then went back to bed. When her uncle returned from the war, Pat remembers a family member asking him when he felt the most danger during the war.

Pat recalled his answer,

And he said, 'you don't feel very comfortable, when you are on a ship. Even though they don't take you up close to the battery, they park you a few miles away from it...it doesn't take the kamikaze pilots very long to know that the ships are out there to give gas. And we were sitting out there several miles off from this battle, between the Japanese Navy and the American Navy' and he said 'these kamikaze pilots started coming,' and he said that day, 'one of them came very close to hitting us, but somehow it missed us.' And mother asked him when it was and it was at the very time that she felt called to pray for him.<sup>48</sup>

Because of her prayers, Pat's mother felt as though she had contributed something to her brother's war effort. Thus Christian periodicals encouraged prayer, as not only a service, but also a wellspring of comfort for mothers themselves. Reminding mothers of the

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<sup>46</sup> Chaplain Jacob S. Mackorell, Jr., "A Soldier's Tribute to Mother," *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], June 21, 1945), 607.

<sup>47</sup> Helen Kuiper Noordewier, *Banner* (Grand Rapids, MI, May 15, 1942).

<sup>48</sup> Pat Williams, "Oral History of Pat Williams."

sovereignty of God, and the importance of prayer, was for Christian periodicals a means of providing hope while reinforcing the ideals of patriotic piety.

*A Contrast of Ideals: Juvenile Delinquency*

Periodicals highlighted the important consequences of neglecting one's duties of spiritual motherhood, and patriotic piety, by focusing on the problem of juvenile delinquency. Both secular women's magazines and conservative Protestant periodicals acknowledged the problem of juvenile delinquency, and both attempted to offer solutions to the problem. In the minds of conservative Protestants, juvenile delinquency was an issue of morality, a failure of patriotic piety. A loss of morality led to alcoholism (a social problem protestant women would directly confront in the public sphere). Women were indicted for their alcoholism, which supposedly led them to leave their children on the streets. Christian periodicals claimed, "The criminal records of the land indicate that too many juvenile delinquents and abandoned children can trace their difficulties to mothers' fondness for 'relaxation' in a gin mill."<sup>49</sup>

Conservatives also blamed the war industries for taking mothers out of homes, resulting in the need for childcare and after school programs.<sup>50</sup> Theologian A.W. Tozer argued in *Moody Monthly*: "[T]he fault lies with Christian parents. The influence of godly parents is one of the most potent forces in the world, and I believe that the failure of that influence is back of most cases of delinquency among young people who come

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<sup>49</sup> "Close the Bars to Women," *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], November 30, 1944), 1060-1.

<sup>50</sup> "For the Sake of the Children," *Baptist Leader* (Philadelphia, PA, March 1943), 6-7.

from religious homes.”<sup>51</sup> Conservative Protestants clearly saw juvenile delinquency as the culmination of everything they feared.

The difference between the conservative Protestant periodical’s approach to juvenile delinquency and the secular women’s magazine’s approach is illustrated in two articles written by the same man. This man did not fit into the target demographic of either type of periodical: his name was J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover wrote letters in *The Woman’s Home Companion* and the *Alabama Baptist*. He directed both letters at women, they were written in the same year, and both letters addressed the problem of juvenile delinquency. Hoover was a savvy writer and he knew how to appeal to the audiences of both publications. By comparing these two letters, the differences between secular patriotic femininity and Christian patriotic piety become clearer.

Hoover’s article in *The Woman’s Home Companion* is titled “Mothers Our Only Hope.” In it he appeals to mainstream women to fulfill their roles as mothers without any tone of condemnation. He calls them to obey the rationing laws in order to instill in their children a respect for the law. Ideally, a home should have “a hot meal ready to serve and a mother fully dressed and ready to receive not only her own children but their friends.... The mother who does not provide that decent place is definitely falling down on her war job.” The advice given is practical, even sympathetic, as he acknowledges “They, upon whose shoulders wartime deprivations fall most heavily, must feel a double obligation to bear without resentment the pinch of rationing and the annoyance of

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<sup>51</sup> A.W. Tozer, “What’s Behind Juvenile Delinquency?,” *Moody Monthly* (Chicago, IL, September 1944), 10–11, 21.



temporary interference with private life.” Again, there is no indication of any systemic moral failure, only individual mothers failing to attain the ideal of a patriotic woman.<sup>52</sup>

Even taking into consideration that the *Alabama Baptist* was written to an audience of both men and women, it is clear the entire substance of Hoover’s argument changed when writing to conservative Protestants. First, Hoover appealed to the concerns Christians had about the decline of moral virtue, when describing juvenile delinquency as a systemic problem. The answers to his question “Why do we have this problem?” were broken homes, wartime conditions, and “unlicensed sex.” Divorce was a fundamental problem, according to Hoover, as well as “teen-age girls” who were “literally throwing themselves at service men.” The morality of women came up again when he wrote about the rise of arrests of teenagers. He emphasized that the arrest-rate for girls had risen 47.1 percent compared to 45.6 percent for boys. Hoover presented these facts with a sense of outrage that undoubtedly incited the same emotions in his readers. The solutions Hoover presented in the *Alabama Baptist* differed significantly from those he gave in *The Woman’s Home Journal* in that they are community-oriented rather than individualistic. He called parents to “recognize and shoulder their God-given and patriotic duties to the young ones.” This did not sound too different from his advice to mothers, except for the religious emphasis. The difference came when he explained how they should go about shouldering these duties.

Working with their church, the teachings of God and His works must be religiously made available to their sons and daughters. Institutions engaged in the moral and character development of youth should extend their efforts. Community endeavors engaging the boys and girls in constructive and worth-while projects need the support of the residents. Only through the

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<sup>52</sup> J. Edgar Hoover, “Mothers Our Only Hope,” *Woman’s Home Companion*, January 1944, 20; in Walker, *Women’s magazines, 1940-1960*, 44–47.

combined work of parents, schools, churches, communities and other agencies will this trend of our youth toward crime be met.<sup>53</sup>

Hoover appealed to conservative Protestants' ideals of patriotic piety to encourage Christian mothers to engage with the moral problems of the public sphere, not just the private.

### *Conclusion*

As the following chapters will show, conservative Protestant women did indeed enter the public sphere to extend their moral influence by means of the church and denominational organizations. At the same time, many women left traditional feminine spheres altogether and entered full-time work or the military. All of these women found ways to adapt the ideals of patriotic piety to their needs and situations, and the conservative Protestant press proved itself flexible in its definition of women's work. For Christian women the home remained a priority. The success of the war effort and the endurance of the American church both depended upon them. Maintaining these Christian virtues was not simply a matter of individual morality: it was intrinsically linked to the Christian home and therefore to the roles of conservative Protestant women. An article in the *Alabama Baptist* clearly reinforced this connection: "The nation that we call great will stand as long as the homes are occupied by Christian parents. Otherwise we will drift further and further into sin and finally forget God and his goodness. If we win in this Great War, it will be because we have honored God in our homes, in our lives

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<sup>53</sup> The editor of the *Alabama Baptist* explicitly states that this article was written specifically for this paper and its audience. J. Edgar Hoover, "Our Task at Home," *Alabama Baptist* (Birmingham, AL, January 27, 1944), 1.

and in all things.”<sup>54</sup> Unlike the patriotic femininity propagated by secular women’s magazines, the preservation of the purity of the Christian home depended on patriotic piety. It was therefore imperative that conservative Protestant women devote their time and energy to her family and faith.

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<sup>54</sup> Pastor C.A. Eiland, “The Christian Home,” *Alabama Baptist* (Birmingham, AL, January 22, 1943), 6.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Patriotic Piety in the Religious Public Sphere

#### *Introduction*

Conservative Protestant families remained deeply involved in the local church throughout the Great Depression. Church life of this period was formative for many of the women who continued to identify as Conservative Protestant during the Second World War. They remembered the strict moral teachings that characterized these churches and how these rules shaped their childhoods. Ima Hope Bekkelund, who grew up in a German Baptist church, recalled that when her parents moved the family from a Lutheran Church to a Baptist church they began to believe dancing was a sin.<sup>1</sup> Ophelia Hatton also spoke of learning a strict Biblical morality. She said in an interview, “I was in the third grade, and because I had grown up in a Christian family and in an environment where we only did things if it was permitted by God—(laughs) in other words, if the Bible forbade it, we didn’t do it. Even as a teenager, the things that I was permitted to do were either things that were okay in the Bible or it wasn’t okay.” Morality was a key aspect of conservative Protestant identity. In addition to these moral teachings, women remembered how involvement in church helped to solidify their own beliefs and convictions. Hatton recalled that she realized she “needed to trust Christ for myself” in the third grade, with the support of her Sunday school teacher Mrs. Hamilton.

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<sup>1</sup> Ima Hoppe Bekkelund, “Oral History of Ima Hoppe Bekkelund” interview by Lois E. Myers, February 25, 1997, 24–25, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University.

In the 1930s in Texas, while in fifth grade, she made a “public profession” of faith and asked “for baptism.”

Despite the influence of church on the lives of these children, home was where their primary religious development occurred. Even Ophelia Hatton, who emphasized the importance of church in her childhood, gave the majority of credit for her “growth in Bible knowledge and in Bible principle application” to her mother. Her mother’s faith, her mother’s protection, and her mother’s declaration of God’s love for her, gave Ophelia “a great deal of security in that we could totally rely on God.”<sup>2</sup>

The faith of two different women in Ophelia Hatton’s childhood, the faith of her Sunday school teacher and her mother deeply affected her. Mrs. Hamilton was operating within the public religious sphere, while her mother worked within the domestic sphere. Prior to World War II, both of these arenas of service offered important roles for conservative Protestant women. The wartime ideal of patriotic piety continued to embrace these dual roles, but articulated the need for women to enter religious public sphere for democratic, in addition to spiritual, purposes.

The roles of conservative women within the religious public sphere during the war included ministry within the local church, charity or “justice” work, global missions, and crusades for public morality such as temperance. Often the rhetoric used by conservatives to describe these roles invoked their connections to the domestic sphere. However, conservatives also used these examples of public service as a means to connect the work of conservative women with that of wartime volunteers. The ideal of patriotic femininity encouraged women to support the war through volunteer work, especially that

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<sup>2</sup> Ophelia Hatton Humphrey, Oral History of Ophelia Hatton Humphrey, interview by L. Katherine Cook, December 30, 1981, 32, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University.

which was connected to the domestic sphere. In this way, patriotic femininity and patriotic piety were similar. However, the volunteer work encouraged by the secular press was strictly war-related. This volunteerism included the planting of victory gardens, home nursing courses, rationing, and receiving training in nutrition and first aid.<sup>3</sup> The secular media declared these tasks “the greatest possible service” for women unable to work in a war industry.<sup>4</sup> Conservative Protestants capitalized on this mutual emphasis on volunteer work. Thus the volunteer efforts of conservative women, even those that occurred primarily within the religious public sphere, were often framed as evidence of “patriotism” and a commitment to “democracy.” Conservative Protestant women acted as a bridge between the secular war effort and the religious sphere. However, they also continued to work for causes that did not resonate with the secular war effort, showing their continued dedication to spiritual missions despite a newly politicized rhetoric.

### *Conservative Protestant Church Life in the War Years*

As argued in Sittser’s *A Cautious Patriotism*, conservative Protestant churches did not undergo any major ideological or priority shifts during World War II. Despite this, they still adjusted to the needs of their congregations, which varied significantly depending on the demographic, economic, and geographic characteristics of each particular church. Although many younger men were drafted into the military, older male church leaders remained behind and still conducted official ministries. Women

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<sup>3</sup> D’Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America : Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 67.

<sup>4</sup> Dorothy Canfield Fischer, “A Challenge to American Women,” in *The Family in a World At War*, ed. Sidonie Matsner Gruenberg (New York: Harper & Bros., 1942), 203.

were active in living out their Patriotic Piety through the church in official and unofficial capacities, however. A study of conservative wartime churches and the women involved in them can therefore be divided into two major categories: the church's wartime ministries (which were sometimes directed at women), and the ministries of women themselves within the churches.

In 1945 Harold Franklin Hafer studied the impact of World War II on the Evangelical and Reformed Church (a small denomination spread across the Midwest and West, with 662,953 members in 1941).<sup>5</sup> Hafer's primary goal was to investigate what ministers within the denomination had done to respond to the war in their congregations. Through a questionnaire sent to 1,736 ministers of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, Hafer gathered data on two different kinds of ministries: those aimed at servicemen, and those meant to help "home folks." Hafer sent out a list of wartime ministry choices and each pastor checked all of the options he had employed during the War. Hafer then ranked the various ministry options according to the percentage of pastors who had used them, ranging from 95.6 percent to two total responses.<sup>6</sup> The results are revealing. The most frequently employed ministry to servicemen was "Remembers Servicemen in Public Prayers," (95.6 percent of respondents) and the second and third were, "Visit Homes of Servicemen's Families," (86.8 percent) and "Encourage Correspondence Among Members" (86.1). Also ranking above 50 percent were many variations of letter writing and church bulletin and religious literature sending. One of the lowest ranking options was "Emphasize Ministry to Servicemen's Wives, Families," which only received 1.2

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<sup>5</sup> Harold Franklin Hafer, "The Evangelical and Reformed Churches and World War II." Thesis, Philadelphia, (1947), 99.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 54-55.

percent of positive responses. These results are not necessarily reflective of a universal norm among conservative churches, but they do reflect a pattern the following evidence will reveal. The war ministries of these churches used prayer and the U.S. Postal Service as means to their efforts, while hands-on ministry to the families of soldiers (and women in general) was not a high priority.<sup>7</sup>

Conservative Protestant churches were intentional about connecting with servicemen during the war, whether long-time members or soldiers stationed at a nearby base. Members of First Baptist Church in Kingsville, Texas, specifically invited local military personal to attend their church. According to the church's history, Sunday school attendance increased noticeably directly after the opening of the Kingsville base.<sup>8</sup> The conservative Protestant press also encouraged church members to send letters to men in service. An article in the *Watchmen Examiner* reminded its readers, "Letters from the members of the church are that added something which proves to the man in the service that the church really cares."<sup>9</sup> Members of North Dallas Baptist Church published and mailed a monthly church newspaper to all those in military service.<sup>10</sup> The ministry of simple correspondence was a priority for local churches.

Public displays of support for servicemen were common in conservative churches. Pat Williams's church in Plainview, Texas, displayed blue and gold star banners for

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<sup>7</sup> Hafer, "The Evangelical and Reformed Churches and World War II."

<sup>8</sup> Billy Freeman Pratt, *Spreading God's Light: First Baptist Church, Kingsville, Texas, 1904-2004*, 1st ed (Austin, Tex: Nortex Press, 2004), 41-42.

<sup>9</sup> Wayland Zwayer, "Letters from Home," *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], November 5, 1942).

<sup>10</sup> North Dallas Baptist Church (Dallas, Tex.), *North Dallas Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas: 100th Anniversary History and Cookbook, 1902-2002* ([Waverly, IA: G & R Publishing Company, 2002), Vii.



every soldier sent out from the church.<sup>11</sup> Donna Johnson's Presbyterian Church in Duluth, Minnesota, displayed a large flag with stars on it representing the servicemen gone from their midst.<sup>12</sup> But no ministry was as frequently employed to serve the military and encourage those at home as public prayer. Williams remembered "Almost every time a prayer was said they prayed for our boys in the military."<sup>13</sup> In Nashville, almost 1,000 people signed up for a program of perpetual prayer at the First Baptist Church, which would last from May 31, 1942 for the duration of the war.<sup>14</sup> At Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont, Texas, the church was open 24 hours a day so people could pray in the sanctuary whenever they needed to.<sup>15</sup> Pat Williams also remembered the church praying at Wednesday night and Sunday morning meetings for a specific family who had received a letter indicating their son was missing in action.<sup>16</sup> Conservative Protestant churches did provide official ministries for servicemen and the church body who prayed for them, but in many cases women kept the church itself afloat during the war, and often it was the women in the church who administered more practical and hands-on help.

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<sup>11</sup> Pat Williams, "Oral History of Pat Williams" interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 16, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.

<sup>12</sup> Donna Johnson, "Oral History of Donna Johnson" interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 14, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.

<sup>13</sup> Pat Williams, "Oral History of Pat Williams"; Virginia Woodbury, "Oral History of Virginia Woodbury" interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 10, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.

<sup>14</sup> Gerald Lawson Sittser, *A Cautious Patriotism: the American Churches & the Second World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 149.

<sup>15</sup> Ronald C. Ellison, *Calvary Baptist Church, Beaumont, Texas: a Centennial History, 1904-2004*, 1st ed (Austin, Tex: Nortex Press, 2004), 127.

<sup>16</sup> Pat Williams, "Oral History of Pat Williams."

### *Patriotic Piety in the Local Church*

As Audrey Perkins recalled church life in her Presbyterian Church on the north shore of Lake Superior, her most vivid memory was the role women played in the community during the war years. She remembered:

The women were the ones that held it together. There were bills to be paid, and there was nobody around to make money and pledge, and that sort of thing. My mother was very active...she was in charge of the kitchen and every year they would put on a great big bazaar and dinner and they would try to pay the heating bill for that winter. And they were very proud of the fact that they were able to raise the money to pay the heating bill.

Perkins acknowledged that many of the men in her town stayed nearby during the war and remained involved with church life. However, she still emphasized the high level of responsibility women took for the maintenance of the church, even for its finances.<sup>17</sup> It is difficult to track exactly how influential female members were during the war, especially since conservative Protestant churches continually touted the theological and practical importance of male leadership.<sup>18</sup> However, from the testimony of women who lived through the war years, it is clear conservative Protestant women made a difference in practical and personal ways as they lived out the ideals of patriotic piety.

Velma Ray Huggins was a student at Baylor University during the War and was involved with the Baptist Student Union (which will be discussed further in Chapter four) and the local Baptist church, Seventh and James. She remembered the church had very little money, but the congregation was active in supporting the student programs. Two of these women, Martha and Esther Leuschner, particularly stood out in her memory.

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<sup>17</sup> Audrey Perkins, "Oral History of Audrey Perkins" interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 10, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present*. (New Haven: Yale Univ Press, 1993).

Secretaries for the girls' and boys' college Sunday school class, they also took students into their home, especially "boys away from home that they fed and looked after." They also encouraged healthy co-ed socialization among the students, Huggins said, "Some of us girls who either were engaged to boys they approved of or dated a few of the boys that went over there were privileged to go to the Leuschners." Although their work was not directly war-related, these women used the domestic and public religious spheres to minister to students who attended their church.<sup>19</sup>

As the story of the Leuschners suggests, teaching Sunday school was a major avenue of influence for conservative Protestant women, as it had been since the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Denominational leaders also espoused the value of these classes for wartime America. The literature for the Sunday school "Advance" movement, which many churches joined, emphasized the need for Sunday schools because of the negative moral effects of war on American churches and homes.<sup>21</sup> Women who served as Sunday school teachers worked for the good of the nation and the church.

Conservative Protestant women also lived out patriotic piety in the public sphere through their use of hospitality. Virginia Woodbury's Baptist church in Minneapolis actually partnered with a non-religious volunteer endeavor, the servicemen's hospitality house. She recalled, "A group from church, like our young people, mostly girls, would go down and play ping pong and games with the servicemen. My youth group went down there, like, probably twice a month to the hospitality house which was downtown in

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<sup>19</sup> Velma Ray Huggins, "Oral History of Velma Ray Huggins" interview by L. Katherine Cook and Katy Jennings Stokes, August 27, 1982, 93, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University.

<sup>20</sup> Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present*.

<sup>21</sup> Sittser, *A cautious patriotism*, 198.

Minneapolis.”<sup>22</sup> By emphasizing “hospitality,” Woodbury and her classmates were not crossing any moral boundaries by spending time with the servicemen. Indeed, they were able to participate in the larger home front war effort through a traditionally religiously feminine value. Women in conservative church congregations also used hospitality as a mode of ministry. Female members of Grace Baptist Church in Minneapolis brought food to the families of servicemen, and Audrey Perkins’ mother used a bazaar and dinner to raise funds for the church heating bill.<sup>23</sup> Again, women used their domestic roles as a means to enter the religious public sphere.

Perhaps most importantly, women encouraged their families and each other to stay involved with the local church during the war years. Although many letters written from a family to their soldier son have been lost, evidence of the “praying mother’s” emphasis on church attendance can often be seen in letters sent home. D.C. Cordie wrote his mother frequently during his time in Europe. He often made excuses for not attending church on Sundays; such as he did in his letter from April 2, 1944 when he wrote, “Here it is Sunday and I don’t have to work. It sure suits me. Weather is keeping me from church as I had planned.”<sup>24</sup> His justifications for missing church indicated the high value his mother must have placed on those gatherings. Indeed, D.C. must have pleased his

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<sup>22</sup> Virginia Woodbury, “Oral History of Virginia Woodbury.”

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.; Audrey Perkins, “Oral History of Audrey Perkins.”

<sup>24</sup> D.C. Cordie to Mrs. Cordie, April 2, 1944, Rocky R. Miracle, *Mrs. Cordie’s Soldier Son: a World War II Saga*, 1st ed, Sam Rayburn Series on Rural Life no. 16 (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 45. See also March 25, 1944, p. 42. See also the WAC Scrapbook in the “Eleanor McLerran DeLancey Collection,” Accession #3831, Box 1, Folder 1, The Texas Collection, Baylor University.

mother greatly when he asked her to write the church a check on his behalf a few months later.<sup>25</sup>

Women also encouraged each other towards the faith in time of war. Although there are few women who published such sentiments, personal letters and conversations were frequent means to this end. While D.C. was missing in action, two different ladies from Mrs. Cordie's church sent her encouraging and consoling letters. One emphasized the solidarity of faith, saying she would "be praying with you for the safe return of your son, and may the Lord be with you in the days ahead."<sup>26</sup> Another letter, from an elderly member of their congregation, closed by recounting the two women's mutual church volunteer work. "I still love you and all the others to have taught in the Sunday school, and mingled with in the missionary society."<sup>27</sup> These letters show that conservative Protestants applauded women who exhibited patriotic piety in the local church as benefiting the church and the nation, but they also received the blessing of mutual feminine community.

#### *Patriotic Piety and Works of Justice and Christian Charity*

Conservative Protestants engaged in wartime volunteerism with as much enthusiasm as their fellow citizens. Virginia Woodbury's youth group visited a Minneapolis hospitality house, Pat Williams's father started a cannery for their local victory gardens, and every woman interviewed for this thesis remembered their efforts at

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<sup>25</sup> D.C. Cordie to Mrs. Cordie, July 16, 1944, Miracle, *Mrs. Cordie's Soldier Son*, 66.

<sup>26</sup> G and J Smith to Mr. and Mrs. Caughran on January 14, 1945, *ibid.*, 99.

<sup>27</sup> Mary E. Howell to Mrs. Cordie, August 20, 1945, *ibid.*, 143.

rationing, even as children.<sup>28</sup> Christian periodicals, however, did not explicitly encourage this kind of volunteerism. Instead, the conservative press encouraged women to place their secular patriotic duties within the framework of Christian priorities. Specifically, they encouraged volunteering for organizations that performed Christian work. The *Baptist and Reflector* reprimanded citizens in Galveston, Texas for using gas rationing as an excuse to not attend church. ““Only four gallons of gas! I can't attend church now!’ What a shame! That statement isn't true Americanism or true Christianity. War took our gas, our tires—and for some few their religion. May God pity them for being so weak—so soft....Make him stand up and take note that God means more than gas or tires.”<sup>29</sup> The *Alabama Baptist* encouraged Christian women to conserve and ration their household supplies as a patriotic, selfless act: “The desire to have and to use for self at the expense of one's neighbor. It is bad enough at any time. It is unpardonable in times like these.”<sup>30</sup> Christian periodicals encouraged patriotism as long as it fit within the scope of Christian charity.

This Christian charity was based on a conservative Protestant view of “peace and justice.” Secular magazines assumed allied troops were the harbinger of justice to the world. Conservative Protestants had a different idea in mind when they spoke of “peace and justice.” Here justice meant the gospel of Jesus Christ, and peace, global and individual, that could only come through him. In L.L. Carpenter’s explanation of the

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<sup>28</sup> For example, Virginia Woodbury, “Oral History of Virginia Woodbury”; Pat Williams, “Oral History of Pat Williams”; Donna Johnson, “Oral History of Donna Johnson”; Joyce Pareigat and Adina Johnson, “Oral History of Joyce Pareigat” Telephone, November 13, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from The Evangel, “Gas Rationing and Church Attendance,” *Baptist and Reflector* (Nashville, TN, December 10, 1942), 4.

<sup>30</sup> “Editorial,” *Alabama Baptist* (Birmingham, AL, March 26, 1942), 13

need for justice and peace around the world, he wrote, “We have a gospel (“good news”) for all peoples and nations, without distinction as to race or habitat. In every way possible this gospel must be proclaimed now, never more needed than now!”<sup>31</sup> Global conversions would lead to peace with more certainty than the leadership of a “Christian” America. In the 1940’s, this view translated to a call to both Christian charity on the home front and foreign missions, despite the reality of a world war. Most of the home front work done in the name of Christian charity was palatable to and even in concert with secular volunteer organizations. An exception to this trend of mutual interest was the crusade for temperance. Along with global missions, this cause did not seem to fit with the greater concerns of the war. They will therefore be placed in a separate category to discuss later in this chapter.

The role of conservative Protestant women in this quest for justice and peace was again tied to the ideal of patriotic piety. Women could use their domestic skills as a means of ministry, but they could also display spiritual motherhood while serving to combat a nationwide loss of morality perpetuated by economic and social problems. Thus volunteer work ranging from knitting blankets for soldiers, to sending hymnbooks overseas, to arranging opportunities for Christian education, to working to solve the childcare crises, could all be considered a fulfillment of patriotic piety.

Opportunities for Christian volunteerism with a wartime twist were widespread and heavily advertised. The most prominent charitable option for women was the work of sending Christian books to soldiers overseas. Publications printed letters from soldiers thanking churches for sending Bibles. “You will never know how glad I was to get the

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<sup>31</sup> L.L. Carpenter was the editor of the wide-reaching Baptist Standard. L.L. Carpenter, “The Baptist Paper in a World at War,” *Baptist Standard* (Dallas, Tex., March 18, 1943).

little Testament you gave me. No one could ever wish to receive a better gift than something to guide him in time of darkness, and the little Book of Truth will guide us when everything else fails.”<sup>32</sup> The Baptist Women’s Missionary Union was particularly active in sending Bibles overseas. Another form of literature sent by churches was Christian hymn or songbooks. The *Baptist Standard* printed a list of church members who had sent songbooks: three of the four were women.<sup>33</sup> Conservative Protestant women also used their personal talents as a means to serve the church and the war effort. Audrey Perkins’s mother was in a knitting circle that made scarves and blankets to send in care packages to soldiers overseas. Audrey herself served by singing at the funerals of deceased soldiers in many churches in her area. Even as a high school student she would sing “‘God Bless America’ and any other hymns that they wanted. We weren’t paid, we just went and did that.”<sup>34</sup> These women did not step beyond their traditional gender roles, but they exhibited patriotism connected to their Christianity in a very public way.

The crisis experienced by military families was another issue where the concerns of conservative Protestants and the priorities of the war effort intersected. As previously mentioned, many camp followers, military wives, and war-workers had an extremely difficult time finding housing.<sup>35</sup> In addition, those women who worked outside the home

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<sup>32</sup> Odie V. Harlan, “New Testaments,” *Alabama Baptist* (Birmingham, AL, September 24, 1942), 11.

<sup>33</sup> John T Knight, “Editorial,” *Baptist Standard* (Dallas, TX, February 25, 1943), 4.

<sup>34</sup> Audrey Perkins, “Oral History of Audrey Perkins.”

<sup>35</sup> Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women : Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 86; See also Jane Mersky Leder, *Thanks for the Memories : Love, Sex, and World War II* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2006).



struggled to find childcare.<sup>36</sup> Conservative Protestants also worried about the shantytowns appearing in industrial areas and their effects on the spiritual and physical health of women and children. They viewed these problems, particularly childcare and Christian education, as “A Great Home Mission Challenge.”<sup>37</sup> Conservative Protestant women mobilized quickly to find solutions to the needs for childcare and Christian education. The Mayor of Philadelphia called upon Presbyterian churches to contribute rooms, equipment, and volunteers in order to take in children who were “left to roam the streets or to amuse themselves in homes as they see fit.”<sup>38</sup> Leaders created new Sunday school curriculum in order to educate those children about Christianity, and caring for the children was seen as an investment in the future of America.<sup>39</sup> A reporter for *The Watchman-Examiner* wrote, “Unless something is done now, we shall be paying a tremendous price within the next few years for any unchristian neglect.”<sup>40</sup> Despite all of the attention paid to children, conservative Protestants made apparently little effort to minister to the children’s mothers. There is little evidence that conservative Christians ever addressed the housing crisis. The Evangelical and Reformed Church questionnaire shows less than 10 percent of those churches worked to “locate rooms for Servicemen’s

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<sup>36</sup> Anderson, *Wartime women*, 122–146.

<sup>37</sup> Maurice R. Hamm, “A Great Home Mission Challenge,” *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], February 12, 1942), 162–3.

<sup>38</sup> “Solve the Child Care Problem,” *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], February 11, 1943), 128.

<sup>39</sup> . Ruth Elizabeth Murphy, “Children in Defense Areas,” *Baptist Leader* (Philadelphia, PA, February 1943), 8.

<sup>40</sup> “Solve the Child Care Problem,” 128.

families.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, not one article in the conservative periodicals surveyed spoke of the importance of housing.

Despite this significant oversight, conservative Christian charity and secular volunteerism found common ground on many efforts of charity during the war. Christian women displayed their patriotism at the same time as their piety, and both were recognized as a service to the nation. This was not the case for other aspects of working for justice in the public sphere, however. World missions and the crusade for temperance did not fit within the larger set of wartime goals, but Christians still tried to frame these religious efforts with patriotic language in order to relate to the national cause. However, they ultimately stayed dedicated to their spiritual goals, even when unpopular, reflecting their fundamentalist tendencies.

#### *Patriotic Piety in Global Missions Work*

Christian missions during this period were very much women’s work, even among conservative Protestants. In fact, missionary work was one of the few environments within conservative Protestant life where women could hold leadership positions. In 1944, Sudan Interior Missions appointed forty-eight new missionaries: forty were women.<sup>42</sup> A vast majority of the missionary biographies printed in Christian periodicals featured women.<sup>43</sup> By the late 1940s, The General Association of Regular Baptists, a fundamentalist denomination, included more women missionaries than

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<sup>41</sup> Hafer, *The Evangelical and Reformed Churches and World War II*, 55.

<sup>42</sup> “What Hath God Wrought in Our Jubilee Year of 1943,” advertisement, *Moody Monthly* (Chicago, IL, March 1944), 425.

<sup>43</sup> For example, G.A. Riggs, “Of Missionary Interest: Gloria Stood by her Colors,” *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], January 8, 1942), 40.

ordained clergymen. By 1948 the denomination claimed 393 women missionaries and 297 clergymen. 245 of the women were single, a significant fact in a religious culture where marriage and motherhood continued to be the ideal.<sup>44</sup> Thus women were the primary ground force of the missionary movement. Prior to the war and during it, becoming a missionary was a means for a woman to fulfill a feminine ideal.

The fundamentalist-modernist controversy had created a division within the ranks of American foreign missionaries. Modernists, or liberal Protestants, focused on spreading democracy, education, social activism, and modernization in addition to the Gospel. This caused fundamentalists to question the modernist missionaries' commitment to theological orthodoxy, evangelism, and church planting.<sup>45</sup> Denominational battles resulted in heated arguments, with the conservative perspective often articulated by J.G. Machen. According to Historian Joel Carpenter, "The protests of J.G. Machen [in the 1930s] functioned as declarations of conservative evangelicalism's independence from the old-line Protestant missionary enterprise."<sup>46</sup> This resulted in a conservative missionary movement that closely mirrored the "fundamentalist movement's nearly total abandonment of social or political reform."<sup>47</sup>

By the advent of World War II, the emphasis on evangelism in missions had not changed for conservative Protestants. They were interested first and foremost in

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<sup>44</sup> Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present*, 88–9.

<sup>45</sup> "The Ecumenical Woman's Missionary Movement: Helen Barrett Montgomery and The Baptist, 1920-30. in Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards and Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, *Gender and the Social Gospel* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2003); *Modernism and Foreign Missions: Two Fundamentalist Protests*, *Fundamentalism in American Religion, 1880-1950* 24 (New York: Garland Pub, 1988).

<sup>46</sup> *Modernism and Foreign Missions*, n.p. Introduction.

<sup>47</sup> Joel A. Carpenter, *Fighting Fundamentalism: Polemical Thrusts of the 1930s and 1940s*, *Fundamentalism in American Religion, 1880-1950*; 32. (New York: Garland Pub., 1988), n.p. Introduction.

converting people to the Christian faith. They did not, however, divorce international and home missions from the effort to win World War II. International outreach sometimes, but not often, consisted of relief work to war-torn areas of the world.<sup>48</sup> In 1944 each Sunday school class of First Baptist Church in Kingsville, Texas, filled 105 relief kits to send to the American ally Russia. Commander MacArthur even actively promoted Christianity in Japan by encouraging missions work and distributing millions of Bibles by the American Bible Society and the Pocket Testament League.<sup>49</sup> More often, however, conservative denominations sent missionaries on traditional assignments to areas such as China or Brazil. Yet even missions to such far-flung places could be rationalized as positive contributions to the war effort. An article in *The Presbyterian* explicitly connected missions to the success of the war effort,

Mission is God's work. We give to missions because God has commanded, not because of war. God's work that is mission work does not stop during war; in truth, the need doubles and trebles... We were all thrilled by the soldier who wrote "Dear Mom," saying that because of missions he feasted and was not feasted on when he fell from the sky into a former cannibal village.<sup>50</sup>

Such stilted justification for missions shows the eagerness of conservative Protestants to appear patriotic, even when advancing a clearly spiritual mission.

The conservative Christian convictions of these churches did not allow abandonment or alteration of purely Gospel missions during the war. Instead, periodicals issued apologetics for why the war effort needed the work of (female) Christian missionaries. Because of theological differences, conservative Protestants did not see

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<sup>48</sup> "Women in the War," *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], July 22, 1943), 703.

<sup>49</sup> Anne C Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military, 1942-1993* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 42.

<sup>50</sup> Charles H. Cooks, "An Answer To: It's Hopeless to Give to Foreign Missions Now," *The Presbyterian* (Philadelphia, PA, August 12, 1943), 9.

missions as a means of solidarity with mainstream Americans, but instead defended the mission endeavor as a foundational (or fundamental) endeavor critical even in wartime. Since the ideal of Christian womanhood held female missionaries in high esteem, connecting political value to missionary work also helped these women to fit under the umbrella of patriotic piety.

### *Patriotic Piety in Public Moral Crusades*

Unlike foreign missions, the patriotic rhetoric of public moral crusades represented a change in conservative Protestantism's ideology of social reform. When J. Edgar Hoover appealed to conservative Protestant mothers in the Alabama Baptist regarding the public issue of juvenile delinquency, he hoped to draw on the great heritage of Protestant benevolence.<sup>51</sup> Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, urban Protestant women were noted for their extensive work fighting (with differing success) rampant social ills and injustices.<sup>52</sup> However, with the rise of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, fundamentalists, or conservative Protestants, began to shy away from activism because of its connection to the "social gospel" of modernism. In a similar manner, their dispensationalist theology considered the Kingdom of God to be a future state, after Christ's return. Work to bring the Kingdom to earth during the present age was only diverting energy away from evangelism.<sup>53</sup> Conservative Protestant women in the interwar years focused on personal evangelism and

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<sup>51</sup> J. Edgar Hoover, "Our Task at Home," *Alabama Baptist* (Birmingham, AL, January 27, 1944).

<sup>52</sup> For a great work on women's religious activism in the nineteenth century, see Anne M. Boylan, *The Origins of Women's Activism: New York and Boston, 1797-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999) contrasts Catholic and Protestant benevolence work.

<sup>53</sup> Carpenter, *Fighting Fundamentalism*, n.p. Introduction.

revivalism, not social reform.<sup>54</sup> World War II proved a turning point for conservative Protestants, however. As we have seen, women began to engage in national volunteer work with both religious and political motivations. As they lobbied for moral causes, in addition to their evangelistic goals, they began to explain their objectives using social and political language. Hoover picked up on this tendency when he wrote about the issue of juvenile delinquency, but in no crusade was this language more obvious than in the continued quest for temperance. With the end of prohibition, temperance was no longer a major issue in the public mind, but conservative Protestants continued to lobby for it extensively. This is further evidence (along with the cause of global missions) that conservatives continued to hold to their religious values even when they were not in vogue. However, by placing public activism under the scope of patriotic piety, they once again actively engaged mainline and secular Americans instead of separating from them. As before, it was conservative Protestant women on the forefront of this engagement.

Legislatures overturned national prohibition in 1933, but during World War II temperance was still a primary concern in the minds of conservative Protestants. To their thinking, prohibition had been beneficial, only inadequately enforced. One author even predicted in 1943 “that national prohibition will again be adopted perhaps in the next generation.”<sup>55</sup> Although secular magazines acknowledged the consequences of excessive alcohol use, and the impropriety of women who spent an abundance of time in pubs, they rarely condemned drinking *per se*. In her memoirs, a former war worker, Ida Banes (who

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<sup>54</sup> Joel A Carpenter, *Revive Us Again : The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 78, 107; George M Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism : Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987), 78–81.

<sup>55</sup> C. Aubrey Hearn, *Alcohol the Destroyer* (Nashville, Tenn.: The Sunday school board of the Southern Baptist convention, 1943), 21, 24 In the preface to the fifth edition, “Within eight months after this book was published four editions totaling over eighteen thousand copies had been printed. The public’s warm-hearted response has been gratifying.”

did not consider herself to be a conservative Protestant) told of the taboo against alcohol, but does not express any remorse for drinking. She wrote,

It was a sin going in a pub. We went to a dance and there was no refreshments, so we all had to go to the Gorse Hill pub for a drink. Then I saw a neighbor of my mother's and I thought "God I'll get killed if she finds out." As soon as I go home I told her. It was a sin, my mother did not drink, only the women of the street went in pubs.... You only went into a hotel, and not a pub, with your husband. I stopped telling her when I went in a pub, for I would get a lecture all week and I'd be twenty odd!<sup>56</sup>

By contrast, for conservative Protestants, alcohol was one of the greatest problems of their day. A conservative Christian view of temperance meant total abstinence, not simple moderation.<sup>57</sup> Traditionally, temperance was a women's crusade, beginning with the formation of organizations such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in the nineteenth century. It was no different during World War II, although perhaps less organized. A 1944 published collection of speeches titled *Youth Looks at Liquor* featured thirteen speeches authored by women, and only one by a young man.<sup>58</sup> Christian publications called women to fight for temperance in various ways: training their children about the evils of alcohol, writing congressmen asking for a change of law, and of course, abstaining from alcohol themselves. In all of these cases, Christian periodicals appealed to two significant motivations for temperance: Christian motherhood and wartime necessity. Conservative Protestant women were again advocating not just for moral, personal change, but also for political action.

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Phil Goodman, "'Patriotic Femininity': Women's Morals and Men's Morale During the Second World War," *Gender & History* 10, no. 2 (1998): 282; in Walter L Hixson, *The American People At War: Minorities and Women in the Second World War*, vol. 10, *The American Experience in World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 22.

<sup>57</sup> Hearn, *Alcohol the Destroyer*, 40.

<sup>58</sup> Southern Baptist Convention. Church Training Dept., *Youth Looks at Liquor* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1944).

Conservative Protestants believed temperance started in the home. Mothers were responsible for teaching their children to reject alcohol from an early age.<sup>59</sup> Mothers were also culpable for their own alcohol use. Numerous articles stressed the evils of a mother who drinks, and the negative influence she would have on her children.<sup>60</sup> The notion that the Christian home was the core of America's unique character was once again argued in 1943. "The home is the citadel of civilization. The strength of our nation has its source in our homes. In the building of a Christian home beverage alcohol has no legitimate or necessary place."<sup>61</sup> By the time children were at draft age, however, the responsibility of mothers changed from education by example to public activism. Courtney Rudd Bixby called on Christian mothers everywhere to vote on behalf of temperance for the sake of their sons. She pleaded,

You hold the vote. My son does not drink. To my knowledge, he never has. But I would rather see him in the front-line trenches, than see him succumb to the drink habit, even the "harmless" glass-of-beer habit...I would gladly die rather than see my son in the condition in which I have seen many of your sons as they staggered down the aisles of the crowded trains! Where did they get it? Many of them got it in the camp they had just left. It was put there by the government which you put into power by your vote or your failure to vote! Do it today.<sup>62</sup>

For this mother and many other conservative Protestants, alcohol was directly linked to moral degeneration. Some periodicals took these connections even further, blaming alcohol for moral degeneration and contending it was therefore hurtful to the war effort. In these arguments another clear appeal to patriotic piety is found. *A Window of YWCA*

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<sup>59</sup> Dean M. Schweickhard, "What About Our Children," *Christian Advocate* (Chicago, IL, February 1944), 8.

<sup>60</sup> For example, Wilbur Cosby Hall, *Alabama Baptist* (Birmingham, AL, February 3, 1944), 10.

<sup>61</sup> Hearn, *Alcohol the Destroyer*, 94.

<sup>62</sup> Courtney Rudd Bixby, "An Open Letter to the Christian Mothers of Our Land," *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], August 6, 1942), 789.



ad for temperance shows a NAZI soldier placing a medal on the neck of a beer bottle (which is next to a whisky bottle and a wine bottle). The medal is enlarged and the text engraved on it reads, “For Sabotage, For Waste, for Absenteeism, For Accidents.” The caption to the ad reads, “It’s hard to believe that these American products aiding our enemies have not yet been decorated by Hitler ‘For Services Rendered.’”<sup>63</sup> Another article, this one in the *Alabama Baptist*, connects temperance with the wartime need for conservation. “We are rightly called upon to conserve every scrap of material substance that can help win the war. We are ready for these forms of conservation. It is infinitely more important that we conserve the supreme factor, the character and the morals of our men and women.”<sup>64</sup> Even one of the *Youth Looks at Liquor* authors, Maxine Hunter, cited alcohol as a major hindrance to the war effort. “Yet Christian America gives her armed forces unrestrained access to liquor. A sense of irresponsibility or of carefree well-being may be fatal to our men in the service when lives depend on keen judgment and mental alertness.”<sup>65</sup> The message was clear. Alcohol robbed America of the morality it needed to win the war. As sustainers of this morality, conservative Protestant women lived out the ideal of patriotic piety when they pushed for temperance, even in the public sphere.

### *Conclusion*

It is clear from this evidence that women acting out patriotic piety in the religious public sphere drew on domestic norms already part of Christian idyllic womanhood. In

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<sup>63</sup> “Advertisement,” *Window to the YWCA*, January 1943.

<sup>64</sup> “Pray for Our Sons and Daughters,” *Alabama Baptist*, September 3, 1942, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Maxine Hunter, “Beverage Alcohol and the War Effort” in Southern Baptist Convention. Church Training Dept., *Youth Looks at Liquor*, 26.

the local church, conservative Protestant women taught Sunday school classes, nurtured wayward members, and encouraged one another. While performing public works of charity, they used domestic skills to help soldiers overseas, and invoked motherly concern for the morality of children to enact child care and Christian education reforms. In global missions, they continued in the steps of the female missionaries that went before them. Finally, in public crusades such as temperance, they embraced the call for stewardship of Christian morality on a public scale. By invoking domesticity in such creative ways, these women expanded the ideal of motherhood that characterized patriotic piety into the public sphere without neglecting conservative Protestantism's basic tenets.

In addition to remaining faithful to their spiritual callings, patriotic piety allowed conservative Protestant women to engage with the national war effort. By arguing for the importance of the local church, finding common ground in volunteer efforts, emphasizing the importance of missions, and declaring the need for moral conservation, these women showed their solidarity with other Americans. For a religious group that had seemingly isolated themselves from mainstream culture twenty years before, this was a huge change. Conservative Protestants showed they could be doctrine driven Christians and patriotic Americans at the same time.

As we have seen, the ideal of patriotic piety was easily invoked by and for women who worked within the religious public sphere. But what of those women who entered the secular public sphere by becoming war workers, soldiers, and college students? Did they also appeal to patriotic piety, or were they so far from the domestic ideal of Christian womanhood that they could no longer claim it? Were they sacrificing their

piety for the sake of patriotism and necessity? These are the questions explored in the remaining chapter of this thesis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Patriotic Piety Tested in the Public Sphere

#### *Introduction*

The women who embodied patriotic piety during the Second World War proudly entered the religious public sphere under its auspices. They drew clear links between the skills of spiritual motherhood and domesticity (represented by patriotic piety) and the needs of the war, creating a bridge between conservative Protestants and the secular war effort. But what of those conservative women who answered the secular periodicals' call to enter the working world, the secular public sphere? Many conservative Protestant women became students, soldiers, and war workers during the war years. Could those so far outside of the domestic sphere of traditional Victorian womanhood still embody the ideals of patriotic piety? Would conflicts between school and marriage, the military and femininity, and work and motherhood lead to criticism and ostracism in the conservative Protestant press? What did the average conservative Protestant woman think of her own actions?

By studying the prescriptive literature written about these women, and their own accounts (or their children's) of their work, it becomes clear they held a precarious position within the ideal of patriotic piety. The conservative Christian women's public roles were still described using the language of domesticity and spirituality, but the press was often starkly defensive of their piety rather than proactively boastful about their patriotism. A conservative Protestant woman who worked outside the home had to prove she was still within the bounds of conservative womanhood. Unlike her homemaker and

volunteer sisters, she had to prove that her place as a bridge to the secular war effort still connected her to the spiritual values of conservative Christian womanhood.

### *Christian Colleges and Patriotic Piety*

A teenager deciding to attend a Christian college in the war years was not unusual, even for a conservative Protestant girl. In the nineteenth century female colleges opened throughout the country, including many denominational schools. In fact most women's colleges founded in this era had explicitly Christian missions, even Mount Holyoke and Wellesley.<sup>1</sup> Baylor Female College (as the Baylor Female Department) opened in 1847 and stayed open even during the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> After the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, many fundamentalist churches and denominations opened Bible schools and institutes (more than seventy between the years of 1918 and 1945).<sup>3</sup> These schools were particularly attractive to Christian women who wanted to work in the religious sphere but were unwelcome at conservative seminaries. At Bible schools such as William Bell Riley's Northwestern Bible and Missionary Training School in Saint Paul, Minnesota, Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and Gordon College outside of

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Ringenberg, *The Christian College: a History of Protestant Higher Education in America*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 91–92.

<sup>2</sup> Lois Smith Murray, *Baylor at Independence*. (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 1972), 70–73.

<sup>3</sup> Virginia Lieson Brereton, “The Bible Schools and Conservative Evangelical Higher Education: 1880-1940,” in *Making Higher Education Christian: The History and Mission of Evangelical Colleges in America*, ed. Joel A. Carpenter and Kenneth W. Shipps (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Christian University Press, 1987), 113.

Boston, women trained to become missionaries, musicians, city evangelists, and Sunday school teachers.<sup>4</sup>

Although the ideal of conservative Christian womanhood before the war affirmed college attendance, especially for those seeking religious training, both mainstream and conservative writers worried about the impact of education on a woman's marriage prospects. One 1895 study of roughly two-thousand female college graduates found that only 33 percent of those over twenty-five were married, along with only 55 percent of those over forty. This was a very low number considering that 80 percent of all women in the United States over the age of twenty were married.<sup>5</sup> It seems, however, the need for religious workers trumped the need for wives, at least among conservative Protestants. Many graduates of Bible colleges and denominational schools became active in Christian service, both male and female. In 1946, 29 percent of Bible college graduates became ministers, and another 27 percent became missionaries.<sup>6</sup> Because of this, conservative Christian women had long reconciled the idea of attending college with their domestic ideals. However, World War II introduced a new set of questions for conservative and Bible colleges. As most college-aged men were drafted, women were suddenly needed for technical work. How could colleges continue to honor the ideals of Christian womanhood while meeting the need for technically trained citizens for the war effort? Women enrolled at these colleges grappled with similar questions, as they tried to

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<sup>4</sup> Brereton, "The Bible Schools and Conservative Evangelical Higher Education: 1880-1940."

<sup>5</sup> Ringenberg, *The Christian College*, 96.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

adjust to the changes of war without abandoning the domestic ideals of Christian womanhood.

The conservative Protestant media's portrayal of Christian colleges during the war illustrates this conflict of identity. Their rhetoric acknowledged the necessity of war work while emphasizing the importance of cultivating domesticity and religiosity in female students. According to *The Watchman-Examiner*, the all-female Stephen's College prepared its students to work at the Red Cross or even in commercial aviation. Another Baptist school, Colby Junior College, in New London, N.H., bragged that 50 percent of women were enlisted in special wartime training.<sup>7</sup> Advertisements also appealed to women looking to gain a practical education in wartime. An ad for Baptist women's colleges asked, "Do You Know? Women students study aviation, radio, engineering, farming, medicine, and applied arts in the six Baptist women's colleges." However, these publications also appealed to the domestic values of conservative Protestants. The same ad touted, "Basic to all instruction is the liberal arts course with strong Christian Emphasis [*sic*]."<sup>8</sup> Along with a picture of a nurse, Wheaton College placed a woman with a baby carriage front and center of a two-page advertisement. It claimed, "Many of Wheaton's women graduates become housewives. They are called on to establish a Christian home and to bear a faithful witness in their community."<sup>9</sup> This advertisement did not promote the academic education one might receive at Wheaton, but

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<sup>7</sup> Carl W. Shaver, "Baptist Colleges in the War," *The Watchman-Examiner*, August 20, 1942, 835-36.

<sup>8</sup> Baptist Women's Colleges, "Do You Know?," *The Watchman-Examiner*, October 28, 1943, 1040.

<sup>9</sup> Wheaton College, "For Christ and His Kingdom," *The Sunday School Times*, December 16, 1944, 2-3.

instead affirmed that Wheaton's female graduates would not forsake the ideals of Christian womanhood. The same *Watchman-Examiner* article that touted Baptist colleges' war readiness took care to mention the continued religious emphasis of their curriculums: "Spiritual emphasis and personal counseling are finding a definite place in the work of the faculties of all of the Baptist institution."<sup>10</sup> Conservative Protestant colleges knew they needed to appeal to the ideals of patriotic piety, demonstrating to students and parents that they would not be rejecting Christian womanhood for the sake of the war effort. Instead, they showcased their dedication to the national cause while also encouraging religious piety in their female students.

Female students who attended Bible and conservative denominational colleges during the war years experienced these changes firsthand. Their educational, social, and spiritual experiences in college were all affected by the war and the new ideal of patriotic piety. The leaders of Baptist Baylor University changed their entire course schedule for the sake of the war effort, creating a means for male students to finish their education in two and a half years instead of three. *The Baylor Round-up* also touted, "Baylor's courses are being planned to meet the peace when it has been won, and it is toward that end that education at Baylor is fitting its students."<sup>11</sup> Baylor also offered opportunities for girls to train for war service through Civilian Pilot Training, which included three girls, and the Baylor Wings Club, with nine girls enrolled in 1943.<sup>12</sup> Another *Round-up* article noted that Baylor women were "preparing for careers in business, chemistry,

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<sup>10</sup> Shaver, "Baptist Colleges in the War," 835–36.

<sup>11</sup> Baylor University, *The Round-up* (Waco, Tex: Baylor University, 1942), n.p..

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, n.p.; Baylor University, *The Round-up* (Waco, Tex: Baylor University, 1943, 32.



medicine, radio, sociology and post-war adjustment—not to mention marriage....”<sup>13</sup>

Female students at Baylor were educated for their necessary wartime public roles, but even the yearbook would not forget their domestic priorities.

Religious life at Christian colleges also changed during the war years in both official and unofficial ways. At Baptist Union Theological Seminary (which would soon become Bethel Junior College and Seminary, now Bethel University), in Saint Paul, Minnesota, women had long been an active part of religious life on campus. The “Student Worker’s Course” was filled with female students who received training in prayer, Bible knowledge, theological doctrines, “techniques and tools for making available spiritual truth,” and an “understanding of the psychic make-up of children and adolescents,” among other things.<sup>14</sup> Despite this, male students led the Bethel Religious Council almost exclusively before and immediately after the war. However, this changed in the war years. In 1942, 1943, and 1944, women held the majority of leadership positions in the Bethel Religious Council.<sup>15</sup> During the war, Baylor’s Baptist Student Union also had a female president for the first time. Velma Ray Huggins was asked to be president of the BSU because there were no non-pastoral male students to take the job. *The Roundup* stated, “Miss Velma Ray Kay has served our campus well in that capacity this year. She has kept in close touch with all the religious organizations on the campus and energetically pushed the various student projects.”<sup>16</sup> Velma, however, remembered

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<sup>13</sup> Baylor University, *The Round-up*, 1944, 128.

<sup>14</sup> Bethel Junior College and Seminary, *Bethel Spire* (Saint Paul, MN: Bethel Junior College and Seminary, 1940), 23.

<sup>15</sup> Bethel Junior College and Seminary, *Bethel Spire*, 1940-1949.

<sup>16</sup> Baylor University, *The Round-up*, 1944, 102.

being hesitant to fill the role, saying, “It was very unusual, and I have always felt like the spiritual leader in the home or the church should be the man. I have a very—I still feel that way, and I was very slow to agree to accept this particular challenge.”<sup>17</sup> She took the job, though, after being told she “owed it to the Lord” to do it. Velma also noted she was not the only girl she knew who took up such a role, remembering that she had met another female BSU president on a train. Throughout her term Velma saw her position as temporary. She noted that she did not know of any girls who had been President of the BSU since her war term.<sup>18</sup> As an example of the embodiment of the ideals of patriotic piety, Velma stepped into a public leadership role when needed. At the same time, she acknowledged it was traditionally masculine position and did not consider her presidency to be a permanent change but a wartime necessity, thus keeping it from undermining the conservative (and her own) ideal of religious male leadership.

The female students at Christian colleges also had their social lives disrupted by the war. An article in *Christian Advocate* spoke of the loneliness of college girls waiting for their boyfriends, husbands, and friends to return home. The author lamented, “Activities are being planned, but just doing things won't banish loneliness. The girl who waits with that pin or ring reminding her of someone, somewhere she cannot possibly reach, isn't so sure about her arguments and her ‘intellectual doubts.’” But these girls were not only lonely, they were also determined to find ways to prepare for the time their patriotic piety would be most needed. “Girls want to be ready for the men who return-- tired, bitter, disillusioned. They want to know what is going on; they want to be the

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<sup>17</sup> Velma Ray Huggins, Oral History of Velma Ray Huggins, interview by L. Katherine Cook and Katy Jennings Stokes, August 27, 1982, 50, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

strength, the hope and the ideal of the young men who return to the campus.”<sup>19</sup> Denham remembered even Pat Neff, the president of Baylor during the war, was deeply aware of the loneliness of his female students. She and her sister both had husbands away at war, and Neff came to visit the war wives daily for the duration of the war.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of the practical ways students could contribute to the war effort while at a Christian college, there was still an understandable sense of loss of the normalcy of college life.<sup>21</sup>

The 1944 *Round-up*, edited and produced by students themselves, made explicit note of the changes female students had endured. It declared,

Three cheers for the college women of '44. They deserve a bit of praise in serving their time in school, for making the adjustment to serious war-time education minus the rah, rahs of normal college life. The usual date time was filled with Red Cross work. Nurses' Aide training, nutrition courses, and donations and drives for the Red Cross Blood Bank. They face today and prepare for the victorious tomorrow while so many of their loved ones fight for it....<sup>22</sup>

In many ways, their experiences mirrored those of their mothers. Pushed by the necessity of war out of their domestic and religious spheres, these college women embraced an ideal that did not reject traditional womanhood but instead adapted it. In turn, their colleges made temporary changes to accommodate the war effort without undermining the traditional ideal of female students studying to become mothers and missionaries. In the public sphere of higher education, patriotic piety was embraced and reinforced.

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<sup>19</sup> “College Women in Wartime,” *Christian Advocate*, May 4, 1944, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Louise Durham Denham, Oral History of Louise Durham Denham, interview by Lois E. Myers, December 17, 1994, 53, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University.

<sup>21</sup> The novel *The Last Year of the War*, which tells the story of a girl attending a Bible training school in Chicago during the war years, also recounts this sense of loneliness and determination. Shirley Nelson, *The Last Year of the War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> Baylor University, *The Round-up* (Waco, Tex: Baylor University, 1944), 128.

*“What Kind of Women are the Waacs?”: Patriotic Piety and the Military*

When assessing the public roles of conservative Protestant women, the role of soldier seems a dramatic departure from the traditional ideal of Christian womanhood. The Catholic Church opposed the WAACs because of the “teachings and principles of the Roman Catholic Church.” The National Catholic Women’s Union echoed the ideals of patriotic piety, denouncing women in the military as “a serious menace to the home and foundation of a true Christian and democratic country.” Surprisingly, since the Catholic Church usually held equally conservative convictions about gender, conservative Protestants were much more amenable to the idea of female soldiers than their Catholic brothers and sisters.<sup>23</sup> Although they rarely made statements explicitly condoning or condemning the inclusion of women in the armed forces, their periodicals featured testimonials and ads showing the WAAC in a positive light.<sup>24</sup> This issue exemplifies the rare occasion when a life of patriotism took priority over piety, although both elements were still included in the rhetoric surrounding these new soldiers.

Over 300,000 women served in the United States’ Military during World War II. 140,000 served as WACs in the Woman’s Army Corps, 100,000 were WAVEs (the female branch of the Navy), and the rest served as Marines, nurses, or as members of the Coast Guard. Two-thirds of those who enlisted were Protestant (making these women particularly relevant to this study), and 80 percent were single.<sup>25</sup> The WAAC (Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps) was created on May 15, 1942, but in 1943 it became the

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<sup>23</sup> “Catholics V. WAACs,” *Time* 39, no. 24 (June 15, 1942): 41.

<sup>24</sup> For an example of an advertisement for the WAVES in a conservative Protestant periodical, see *The Baptist Record*, Thursday, July 13, 1944, page 7.

<sup>25</sup> D’Ann Campbell, “Servicewomen of World War II,” *Armed Forces & Society* (Sage Publications Inc.) 16, no. 2 (Winter, 90,1990): 253.

Women's Army Corps instead, giving women the same ranks and pay as male soldiers. Although the addition of women to the military was a revolutionary development in the United States, this number still represented a very small percentage of American women. None of the women interviewed for this thesis knew any women personally who entered the military during World War II. Still, those who served made a strong impression on their contemporaries and history, attracting the attention of the secular and Christian media.

Conservative Protestant women going to the war-front or training camps left behind traditional expectations of marriage and family life, if only for a limited time. Some of these women were already married, with their husbands also enlisted; while others were escaping unfulfilling war jobs.<sup>26</sup> Still, conservative Protestants (both the media and the soldiers themselves) took care to frame their service in religious and domestic terms. In an article praising their daughter's service with "The Flying Tigers," the conservative Protestant Mr. and Mrs. Buckner listed the roles she had fulfilled while on duty. They included hospital service, protecting supplies, administrative duties, acting as a hostess, and writing letters to the mothers and sweethearts of boys who died in combat—all very domestic activities.<sup>27</sup> The message of the article was clear: becoming a soldier did not necessarily mean one must give up her domestic ideals.

The spiritual life of female soldiers was of great concern as well. Eleanor McLerran DeLancey, a Baylor graduate and WAAC soldier, kept a scrapbook containing seven church bulletins from services she attended during the war. One of the bulletins

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<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth R. Pollock, "Yes, Ma'am!: The Personal Papers of a WAAC Private," in *American Women in a World at War: Cotemporary Accounts from World War II*, ed. Judy Barrett Litoff, n.d., 37.

<sup>27</sup> Hal F. and Mrs. Buckner, "She Kept Them Flying," *Baptist Standard*, August 6, 1942, 3.

contained this note for its readers. “Suggestions: Your folks will be happy to know you are attending chapel services. Be sure to enclose this bulletin in your next letter home.”<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, reports from the women themselves often emphasized church attendance and spiritual growth. Katherine Sherer, a WAAC recruit, wrote of churches near the WAAC base being “crowded beyond capacity.”<sup>29</sup> She also declared that being away from home made her more aware of God’s presence. Betsy Stockridge, a volunteer for the WAVES, wrote:

I believe that I grew spiritually at Stillwater. Being there away from my friends and family made me realize more than ever how much I need God's help, not to overcome any great temptation, but just to live from day to day and live up to the standards which I have set for my life. I appreciate as never before the meaning of being a Christian.<sup>30</sup>

These women seemed well aware of the need to reassure family and friends of their continued piety. This is not surprising; as 41 percent of all WAC recruits reported that they had overcome the opposition of a close relative to join.<sup>31</sup> Outsiders describing the state of women in the service also emphasized their moral uprightness and femininity. The large number of women attending various worship services and prayer meetings was highlighted in an article in *The Watchman-Examiner*. The author quoted a chaplain declaring WACs “99.44 percent ‘tops’!”<sup>32</sup> A piece in *The Presbyterian* asked, “What kind of women are the Waacs?” The answer must have soothed the minds of anyone

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<sup>28</sup> “South Post Chapel Program, Eleanor McLerran DeLancey Collection,” n.d., Accession #3831, Box 1, Folder 1, Texas Collection, Baylor University.

<sup>29</sup> Katherine Sherer, “I Live in WAACdom!,” *The Window of YWA*, March 1943.

<sup>30</sup> Betsy B. Stockridge, “I Am a Navy Girl!,” *The Window of YWA*, January 1944.

<sup>31</sup> Campbell, “Servicewomen of World War II,” 254.

<sup>32</sup> Christian Advocate, “WAACs,” *The Watchman-Examiner*, January 7, 1943.

questioning the suitability of women serving in the war. “Many chaplains told us that they represent an extremely high type of American womanhood, and our observation confirmed this opinion. They are a cross-section of the women-at-home.”<sup>33</sup>

Conservative readers could feel comforted knowing women in the military were still maintaining the traditional virtues of piety and domesticity.

Even mainstream Americans worried about the moral suitability of the WACs and the WAVES, however. When originally founded in 1942 the women’s military units were well respected by the public. Leaders of some of the nation’s most prestigious female universities and colleges were hired as directors, including Wellesley’s president, Mildred McAfee who became the first director of the WAVES. Officer training for the WACs and WAVES also took place on these campuses, including Smith and Mt. Holyoke.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, the WACs eventually came under attack by the media through a “slander campaign” in 1943, a campaign that originated with male soldiers. Rumors of homosexuality, sexual promiscuity, and alcoholism among the WACs were rampant until a two-year investigation by military and civilian officials finally proved them false.<sup>35</sup> *The New York Times* declared on June 27, 1943, “The morals of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps have been examined in the brutal light of national

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<sup>33</sup> Paul Patton Faris, “The Women of the WAAC,” *The Presbyterian* (Philadelphia, PA, August 12, 1943), 18–19; See also Caroline Wintin, “Religion Among the WAACS,” *The Watchman-Examiner* (New York [etc.], January 7, 1943), 1160.

<sup>34</sup> Laurie Scrivener, “U.S. Military Women in World War II: The Spar, Wac, Waves, Wasp, and Women Marines in U.S. Government Publications,” *Journal of Government Information* 26, no. 4 (July 1999): 364.

<sup>35</sup> Scrivener, “U.S. Military Women in World War II”; “Stimson Condemns Gossip About WAAC: Secretary Asserts Immorality,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1943, sec. Special section.

publicity and have been found good.”<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the tainted reputation of the WACs remained and recruiting numbers dropped dramatically after 1943.<sup>37</sup>

It may then be surprising to see Christian periodicals praising women in the military throughout the duration of the war. For example, Stockridge’s testimony was printed in the *Window of YWCA* in January of 1944. But in reality, the rumor scandals made positive press for Christian WACs all the more necessary. In order to defend the reputation for piety and morality of these conservative Protestant women, Christian periodicals needed to speak louder than the voice of the secular media. Silence could have implicated these women with the rumored behaviors, so instead they declared their morality and domesticity unequivocally. Military service may not have been the most ideal way to exhibit or enhance patriotic piety, but conservative Protestants were determined to keep their female soldiers from becoming a liability. Instead, they were used as another badge of patriotism for the conservative Christian community.

### *Patriotic Piety and Rosie the Riveter*

Female soldiers were certainly a novelty for wartime Americans, but no image would come to symbolize the role of American women during World War II more indelibly than “Rosie the Riveter”. The quintessential “Rosie” was a woman who exemplified patriotic femininity while working in a wartime factory wearing overalls and a bandanna. Propaganda posters idealized her as a national heroine, and Norman Rockwell painted an iconic portrait of “Rosie” for the cover of the *Saturday Evening*

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<sup>36</sup> “WAACS Fight Back: ‘Sinister Rumors, Aimed at Destroying Their Reputation’ Are Denounced,” *New York Times*, June 27, 1943.

<sup>37</sup> Scrivener, “U.S. Military Women in World War II,” 365.



*Post.*<sup>38</sup> Indeed, many women entered the work force for the first time during the war, in traditionally masculine jobs. However, both mainstream Americans and conservative Protestants wrestled with the impact of this change. Both voiced concerns for the health of the family, and as we have seen, emphasized the necessity of other wartime roles for women. Conservative Protestants, in particular, differed on whether “Rosie” fit into the ideal of patriotic piety. For many average Christian women, there was little sense of a conflict between their Christian ideals and wartime work. Periodicals and public figures, however, took a decidedly more ambivalent stance on Rosie the Riveter.

In December of 1941, the *Woman’s Home Companion* published “Women Work for Their Country,” an article highlighting ways women could make practical contributions to the war effort. Unlike the highly domestic duties praised in other articles, the *Home Companion* emphasized vocational work outside of the home. It challenged women, “Perhaps you think you could drive a truck or an ambulance but to be really useful you need also to know how to repair it. These housewives are taking a course in motor mechanics at a vocational school in Syracuse, New York.”<sup>39</sup> Women’s periodicals declared that not only should women drive trucks, they should also become mechanics. Whether referred to specifically or eluded to thematically, “Rosie the Riveter” was ubiquitous in secular advertisements and articles. This was partly due to a campaign by the Office of War Information, through the publication of the “Magazine War Guide,” encouraging magazines to publish stories and fiction that would help to

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<sup>38</sup> Allan M Winkler, *Home front U.S.A.: America during World War II* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: H. Davidson, 1986), 59.

<sup>39</sup> Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, “Women Work for Their Country,” *Woman’s Home Companion*, December 1941, 34–35.

satisfy the need for five million new war workers.<sup>40</sup> To this end, magazines also stressed that housework and war work could both be completed sufficiently: a woman did not have to choose between them. Ads such as those for Westinghouse or Eureka showed women running a home and making gas masks or building airplanes at the same time.<sup>41</sup> But Historian Karen Anderson argues even this “almost obligatory praise for the homemaker” showed “that the real prestige was conferred only on women who assumed previously male responsibilities.”<sup>42</sup> A furious author of a letter to the editor (presumably a housewife) expressed disgust at the praise for war workers. This letter provides evidence that Anderson’s observations are astute. The letter author wrote,

What is all this ado about female war workers? Where do they get the idea that they are to be bowed to just because they wear a defense badge and a pair of slacks? All these workers are actually tired from is mentally computing the amount they've earned for that one-day.<sup>43</sup>

Although every American did not embrace it, the message of the media was clear. The woman who embodied patriotic femininity worked in and out of the home with equal competency, but placed war work among her top priorities.

Despite the messages of the popular press, most American women never became a “Rosie.” According to Anderson, only 26 percent of American wives worked for pay

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<sup>40</sup> Maureen Honey, “Maternal Welders: Women’s Sexuality and Propaganda on the Home Front During World War II,” in *The American People at War: Minorities and Women in the Second World War*, ed. Walter L. Hixon, vol. 10, *The American Experience in World War II* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 37.

<sup>41</sup> As cited in Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 41, 43, 117.

<sup>42</sup> Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 11.

<sup>43</sup> As cited in *ibid.*, 90.

during the war.<sup>44</sup> Over 60 percent of American women remained outside the labor force entirely. Of those who did work, only one-third had been employed as housewives before the war. “Rosie” was usually a single woman who had worked outside the home prior to World War II.<sup>45</sup> Many women chose to continue as housewives during the war, mostly due to the large amount of manual labor required to raise a family during the 1940s. According to D’Ann Cambell, households in Vermont took seventy-two hours per week to run, while adding even only one child raised the workload to ninety-five hours a week.<sup>46</sup> As there was not yet a widespread use of electrical appliances, women did all cleaning, cooking, and sewing manually.

As previously discussed, children and the responsibilities of motherhood were additional reasons for women to stay home. The concerns over juvenile delinquency and “war babies” led the media to add a note of caution to their push for war workers.<sup>47</sup> The *Woman’s Home Companion* even asked, “Should We Draft Mothers?” The article did not criticize mothers for joining the war industry, but acknowledged that many saw it as their patriotic duty. However, the concern that women were forgetting their family responsibilities weighed heavily on the author.

The situation becomes more acute every day as more and more American mothers swap their aprons for overalls and trade their homes for auto-trailers. Many of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>45</sup> Honey, “Maternal Welders: Women’s Sexuality and Propaganda on the Home Front During World War II,” 56.

<sup>46</sup> D’Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America : Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 175.

<sup>47</sup> A.W. Tozer, “What’s Behind Juvenile Delinquency?,” *Moody Monthly*, September 1944. Toombs, Alfred. “War Babies.” *Woman’s Home Companion*, April 1944, 32. In *Women’s Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, edited by Nancy A. Walker, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1998) 54-56.

these mothers naturally are attracted by the pay checks promised them by the defense industries. Others are sincerely trying to do their patriotic duty, as they have been misled into seeing it. They are told at every turn that only in the factory can they help win the war.... Apparently they do not realize that their primary responsibility is to their children and the America of tomorrow.<sup>48</sup>

“Rosie” could only be helpful to the nation if she were not neglecting her family. At the end of the war, many women who successfully worked within the war industries also chose to return home because of their families.<sup>49</sup>

The experiences of conservative Protestant women in relation to war work reflect the experiences of American women as a whole. Some entered the work force while others stayed home with their families. Their testimonies, and those of their daughters, show little doubt as to whether working outside the home was an appropriate occupation for a conservative woman. The nature of these sources may have a part to play in this perspective. Working outside the home has become more acceptable, even encouraged, among evangelical women during the twentieth century. “Rosie the Riveter” became such a treasured icon of the World War II home front that women may want to be remembered as part of the working women movement. Therefore interviewees may remember wartime work in a more positive light than their actual experiences during the war would suggest. Because of this source issue, it is important to weigh the oral histories of conservative women against the rhetoric of the Christian media in the 1940s. The reality of how patriotic piety and “Rosie the Riveter” were balanced likely lies somewhere in between the two.

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<sup>48</sup> “Should We Draft Mothers?” James Madison Wood, *Woman’s Home Companion*, January 1944, 48-49, In Walker, Nancy A. *Women’s Magazines, 1940-1960*.

<sup>49</sup> Colton, Jennifer. “Why I Quit Working.” *Good Housekeeping*, September 1951, 53. In *Women’s Magazines 1940-1960*.

Many conservative Protestant women, like their mainstream sisters, stayed home with their families even in the war years, especially those with young children. Virginia Woodbury, Pat Williams, Audrey Perkins, Donna Johnson, and Joyce Pareigat's mothers (who lived in a variety of urban and rural environments) did not work outside of the home. These women offered this information only when asked specifically about the vocation of their parents: they saw their situations to be average rather than unusual or unpatriotic. However, their experiences with stay-at-home mothers did not lead to any moral aversion to working outside the home. Audrey Perkins returned home after one year at McAlester College to work in an office at the oar docks in Two Harbors, Minnesota, at Lake Superior. Her work took the place of a man who had been called into service. Pat Williams also noted that many women in her church worked at a munitions plant about thirteen miles away, especially those women whose husbands were in the service. She recognized that this was a new phenomenon, "Before then women basically didn't many of them work outside the home, nurses probably, school teachers, and a few secretaries . . . But most women just stayed home." However, Williams's observation contained no moral judgment on women who worked or those who stayed at home.

Other conservative Protestant women had mothers who worked outside the home, or who, like Perkins, worked in the wartime industries themselves.<sup>50</sup> Donna M. Panknin Denton worked two jobs during the war. Her first was a paid version of Perkins's volunteer work, playing the organ or piano for local funerals. Her primary job was

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<sup>50</sup> Virginia Woodbury, Oral History of Virginia Woodbury, interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 10, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.; Pat Williams, Oral History of Pat Williams, interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 16, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.; Audrey Perkins, Oral History of Audrey Perkins, interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 10, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.; Donna Johnson, Oral History of Donna Johnson, interview by Adina Johnson, Telephone, November 14, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.; Joyce Pareigat and Adina Johnson, Oral History of Joyce Pareigat, Telephone, November 13, 2012, Adina Johnson Private Collection, Waco, Texas.

working at a war plant that manufactured ammonia and nitric acid. She noted, “Of course, I was in the administrative building,” a comment revealing her assumption that women wouldn’t work in the factory itself. Still, she worked outside the home and her mother did as well, although she did not give any further details of her mother’s work.<sup>51</sup> According to Ima Hoppe Bekkelund, she and many of her friends worked at the glass plant in Waco, Texas, a job she started when she was twenty-one. Bekkelund did not see her employment as a direct result of the war, but she and her friends were still part of the trend of female employment during the war.<sup>52</sup> Like the majority of the women cited here, she did not offer any religious commentary on her work, only explaining it as a natural part of life in the 1940s.

Mary Ellen Nix Bullock is the only interviewee who offered any commentary on work of women outside the home and its relation to patriotic piety, but even her thoughts were decidedly conflicted, if not contradictory. Bullock’s mother worked during the war driving a gravel truck. The wages her mother made from working did not go into the greater family income, but were for her personal use. She used the majority of her money to buy material with which to make clothes for her children. However, Bullock’s mother was forced to stop working because she could not get a babysitter for her children. Although her work was not contrary to the ideals of patriotic piety (especially because she used her wages on her children), she gave it up when her duties as a mother required

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<sup>51</sup> Donna M. Panknin Denton, Oral History of Donna M. Panknin Denton, interview by Lois E. Myers, May 22, 1998, 6, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University.

<sup>52</sup> Ima Hoppe Bekkelund, Oral History of Ima Hoppe Bekkelund, interview by Lois E. Myers, February 25, 1997, 11–13, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University.

her to.<sup>53</sup> Despite this seemingly positive view of her mother's work, Bullock also alluded to common concerns within her community that women working outside the home would be dangerous for marriages. When speaking about women who worked at a local ordinance plant, she noted, "In fact, I heard some awful stories of marriages getting broken up because women . . . well, they just said, boy, this is a new kind of freedom that women had never had before." Bullock said that this kind of story was never spoken of publicly, but was more a form of town gossip.<sup>54</sup> Although Bullock's mother was able to work without compromising her domestic ideals, other women were apparently not as successful. This reflects very closely the varied results of mainstream American women attempting to become "Rosie", not just conservative women.

The conservative Protestant press took a decidedly more critical stance on "Rosie", their articles focusing on war work's dangers for families and marriages without directly renouncing it. They were pushing back against the pro-"Rosie" agenda of the secular press and warning conservative women against neglecting their primary duties in the home. A poem published in *The Watchman-Examiner* displays the mixed-feelings conservative Protestants felt towards Rosie:

She's swapped her flowered smock for slacks,  
And all her energy and art  
Devoted once to kitchen chores  
Now goes to form an airplane part.  
With strong back and certain touch  
She joins the metal skin and beam,  
Driving stubborn rivets home  
As deftly as she'd sew a seam  
Unflinching she fashions well  
The man-made war birds, swift and fatal,

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<sup>53</sup> Mary Ellen Nix Bullock and Lois E. Myers, Oral History of Mary Ellen Nix Bullock, June 27, 1995, 33–34, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

But building death's a heavy task  
For hands best shaped to rock the cradle.<sup>55</sup>

This poem highlights how emotionally problematic was the necessity of women war workers. It never explicitly denounces factory work, and in fact praises the efforts of those creating plane parts. But this was clearly not a desirable occupation for women better suited for housework or child-rearing. Other articles also approached this issue with trepidation, if not outright warnings. An editorial in *Banner* condemned government propaganda for encouraging women to leave their homes for war work. “The lure of high wages in defense factories has taken thousands of mothers out of their homes and away from their children. War or no war, it is a crime against society and against the institution of the home to urge mothers to abandon their children for the sake of helping win the war.”<sup>56</sup> Conservative Protestants did not mince words when the fate of the family was on the line. A conservative woman who intended to live out the ideals of patriotic piety would have to use extreme caution if she planned to work outside of the home.

### *Conclusion*

Patriotic piety proved to be flexible enough to serve as an ideal even for conservative women who were operating outside of the domestic sphere for the duration of the war. In fact, conservative Protestants often relished this as an opportunity to prove their patriotism. Conservative Protestant women who served in the military or went to

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<sup>55</sup> Nancy Anderson, “The Riveter,” *The Watchman-Examiner*, July 22, 1943, 701.

<sup>56</sup> Editorial, “Guard the Home!,” *Banner* (Grand Rapids, MI, March 26, 1943), 292. See also Marriage and Family, 127, *A Cautious Patriotism* “Solution to the Social Question,” *United Evangelical Action* December 1943, 26; Susan M. Ostrom, “Christian Woman: Stewardship in the Home,” *Moody Monthly* May 1944, 496. Additional comments on the difficulties of both servicemen and women on the home front can be found in: Gilbert Johnstone, “After the War, What?” *Moody Monthly* September 1944, 14-15, 47.



work in a factory were making just as many sacrifices for the war effort as their fellow Americans. Unlike the fundamentalism of the 1920s and 1930s, these conservatives engaged with greater American causes and compromised when necessary.

However flexible their ideals proved to be, the conservative press never placed the principles of Christian domesticity and piety on the back burner. They argued a college education, even if training to become a pilot, would provide women with the skills to interpret scripture and become missionaries or Christian wives at the end of the war. Conservative Christian women who joined the military were not rejecting their Christian values, but instead becoming examples among their fellow soldiers. A Christian “Rosie” could be honorable as long as family and the home always stayed her top priority. The conservative Protestant media differed from the secular media in that Christian authors and editors never wholeheartedly endorsed women in the military or the factories, even as conservative women sought out these roles along with their mainstream counterparts. This ambiguous ground for women’s roles defied explicit conservative moralizing, and thus did not become a roadblock for Christians who were engaging with culture anew.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion

Patriotic Piety sought to combine conservative morality and an emphasis on the home with democratic values. This differentiated the wartime ideals of conservative Protestant women from those of their mainstream American sisters, answering the first question posed in the introduction, “What, if any, were the differences between the ideals communicated to conservative Protestant women and the ideals presented in mainstream culture and the media?” Patriotic femininity encouraged women to be alluring sweethearts worth fighting for, dependable, stoic wives and mothers, and patriotic war-workers in the public sphere. Patriotic piety also encouraged conservative women to be steadfast wives, but primarily focused on their roles as moral examples and spiritual mothers. This domestic language did not preclude conservative Protestant women from entering the public sphere, but provided a reason for them to do so. During World War II they took on public roles in the church, attended college, volunteered, joined the military, and even worked in factories. As spiritual mothers and moral examples, conservative women’s work in the public sphere could extend the influence of the Christian home to the entire nation.

The rhetoric of patriotic piety represented a shift in focus for conservative Protestants. Since the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the 1920s, conservative Protestants had been defined by their single-minded focus on doctrine and evangelism. At most, conservatives during the inter-war period minimized the importance of political

and public social issues, often, they abandoned them completely.<sup>1</sup> Patriotic piety, however, used the language of patriotism as a means of motivation for conservative Protestant women to invest in the public good.

For conservative Protestants, any work for the “public good” needed to include Christianity by definition. How could something be “good” if it did not embrace God and offer the hope of eternal salvation? In this conviction conservative Protestants continued to differ from their modernist and secular peers. Thus, the umbrella of patriotic piety included female missionaries, homemakers, and Sunday school teachers, women who would remain in traditional spiritual and domestic roles. Because of their distinctive definition of the public good, conservative Protestants considered these roles patriotic even though they did not have an explicitly political component.

Conservative Protestants may have continued to emphasize spirituality in their advocacy for the public good, but subtle changes were also occurring. Along with campaigns to send hymnbooks overseas, women formed knitting circles and held fundraisers to raise money for soldiers and allied civilians. Conservative women worked to get childcare for war worker families even while advocating for the importance of women in the home. Church youth groups visited public hospitality houses for soldiers in addition to their weekly prayer meetings. Christian colleges provided their female students with training to become pilots and missionaries concurrently. Patriotic piety’s spiritual and social causes were suddenly linked in an explicit way.

This intersection of social and spiritual concerns is seen clearly in conservative Protestant women’s temperance work during the war years. Alcohol was decried as

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<sup>1</sup> Carpenter, *Fighting Fundamentalism; Modernism and Foreign Missions*; George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

harmful for a person's individual soul and family, as well as the nation as a whole. Conservative women thus advocated for both political and collective action against alcohol in their local communities and on a national scale. No longer content to simply change the heart of individuals, they had to engage in political and social campaigning in order to fight for what they saw as the public good.

Most significantly, conservative Protestant women entered the military with little protest from the Christian press. Instead, service outside of the traditional private sphere was lauded as a representation of "an extremely high type of American womanhood."<sup>2</sup> Using the term "American" emphasized the conservative woman's participation in the greater cause of the war-effort. Thus we see the first part of the answer to the second and third questions, "How did the ideals for conservative Protestant women change or remain stable amidst the larger changes in gender roles in World War II?" and "How did these ideals affect the way conservative Protestants interacted with mainstream Americans and mainstream culture?" This evidence shows that conservative Protestants used patriotic piety as a means to find common ground with their fellow Americans, and this represented a shift in their rhetoric.

In addition to their commitment to the importance of Christianity when defining the public good, conservative Protestants continued to emphasize domesticity and morality in their articulation of patriotic piety. Thus the shift toward social and political awareness did not mean a shift away from the ideals of conservative Christian womanhood. Women were called "spiritual mothers" and those women who entered the military were primarily praised for their most domestic duties such as letter writing and

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Patton Faris, "The Women of the WAAC," *The Presbyterian*, August 12, 1943, 1160.

hospital service.<sup>3</sup> Conservative Protestant women never fully embraced war work, but instead the press sounded subtle warnings that a “Rosie” may neglect her domestic and parental duties. In addition, the Christian home was still held up as the most important contributor to America’s exceptional character. Patriotic piety may have led women into the public sphere, but it did not remove them from the circle of domesticity.

In a similar manner, morality was hailed as “the foundation of true Christian womanhood.”<sup>4</sup> If a woman did not maintain her virtue she was useless in both the public and the private sphere. Temperance activists fought to keep women out of bars because they asserted that alcohol often led to impropriety. According to conservative Protestants, alcohol also robbed a mother of her ability to teach morality to her children. The Christian press fiercely defended the reputations of female conservative Protestant soldiers: a scandal would have negated the value of their service outside the domestic sphere. So despite their efforts to engage mainstream American culture, conservative Protestants maintained some of their conservative spiritual convictions in regards to womanhood.

### *Epilogue*

In the post-war years, mainstream American women embraced domesticity wholeheartedly. It would be easy to presume that conservative Protestant women thus found themselves at the center of American culture, only to have to contend for their place once again in the 1970s (through STOP-ERA). But like the story of conservative Protestants during World War II, the narrative of the relationship between conservative women and secular culture is almost certainly more complicated. In the same vein, more

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<sup>3</sup> Hal F. and Mrs. Buckner, “She Kept Them Flying,” *Baptist Standard*, August 6, 1942, 32.

<sup>4</sup> “Sound a Warning,” *The Watchman-Examiner*, December 18, 1941, 1286.

studies must be done on the connection between patriotic piety's timid steps into the public sphere and the emergence of the full-blown post World War II neo-evangelical movement. These historical questions cannot be answered within the scope of this thesis, but are raised by the implications of its findings.

At least one young conservative Protestant woman declared that the war caused her and her classmates to reject domesticity and the American dream. Lillian Brown, a Baylor student, said, "We as college students realized that all the answers were not in textbooks and in getting degrees and in living in a ranch home and having two cars and a dog and a wife and three kids—that this was not the answer. And I think that a lot of soul-searching went on."<sup>5</sup> Conservative Protestant women during World War II never fully bought into the ideal of patriotic femininity, but instead created their own values in the form of patriotic piety. The historical impact of these convictions on conservative Protestant women and the nation as a whole after the war is still to be discovered.

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<sup>5</sup> Lillian Wheelless Brown, Oral History of Lillian Wheelless Brown, interview by Thomas L. Charlton and Katy Jennings Stokes, October 22, 1981, 9, Oral History Institute, Baylor University.

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