

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Leonardo da Vinci found the study of faces a fascinating and character-revealing exercise. Relying on his observation and subsequent caricature drawings, he declared that some people's faces are good only for passing food. Like da Vinci, political cartoonists make their living from faces, using their medium to reveal character. Even the faces of animals symbolizing a people frequently appear in the press. The cartoon of the "stern eagle looking in the mirror and seeing there a chaste and beautiful swan"¹ reveals a face of American nationalism that is pervasive in the twentieth century.

Without such cartoons, caricatures, or pictures of faces, human or animal, this volume focuses on the faces of individuals and the types of nationalistic expression they represent, both beauty marks and warts. It reveals how exponents of nationalism sought to forge a new religious relevance predicated on the American experience and the extent which these diverse styles of religious nationalism create and reflect the tension in the American experience of the twentieth century. The study reveals the similar nationalistic expressions uttered by unlikely bedfellows within Protestantism. Common theology did not necessarily shape one face of nationalism.

The scope of the study, 1900 to the Vietnam era, can be helpful not only in understanding the present phenomenon of the religious resurgence in American politics, but also because during this period Protestant leadership gave mixed signals as to who the American people are and what they are about as a people, contributing to the crisis of community in this post-Vietnam/Watergate era. Today many conservative religious leaders look to the turn of the century as a glorious time in American history when the United States was emerging as an industrial giant and world power. Those years are perceived as glory days when America began to assert itself in a manner advocated by these admirers of that era for today's world.

Other leaders of a more liberal persuasion in the current religious community look to this period, but as a time of shameful imperialism that should not be repeated in our time: they choke on the policies that are reminiscent of earlier gunboat diplomacy mentality. What, then, are the American people to believe about themselves and their mission to the world? To understand this dilemma more fully, we consider the numerous forms of nationalism prevalent in the American Protestant experience and the confusion of identity revealed there.

Since a point of departure in this work considers nationalistic expression as the centerpiece of the inquiry, a careful definition and explanation of the form of nationalism employed is necessary. This is especially important when the term is applied to personalities—as in this study—that are not normally perceived as exponents of nationalism. Some who read this volume may even take offense that this or that person is even included in a study of religious nationalism. This is understandable since nationalism today is normally defined in negative terms. It is often identified as a major incentive for arms races, imperialism, and revolution, emanating from a mindless enthusiasm of fanatical citizens asserting their identity and willing to follow the leader over the cliff of national aggression against other nation-states on behalf of the mother/fatherland. Such has often been the case. But to apply the term “nationalism” exclusively with this connotation would be grossly incomplete as a working definition of the term and hence an inappropriate description of the widely varied nationalistic expressions revealed by most of the subjects of this study. Just a cursory perusal of the enormous amount of the literature on the subject will give one a sense of the variety of nationalistic expressions identified by scholars in the field. Happily, much of the spadework on the varieties of nationalism has been done. Louis Snyder is one example; his summary piece titled *Varieties of Nationalism* elaborated on the American style, which he identified as the nationalism of messianism.²

The nationalism defined by Snyder is the belief that the nation has come into existence to mark a new stage in history that will transform the human condition from misery to abundance, happiness, and peace. It is a belief by a people that their way of life is superior and should be adopted by others.

Consistent with this definition early Americans were certain that Europe had sunk into decrepitude and senility. One American hayseed boasted: “We air [sic] a great people and bound to be troublesome to them kings.” Noah Webster’s spelling book made it culturally official: “Europe has grown old in folly, corruption, and tyranny.” And

Jefferson, the opposite in intellect and culture from our "hayseed" ancestor: "We are acting for all of mankind."³

That Americans should have felt obliged to be messianic should come as no surprise. At the time of national infancy, Americans were nurtured on a Calvinist teething ring that God had chosen certain people to do His work. For these infants of nation-building, this meant the obligation to establish the "City on a Hill" with the expectation that the rest of the world would ultimately fall into line. The mission of the United States, said Thomas Paine, was to "excite emulation throughout the kingdoms of the earth and meliorate the conditions of the human race."⁴ It is unnecessary to go into all the details of subsequent evidence of American messianic nationalism. Merely citing that America entered World War I to make the world safe for democracy, World War II to save it from Nazi and Japanese tyranny, and Korea and Vietnam from Communism, will suffice.

However, while American nationalism has been messianic in style, it has not always presented a consistent face in revealing the object of its messianism. It revealed a libertarianism, a materialism, an Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism, and an egalitarianism. Obviously, not all these faces were compatible, and when revealed simultaneously created a very confusing and sometimes contorted image of American identity and purpose. Libertarianism was a unifying concept identified with the idea of individual liberty in opposition to the power of the state. It was a prominent sentiment seen in the Articles of Confederation at this country's inception, and later on in states' rights movements at various times in United States history up to the mid-twentieth century. And, Americans liked to tell the world how free they were as individuals in American society even if locked into some corporate juggernaut.

Materialism, a second unifying concept, has always been a major component in American nationalistic expression, reinforced by the so-called Protestant ethic. While on the one hand declaring that money was not everything in life, many Americans, on the other hand, believed that worldly success was a sign of God's favor on individual and nation alike. Whether religious or not, Americans tended to think that the prosperity of the nation legitimated their political and economic system applicable to the whole world.

The American belief in egalitarianism, another unifying concept, is fraught with ambiguity. In one sense Americans found their identity by preaching that the ideal society, their society, was egalitarian, that one person was as good as any other and entitled to the same rights and privileges. This egalitarianism was even expressed proudly that

Americans were made up of all races, creeds, ethnic origins, and cultures. However, this image of egalitarianism was qualified by the insistence that multicultural diversity be Anglo-Saxonized—that the diversity of race, creed, ethnic origin, and cultures was desirable only insofar as the unique characteristics of each were subordinated to a paternalistic Eurocentric core. The many unique cultural traditions in American society were seen as quaint contributions to the cultural mix, especially on parade day when spectators could feel good about seeing the colorful costumes worn by people who would no doubt be expected to return the next day to “normal dress.” This subordination of cultures has been euphemistically called “Americanization,” and the popular identification of this process the “melting pot.”

It must be made very clear at the outset that this is not the sense in which the term “egalitarianism” is used in this study. In fact, that concept of the melting pot and Americanization can evolve into the very opposite of egalitarianism, a view in which all cultural traditions represented in American society are expected to capitulate to the mythical Anglo-Saxon “values of the past.” This attitude was even extended to national immigration policy, which in the 1920s favored Northern Europeans since they were considered to be more assimilable into American society than Southern Europeans and Orientals, and hence superior. The concept of racial hierarchy helped to explain levels of civilization. At the top of the hierarchy was the American civilization. Whether it be a Theodore Roosevelt who believed progress comes when the civilized subdues the barbarian, or a Harry Truman who spoke of Eastern hordes vs. Christian morality, the rankings after World War II were similar to the racial rankings at the turn of the century. The terms were different—the rankings the same. Americans knew they were “on top” as Anglo-Americans over what is now called the Third World. “This genteel and patronizing label simply made more plausible the denial of any links to an unfashionable racist worldview.”⁵ But even with this respectable designation for dark-skinned, backward, and sometimes barbarous people, the real American opinion on race remained amazingly consistent throughout this century.

The bias affected nearly everyone in the American Protestant community—liberal and premillennialist, believer and skeptic. Their attitudes toward ethnicity at home were reflected in the same hierarchy of race on the mission field, “having the practical effect of little distinction between those who went out [consciously] to civilize, and those who felt they were scorning such an approach.”⁶ They believed the white Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic race was destined by God to Christianize and civilize the world. Yet the white American community

stumbled over itself to tell the world how egalitarian it was. The most popular American World War I poster was one by Howard Chandler Christy which depicted a young girl appealing to onlookers to buy Liberty Bonds and pointing with pride to the list of names: "Americans All! DuBois, Smith, O'Brien, Knutson, Cejka, Haucke, Pappaneikopolous, Gonzales, Andrassi, Villotto, Levy, Turovich, Kowalski, Chiczanevicz." What this kind of list meant to Theodore Roosevelt was clear. "We must shun," said he, "as we would shun the plague all efforts to make us separate in groups of separate nationalities. We must all of us be Americans and nothing but Americans." It was a nationalistic rallying cry in spite of the egalitarian label and was characterized by a strong Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism meant to blot out any unique characteristics of ethnic groups in America, and subordinate them under an Anglo-Saxon core and a messianism that sought to make the world in its own image according to its perception of itself as a superior culture.

In another sense, however, one which represents a genuine egalitarian nationalism, American identity celebrated an ethnic diversity that was seen to actually make the nation stronger culturally, politically, economically, and morally. Rather than the metaphor of the "melting pot" that destroys distinctive cultural uniqueness in the societal soup, a more accurate, but still limited metaphor would be the mosaic, which displays distinctiveness and color, making the total production the more beautiful. Whether intentional or not, this mosaic metaphor was deficient in that it tended to legitimate what was not only multicultural brilliance in America but also economic, political, and social deprivation wherever it existed. However, those who connected American identity with this mosaic perception often portrayed the United States as the greatest and most successful experiment in multicultural diversity by a nation-state in history and a model for the world to emulate. This egalitarian nationalism extended beyond merely celebrating the diversity of cultures within the unity of the American nation to include an appreciation of all cultures in the world as equal under the eye of God. It maintained that each nation must be allowed/encouraged to maintain its own identity and development to its fullest potential.

Two centuries ago Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), known as the father of nationalism, expressed these sentiments in the wake of Napoleon's conquests, which continued to entrench French cultural dominance in all of Europe and specifically in the German "hoi polloi" who were aping French customs and speaking the French language. Irritated by this, he argued that all nations and their cultures had an

equal right to exist and should be proud of their respective cultures. Rejecting Enlightenment notions about the ideal man and ideal society, it held that no person was like any other person and no nation like any other nation. All were part of humanity, and all made their unique contributions.

Here was an egalitarian nationalism, that few Americans, given their sense of superiority, could swallow. However, some few did in varying degrees recognize without judgment the uniqueness and legitimacy of all cultures and religions. Celebrating this worldwide diversity of cultures and religions, exponents argued that much could be learned from the diverse peoples of the world as well as much given, enriching all.

While most Americans could not buy into this position of egalitarian nationalism—all cultures being equal under the eye of God—there was one sense in which they bought into Herder's nationalism totally, without knowing that Herder ever existed. It was his emphasis that each people must find its own way, one that fit its traditions, literature, language and customs. In exhorting the Germans to be German, he got downright carried away with "Awake, German nation! Do not let them [French] ravish your palladium! . . . Germans speak German! Spew out the Seine's ugly slime."⁸

Such inflammatory sentiments virtually guaranteed the involvement of politics in defending cultural nationalism, the very thing Herder wished to avoid. It was now only a step to conclude that while all cultures were equal, some were more equal than others. Says Gordon Craig:

It was Herder's tragedy that the essential humanity of his philosophy was to be perverted into narrow political nationalism by patriotic tub-thumpers, and that his views on the individuality of the nation were to be transformed by philosophers like J. G. Fichte and George Fredrick Hegel into an idealization of the state as a kind of super-personality to which the individual citizen owed complete allegiance, which, indeed, alone validated his existence.⁹

As for Germany, then, the ideas of Herder, this father of nationalism, were contorted all out of recognition, and the Germany of a later century came to wallow in the horror of Nazi German tribalism.

But the ideas of Herder unsullied by tribal maniacs framed a particular face of American nationalism that represented a force for cultural identity. Again, without necessarily having Herder in mind, American artists, writers, philosophers, and theologians of the twen-

tieth century sought to develop a genuine national culture. They continued a trend that began in the early nineteenth century when they became sensitive to their rootlessness as a new nation. Chafing under the sentence of American cultural inferiority from Europeans, these cultural elitists worked for the birth of a genuine American art, literature, and philosophy. Throughout this century some religious leaders also saw the need for a new and unique application of religion to the threat of industrialism. Within the diversity of Protestantism there was emphasis on creating a genuine American religion and an American church applicable to uniquely American problems, an aspect of American cultural nationalism.

The messianic spin-off of this development was particularly interesting in relation to the search for an American church. This search led to either the conviction that the American model be spread through missions or to a contrary conviction that each culture develop its indigenous style of Christian commitment. In either case, a form of messianic nationalism: make them like Westerners/Americans or encourage them to develop their own way.

In defining and explaining American nationalism as used in this study, then, we see a phenomenon that is messianic with variant supporting characteristics that are not necessarily compatible and in fact represent antithetical perceptions of American identity, but are seen, nonetheless, by diverse groups and individuals as the enlightened way to live and worthy of being spread around the world.

But not only was there ambiguity and conflict over about what to be messianic, but also there was sharp difference on how to be messianic. Should America win the world by killing off the wicked, sending them to their early reward, or win the world by killing with kindness? Should the messianic mission be accomplished through the example of a superior way or through leadership in a search for truth regardless of source, acknowledging the mutual exchange of diverse cultural exponents?

Robert Jewett, in his book with the engaging title *The Captain America Complex*, acknowledged the American ambiguity in how to be messianic. Jewett distinguished between "zealous nationalism" and "prophetic realism." These concurrent strands of mission style in American life, both biblically based, feed the American perception of mission to the world. Zealous nationalism is "derived from the Book of Revelation that after destruction of the Beast the world will automatically come under control of the saints."¹⁰ It is the driving force to redeem the world by destroying the wicked and fits with the traditional perception of a nationalism exuding superiority and race and viewing the world in manichean terms.

Prophetic realism is based on Jesus' rejection of a messianic kingdom of violence (Luke 4:5-8); that evil is not in the enemy, but in the heart of the chosen people themselves (Mark 3:1-6); that zealous rebellion will not guarantee intervention of divine forces: "Those who take the sword, die by the sword." It seeks to redeem the world for coexistence by impartial justice. Being very close to egalitarian nationalism, it differs only in its assumption of superiority, but a superiority to be demonstrated by example rather than by physical conquest.

These two strands, interwoven and coexisting in the American mind, are incompatible in their extremes. The strain alternately surfaces and submerges at varying points in American history. On the one hand, a Timothy Dwight saw the American Revolution ushering in the millennial hope. "Through earth's wide realms Thy glory shall extend and savage nations at Thy scepter bend." On the other hand, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." Manifest Destiny justified wars against Mexicans and Indians, while the McGuffey Reader warned of the dangers of zealotry. The "Battle Hymn of the Republic" promised the elimination of the wicked by the "terrible swift sword," while Lincoln urged "malice toward none, and charity toward all." Angels called to battle to rid the world of Kaiserism, overcame the plea for a "Peace Without Victory." On the one hand, Communism and Russia, the Bear of the North, would be destroyed by Armageddon, ushering in the ultimate reign of Christ and his saints. On the other hand, Communism must be overcome by meeting the demands of rising expectations among the underdeveloped peoples of the world. On a continuum reaching from the most militant form of zealous nationalism to the most pacific form of prophetic realism, the variant acts of American mission fit within this broad range of redemptive mission to the world. Though vastly different in styles of messianic mission, these two strands in American history—zealous nationalism and prophetic realism—represented agreement on a central theme. America was great, perhaps the greatest nation-state in history, and it had a mission to the world.

Within these parameters, one can recall the ambiguity of messianic method relative to American foreign policy. As perhaps the greatest nation-state in history, the United States had generally been assumed to have the wisdom and experience to define a good revolution and a bad revolution, as occurred at various times and places around the world, and had acted accordingly. To either aid or hinder a revolution, Americans sometimes acted from motives of morality and sometimes from self-interest. Logically, revolutions subsequent to the American Revolution were evaluated according to the extent they

copied the American model. Americans were quick to welcome revolutions "which seemed to reflect the example of their own."¹¹

However, by the end of the nineteenth century it became apparent that more was needed than merely serving as an example to the world. All men may be created equal, but certainly not all revolutions. With the concern over suspect revolutions came the call for possible intervention. Should freedom come to danger, "be never wanting there." The mission of America must assist the victims of oppression wherever they may be. As Woodrow Wilson would put it, the American responsibility is "teaching the Mexicans to elect good men."¹² An ounce of prevention would prevent a pound of bad revolution. If the United States had the responsibility for supporting good revolutions then it must certainly assist the victims of oppression wherever they may be, "perhaps even intervening on behalf of justice and liberty wherever it is endangered."¹³

After 1910 this right to intervene was invoked consistently in response to bursts of revolutionary activity abroad, especially in Latin America. Policymakers in Washington examined revolutions to keep them "within safe bounds."¹⁴ Revolutions that merited United States support were to resemble the American Revolution. They were to cause a minimum of "disorder" led by "respectable citizens" having "moderate political goals" that were happily concluded with a balanced constitution "safeguarding human and property rights."¹⁵

Dangerous revolutions that did not merit American support and perhaps even qualified for American intervention were characterized as social revolutions out of control, driven by the radical doctrines of dictators and demagogues. Such revolutions were extremely violent: destruction of private property, redistribution of land and goods, and merciless violence against the old dominant classes. They were characterized by senseless violence, women violated, "elders slain and children impaled." In short, individual liberty was violated and the revolution ended with "survival rather than liberty the greater good."¹⁶

A *New York Times* article written by Gary Trudeau has suggested that nothing had changed regarding American judgmental skills. Not only had Americans categorized good and bad revolutions, but now they were obliged to identify villains and heroes from the old world order to the so-called new world order. Bad invasions of the old world order included the Syrian invasion of Lebanon (1976), the Vietnam invasion of Cambodia (1978), the U.S.S.R. invasion of Afghanistan (1979), and the Libyan invasion of Chad (1983). Good invasions of the old world order were China's invasion of Vietnam (1979), Iraq's invasion of Iran (1980), Israel's invasion of Lebanon (1982), and the U.S.

invasion of Grenada (1983). A bad invasion of the new world order was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (1990). Good invasions of the new world order included the U.S. invasion of Panama (1989), the U.S.S.R. invasion of itself (1991), the U.S. and allies invasion and Kuwait and Iraq (1991).

American judgments included old world order and new world order leaders. Bad Hitlers of the old world order were Muammer el-Qaddafi, Mikhail Gorbachev, Hafez al-Assad, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and Daniel Ortega. Good Hitlers of the old world order included Ferdinand Marcos, Manuel Noriega, Saddam Hussein, and Augusto Pinochet. Miraculously good Hitlers of the new world order included Mikhail Gorbachev, Hafez al-Assad, and Deng Xiaoping. As for bad U.N. Security Council Resolutions of the old and new orders, none existed, since the United States supported all good resolutions and vetoed all bad resolutions such as resolutions on United States invasions of Grenada and Panama.¹⁷

While Americans had the ultimate wisdom to judge the good, the bad, and the ugly revolutions, from the very beginnings of American national life they did not always agree on what to do about them. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson disagreed, and both had followers from their day into the twentieth century. For Adams, revolutions were "under the direction of all too fallible man—and foreigners at that! The revolutionary impulse was all too likely to degenerate, and unless quickly restrained, to rend the fragile social fabric and destroy liberty."¹⁸ Those adhering to the heritage of Adams were inclined to intervene to stop revolutions.

For Jefferson and his followers into the twentieth century, there was "deep faith in the ultimate triumph of liberty." They were "prepared to tolerate greater excesses because of their conviction that emancipation for all mankind was not only possible, but imminent."¹⁹ Those adhering to the heritage of Jefferson were inclined to intervene in order to guide revolutions.

American policy toward revolutions in the twentieth century represented a combination of both tendencies. Where bad revolutions appeared to get out of hand, policymakers used a variety of strategies to control the given situation, such as manipulation of arms sales, judicious financial aid, diplomatic recognition, intrigue with pro-U.S. factions, coordination with major powers, and if need be, troops.²⁰ But, regardless of the policy, central at all times was the assumption that American wisdom could determine the legitimacy of a revolution.

Much the same attitude could be seen in Protestant leadership of the twentieth century. Even as the American Protestant mission

enterprise served as judge and jury of foreign cultures, so again the theology mattered not. Because Americans were under special obligation to save and renovate the world, they were obliged to evaluate world revolutions with a view to helping those on the straight and narrow and to condemning those not so blessed. Indeed, "post millennial optimism . . . tended to produce more militant images of world conquest than did premillennialism."²¹

These, then, are the criteria by which the faces of American Protestant nationalism are to be recognized with all their warts and beauty marks. The primary focus is to demonstrate that the cacophonous mix of nationalistic expression evident in the Protestant experience throughout the twentieth century enables one to better understand the American struggle to focus on national meaning.

In choosing the faces for this study, I sought to engage representatives in a broad spectrum from separatist fundamentalism to liberalism. John R. Rice represents separatists fundamentalism, which came into its own in the 1940s and 1950s as a result of the more liberal elements of fundamentalism forming the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). This organization sought to cooperate minimally with theologically conservative Christians not considered absolutely orthodox by the "ultras" of the John R. Rice stripe of fundamentalism. "Be not unequally yoked" in fellowship with those not totally fundamentalist in belief and action was the battle cry of Rice and others like him such as Carl McIntire, founder of the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), and Bob Jones, Sr. and Jr. of Bob Jones University. The latter voice expressed separatism in action with the declaration that Jerry Falwell is "the most dangerous man in America" because of his willingness to work with Catholics, Mormons, Jews, and evangelicals through the Moral Majority.²² Billy Graham also fell from grace because of his willingness to work with the more liberal National Council of Churches (NCC) in revival meetings.

The separatist fundamentalism, sometimes referred to as ultra-fundamentalism, had very clear ideas concerning the proper role of the United States in the Cold War world and an equally clear message concerning their perception of a godly American ideal. Those views of the American role at home and abroad were driven by a dispensationalism that believed the end of time and the Second Coming of Jesus were near. This perception was based upon an interpretation of portions of the books of Daniel, Revelation, and the sayings of Jesus regarding last things. "There will be wars and rumors of wars" seemed to fit the situation around the Cold War world. Reference was also made of the return of the Jews to their homeland as a sign that the end

was near, and to the soon-to-be culminating battle of Armageddon in the Middle East, which would involve conflict with the Bear of the North, meaning Russia. Therefore, the United States, it was believed, should not back away from a nuclear fight with the Soviet Union since an engagement of that sort would no doubt be God's way of using America to end the present age (dispensation) and to usher in the millennium of Christ's reign on earth. America would be the agent used by God to cleanse the earth of evil empires. Hence, any move for peace or détente by the United States with the "Evil Empire" would be run directly counter to God's intended design.

Clyde Edminster, survivalist, numerologist, and dispensationalist par excellence, is included in this study since he saw the United States as having cosmic significance. Dividing the ages of the world into dispensations, Edminster paralleled the captivity of the children of Israel in Egypt, delivered after 210 years, with a history of the people of the United States, who had suffered for 210 years in preparation for Armageddon and its deliverance. This "deliverance" was to occur in 1986. In near ecstasy, Edminster stated: "So the more I studied into this possibility, the more I was convinced that Israel's sojourn in Egypt was the pre-written history of the United States of America."²³ In short, America was born as a nation under God, being His New Israel destined to rule the world.

Jerry Falwell, also a dispensationalist of a different sort than Edminster, but similar to Rice, is included because he represents a fundamentalism rigid in doctrine but pragmatic in enlisting any of the socially conservative forces in America regardless of their theology in a drive to lead America back to perceived traditional American Christian values. The Moral Majority of the 1980s was his most public and extensive manifestation of this effort. Falwell is also significant to this study because of his seeming ambivalent perception of the nature of American chosenness in God's scheme. One the one hand America was in danger of losing its status as God's instrument in human affairs because of its moral decay. On the other hand, Falwell believed that God would never allow the Soviet Union to destroy America, since the republic, in spite of its faults, was still a Christian nation.

J. Gresham Machen, a leading fundamentalist intellectual of the early twentieth century, would likely be considered an inappropriate prospect for a study of American Protestant nationalism in this century by those familiar with his life work. When his name comes up among American religious academics and those lay people familiar with his life and ministry, he is usually connected to the Modernist Fundamentalist Controversy in the 1920s and 1930s. Or, he is admired

for his New Testament Greek scholarship, having created a standard Greek text used by divinity schools regardless of denominational affiliation or theological tradition.

However, if nationalism includes the intense expression of a nation's identity role and mission, then J. Gresham Machen, who addressed this issue head-on, was a major player in that debate, and his role and influence in that regard are fair game. Furthermore, successive fundamentalists, notably John R. Rice, Jerry Falwell, and others, have looked to Machen as their fundamentalist guru, no doubt ratcheting up the debate to a shrillness that probably would not have been approved by this gentleman scholar. His influence adds a significant face to this study of variant and antithetical perceptions of a proper American identity.

Carl Henry and the journal he founded, *Christianity Today*, were chosen to demonstrate an evangelical perception of a proper, divinely ordained, American identity. Considerable emphasis was also given concerning the extent that America had drifted from its alleged godly motivated beginnings.

Conservative in theology, the journal never displayed the level of shrillness typical of fundamentalist leadership. If anything, it moderated gradually over the years, recognizing the complexity of the geopolitical arena and the increasingly pluralistic complexity of American life. Its thoughtful moderation over the years between the height of the Cold War fifties when it was founded and the latter years of the Vietnam struggle earned for *Christianity Today* the scorn of its fundamentalist critics, especially as it even found itself agreeing with the more liberal *Christian Century* on a number of domestic and foreign policy issues. The scorn it received from fundamentalists compared to that heaped upon Billy Graham, who can be linked to *Christianity Today* not only to the founding of the journal but also in its theology and thoughtful caution of refraining from the temptation to crown every political action or politician with divine approval or sanction. Hence, the journal is portrayed as displaying a nationalism of moderation, declaring on the one hand that America has a divine calling to minister to the lost, both at home and abroad, but on the other hand willing to concede to diversity in fulfilling the mission.

A face of American Protestant nationalism that has proven to be one of the most fascinating and colorful is that of Russell Conwell during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Normally remembered as the Carnegiesque Gospel of Wealth advocate who crisscrossed the country to deliver his famous motivational lecture, *Acres of Diamonds*, over 6,000 times, Conwell offered even more to the subject at hand

through sermons and books. Theologically mainstream Protestant, not wishing to get embroiled in Virgin Birth or evolution controversies of his day, Conwell had clear ideas concerning America's emergence as a major world power. He could mix unabashed nationalistic fervor proclaiming American superiority in any and all categories with withering prophetic exhortation of national policies he believed un-Christian. The chapter "Foreign Policy through Benediction" is named, not only because of his famous sermons on national policy, but also because he often confirmed the issues expounded upon in sermon with an extensive benediction that appeared to outline instructions to the Almighty and to faithful listeners. He represents enthusiasm for American greatness when the country was flexing its adolescent muscles in the world, discovering that it had weight to push around.

One cannot treat the subject adequately without considering the work of Reinhold Niebuhr. While he has been considered neo-orthodox in theology, the label does not do him justice. On the one hand he emphasized the inherent reality of human sin and the perverseness of all human collectives. On the other hand, he was intensely devoted to implementing social justice through collective power. The two emphases were not contradictory since for him some human collectives were simply more evil than others, and the responsibility of the less evil collective was to exercise its power for justice over the more evil one. This meant that no perfect justice could ever be fulfilled in this life in an absolute sense. History could be fulfilled only outside of time.

When applied to the geopolitics of the twentieth century and especially to the Cold War era, the United States was seen as the less evil collective which had the God-ordained responsibility of checking the more evil collective, the Soviet Union. Great Britain and the United States also had a godly mandate in thwarting the evil Nazi threat. Along with this divine mandate to use power was the warning that arrogance and pride could lead to misuse of power, which Niebuhr saw the United States guilty of in regards to Vietnam.

Niebuhr applied the same model to domestic politics. Those in power who were oppressive could not be expected to relinquish their hold on the less franchised of society without some domestic collective force, be it labor unions or the church applying pressure for change. This judicious use of power to bring about a better society/world is why Niebuhr's system has been called Christian Realism, and why I have entitled this chapter "Nationalism and Realism."

Theological liberals no less than conservatives and fundamentalists had visions of an ideal American identity, which they strived to

bring to fruition. One such theological liberal during the early twentieth century was Walter Rauschenbusch. He is best known as the Baptist minister to the poor immigrants in Hell's Kitchen, New York City, turned divinity school professor-scholar and eloquent exponent of the Social Gospel movement. Emphasizing that sin was social as well as individual, he envisioned a reformed America in which social, political, and economic institutions would provide a healthy, positive environment allowing the disenfranchised the opportunity for the better material life. This, he believed would more likely lead to spiritual salvation of the individual as well.

Optimistically, he saw that some American institutions were already well on the way to reform, such as political, religious, and educational institutions. Business was viewed as needing considerable improvement. While he urged continued improvement of America's institutions through reform, he still viewed the American experience as vastly superior to that in any other part of the world. Furthermore, in expressing an optimism fairly typical of the Progressive era of which he was a part, he believed that the social evolutionary process was at work in establishing the democratic Kingdom of God on earth.

What is puzzling in the total picture, however, were the mixed messages from this Rochester professor. On the one hand, he compassionately advocated social reform for the down-and-outers of society, and on the other hand he harshly judged the Native American in his praise of the "yellow-haired" Custer. Rauschenbusch admires downplay this unsavory aspect as well as his enthusiastic support for the Spanish-American War, while praising him for his pacifism in World War I. Attempts to explain these discrepancies will be made in the chapter on "Bifurcated Nationalism."

Representing the antithesis of fundamentalism in this study is the liberal idealist, William Earnest Hocking, Congregational layman and Harvard philosophy professor whose life spanned some 92 years with his death in 1962. Hocking represented the best example of what I'm calling egalitarian nationalism described earlier in this Introduction. His consistent theme was to celebrate diversity in unity—that there was much to learn from other cultures and religions in the world—that one's own faith could be understood and enhanced by understanding other belief systems in the world.

Hocking's position, difficult for most Americans to swallow given their sense of superiority, was all the more remarkable given his application of his teachings to the Cold War relations of the United States and the Soviet Union. Writing in the 1950s and celebrating that the United States and the Soviet Union were learning from each other and

drifting closer together, the Soviets becoming more capitalistic and individualistic, and the United States more collective, was not a message that most people wanted to hear.

Two decades earlier he had applied the same principle concerning the relationship of Christianity and the other religions of the world in calling for Christian missionaries to seek truth with peoples of other faiths rather than to tell them the truth, as though having the last word on the subject. One need not read about the response of mission boards to this advice to imagine their chagrin.

The significance of Hocking in this study stems from the nationalism he represented that encouraged and celebrated the richness of cultural diversity in the world without any one people imposing on any other people. All cultures, while not equal under the eye of God, had contributions that could add richness to the life of the individual and of the nation, if allowed to do so.

These are the choices and reasons for them. Obviously the list could be nearly endless. Why not a Billy Graham? *Christianity Today* can be seen as generally representing his pilgrimage. Pat Robertson? The study was limited to exclude charismatics. Charles Clayton Morrison and *Christian Century*? It could have been included, but neo-orthodoxy to liberalism was represented without it. Billy Sunday? John R. Rice fits the bill nicely. In point of fact the book contains quite enough cacophony to drive home the theme that American Protestant leadership conveyed confusion, contradiction, and bifurcation in its struggle to define America. Whether leadership led or reflected the populace is a chicken-or-egg question and really does not matter. It is probably some of both. Either case is not pretty, and while one may want to rationalize that this is the free market of ideas in action and therefore good, the fact is that American society is in some trouble with its struggle over values and this is not some recent phenomenon brought on by the "crazies" of the 1960s.

To drive this home further, the sequence of chapters is arranged both chronologically and thematically to cover the century to Vietnam while concurrently showing the varying and conflicting faces within the period. Thus, Rauschenbusch, Conwell, and Machen, in that order, can be taken as a cluster in which all three during the same period demonstrate dramatic differences in their perceptions of American identity during the first third of the century.

The Hocking chapter follows the first three because he straddles the early part of the century and the latter decades into Vietnam during his 92 years on this earth, and was productive to the end. Because of this he can be seen, not only in contrast to Machen of the 1930s (the

two infuriated each other), but also to Niebuhr (who also wrote in the thirties and in the succeeding decades into the sixties) and everyone else in the 1950s and 1960s.

The remaining cluster of figures, including Rice, Niebuhr, Carl Henry and *Christianity Today*, Edminster, and Falwell, round out the figures in the remaining thirty years or so into the Vietnam years and continue to demonstrate enormous contrasts among generally contemporaneous Protestant leaders concerning the role and mission of the United States during the Cold War years.

Finally, a word needs to be said about bias in writing history, especially in a work such as this. Roland Bainton's cautionary words in the introduction to his Reformation history are appropriate for a work such as this. In writing about the Reformation (and in this case twentieth-century American Protestant nationalism) "one is not poking ashes with embers." Indeed, this note is perhaps even more appropriate since the issues considered in this work represent more accurately a smoldering, sometimes flaming, controversy that can easily be fed the fuel of discussion that results in a roaring fire of controversy.

Bainton goes on to indicate the direction from which he comes to the subject, which is what every historian should declare as he/she presents to an audience. As I suggest to my students, the only way to eliminate bias is suicide. By virtue of being a human being, with background in race, gender, education, religious upbringing, and a host of other personal experiences uniquely received and uniquely responded to, we are all biased. The difference among the biased is between those who know what their bias is and allow for the biases of others and those who do not know they are biased, and who see the world in manichaeian terms.

But this is not to say that fairmindedness is impossible. Objectivity simply means for all to see. That is, in the writing of history there is the stuff out there that anyone can examine, the documents, records, shared interviews, statistics of X number of automobile deaths due to alcohol and whatnot. But one's interpretation of the objective data is done by inference, by an individual subjectively declaring the meaning and significance of the data, and no two historians will ever see all the possible relationships between the collected objective (for all to see) data. There will not even be agreement on which data is significant and that which is not. Two or several historians will often make a larger number of the same inferential judgments on a given set of data. But never will there be total agreement on every possible angle of meaning and significance of the data. But herein lies the key. Objectivity can and does occur to the extent to

which one is able to alter one's inferences when exposed to new information, new data, and even new interpretations, new ways of viewing an issue—new to the one who searches for insights and expanded understanding. This means that learning and understanding are very dynamic. The next day's efforts may necessitate altering one's inferences on the nature and meaning of this or that event. Indeed a little "larning" can be a dangerous thing.

And so, the pages that follow represent a piece that poses a particular angle of vision of one raised in a Protestant minister's home that in the 1980s and 1990s would be called evangelical, but in the 1930s and 1940s was tagged liberal, and which was embroiled in the tail end of the modernist-fundamentalist controversy. It is written by one who subsequently became a third-generation minister trained in a "liberal" divinity school by the definition of McCarthy era values and by one whose ministerial cloth has been subsequently devoured by the moths of other interests. Yet the concern that something is terribly wrong with American society is shared with fundamentalist and liberal alike, and the search for answers is an odyssey with an understanding that inferences will need continuing adjustments as new objective realities confront one's consciousness.

Do I have my candidates for warts and beauty marks? One would be brain dead to not have one's favorites and villains. But even at that I found myself actually liking all of the candidates under study. Aside from that, however, the central focus of this piece is an appreciation of the deep fissures in American society, long standing, potentially dangerous, and in need of attention. The concluding chapter attempts to summarize and suggest potential scenarios of resolution.