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SWORDS & PLOWSHARES:
AMERICAN PROTESTANTS AND THE VIETNAM WAR

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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Abstract

Theological commitments and contemporary pressures shaped the response of American Protestants to the Vietnam War. Mainline denominations experienced extreme dissension. Opponents of the war, centered on clergy and leadership, challenged the war based upon its consequences. Supporters of the war, overwhelmingly laity, supported it as a just cause. The extreme levels of discord and disconnect between leadership and laity found expression in the debates over the attendant issues of the war. Frustrated, conservatives within mainline denominations provided an alternative vision for the church that rejected a focus on social issues. The world view and eschatology of conservative evangelicals made war and the Vietnam War less troublesome. Conservative evangelical denominations saw in Vietnam an evangelistic opportunity and generally portrayed soldiers as frontline missionaries. African-American denominations had connections to both mainline and conservative evangelical approaches. Martin Luther King, Jr., the foremost African-American of the time, religious or otherwise, strongly opposed the war and sought to lead fellow blacks on the issue. However, church members were very resistant to joining King in this particular struggle. African-American denominations did not so much support the Vietnam War as were unwilling to criticize Lyndon Johnson publically out of recognition of his great efforts on their behalf. With the election of Richard Nixon, a Republican with a very different political agenda, African-American denominations became more outspoken against the war as it began to draw attention and resources away from the economic and civic concerns of blacks.

Introduction

Religion is war's fickle partner. At times it affirms the use of violence for economic, territorial, or ethnic gains. Nations know there are few better weapons than God. With the conviction that they are on God's side, nations can motivate men's souls to readily give their lives and validate their deaths to soldiers' families. At the same time, religion has played a prophetic role against the state and against the established order, a role which some have viewed as dangerous and seditious. In the hands of some, following God's command requires people challenge the idolatry of the state, a force that would destroy others for misconceived and selfish "national interests". It can offer unarmed dissenters the moral courage to challenge the military; it offers a way to bring moral judgment upon the actions of the state. In the modern age, faith has served as a means of both affirming and critiquing a nation's military activities.

The American Protestant response to the Vietnam War was shaped by the pre-existing theological commitments and by the political realities confronted by each group. Many leaders of mainline denominations generally held to a liberal commitment to social justice while more conservative denominational leaders and laity advocated a dualistic, evangelistic and, at times, a millenialist mindset. These more conservative Protestants also felt ambushed by the reform movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. Within the African-American denominations, there was much less discussion and outright dissent, which reflected a strong loyalty to President Lyndon Johnson for his accomplishments

in civil rights. When the Vietnam War became “Nixon’s War”, African-American church leaders grew more outspoken in their opposition. The response of American Protestants to the Vietnam War found expression not only in just war debates but also in the attendant issues that accompanied the war, issues such as patriotism, conscientious objection, perspectives on soldiers, protests and protestors, and amnesty. As American Protestants debated the war in Vietnam, their conceptions of God, morality, sin, and righteousness guided their judgments on the war.

This dissertation contributes to our knowledge of how American religion works as a force in modern American life and politics. Its central concern is how American Protestants debated the Vietnam War. Theology informed both support and opposition to the war. Debate within mainline denominations revealed a theological chasm between a conservative laity and a more modernist and socially and politically liberal leadership. Mainline leaders, awakened by the Civil Rights movement and drawing upon a social gospel heritage, emphasized the role of prophetic challenger, acting as “agents of change” within society and within their churches. A significant portion of mainline laity did not share in this theology or ideology. In many forums, they actively dissented, echoing the theology and ideology of conservative evangelicals. Conservative evangelical Christianity presented these Protestants with a coherent interpretive theological lens which viewed the Vietnam War as a justified effort to defeat a Godless communism. Patriotism was not blind loyalty, but an affirmation of God’s work on earth.

Although it would be simplistic to talk about the role of the "black church" in this debate, race was nonetheless a consequential fact. The history of African-Americans and the historical development of their churches created a different set of parameters and allegiance. Looking back on these years, Martin Luther King's words against the war in the last year of his life loom large.

> "And some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak."[1]

My research, however, underlines the importance of not permitting those words to obscure a greater silence from the organs of black Christianity. The long struggle against slavery, lynching and segregation made the victories achieved with the help of President Johnson's especially cherished. In the case of Vietnam, African-Americans, were encouraged to be theologically silent not because of the irrelevance of the Vietnam War but due to a combination of the primacy of the politics of civil rights and economic advancement and a historic tendency of African-American churches to cautiously offer political critique.

Reconstructing such a crucial debate, of necessity, requires the rethinking of broader questions bearing not only upon history, but also upon theology and ethics. A valid, general assumption for this period is that people who attended church tended to support America's fight in Vietnam. As support diminished, it did so last among this group. But this assumption begs a question: why did these Americans more strongly support war? As this study demonstrates, liberal

[1] Martin Luther King, Jr. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper One, 1990), 232

and conservative evangelical theology could easily have been marshaled to either support or oppose the war.

As is often the case, it is tempting to see the outlines of the present in this study of the recent past. I have been tempted at various points to see the debate over the Vietnam War as singularly "causing" the rise of a Christian "New Right", and the weakening of mainline protestant denominations. The debate over the Vietnam War sped up the pace of the demise of American mainline denominations. But, this war, as important as it has been in American history and politics, was but one contributor – probably the strongest one – to this change; the war must take its place beside opposition to the civil rights movement, feminism and other movements which took strong root in the 1960s and 1970s. The conservative critique within American mainline Protestantism and the para-church groups they created provided an intellectual and organizational model for growth after the Vietnam War.

Lastly, this study can help us understand the demands of leadership and the relationship of leadership to morality and pragmatic realities. Mainline denominations suffered due to an enormous political, social and theological distance between clerical leadership and laity. Mainline leaders failed to appreciate the special role of leaders in a voluntary organization whose membership was shrinking. Providing prophetic leadership does not mean being "prophetic" on all things and at all times. Finding "common ground" is also essential. Seeking to be prophetic leaders was not wrong, but their sheep needed to be spoken with, not simply commanded.

African-American religious leaders faced a different set of historical imperatives. On the one hand, Martin Luther King, Jr. demonstrated the problem of being out of tune with those he sought to lead. On the other hand, African-American religious leaders displayed a bit too much political opportunism and offered no leadership on surely one of the most important moral issue of their day. The Vietnam War, as Dr. King made so clear, exacted a special cost from the poor, who were also disproportionately African-American.

> It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. And so we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. And so we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would hardly live on the same block in Chicago. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.[2]

This dissertation will explore primarily the debate over Vietnam from 1964 to 1973. While the main focus is the war in Vietnam, a significant amount of information will be drawn from the debate over the attendant issues like conscientious objection, military service, pacifism, and protests. To master this subject, I drew on four types of sources. First, the study makes extensive use of denominational proceedings at the national level. The proceedings met at various intervals from yearly to quadrenially. They included reports by national

[2] King, 238.

committees, petitions from individual churches, and petitions from local jurisdictions ("synods," "conferences," "conventions"). These proceedings also included major speeches as well as floor debate on resolutions. Where present and relevant, this dissertation utilized proceedings from local denominational jurisdictions too.

Second, I utilized the major publications of all the denominations studied as well as those of relevant para-church groups. These included: *Presbyterian Outlook*, *Presbyterian Life*, *The Presbyterian Layman, Christian Advocate* (United Methodist Church), *The Good News, The Lutheran* (Lutheran Church in America), *The Witness* (Episcopal), *The Christian Challenge, Christian Index* (Southern Baptists Convention of Georgia), *The Baptist Standard* (SBC Texas), *The Baptist Program (The Southern Baptist Convention)*, *The Pentecostal Evangel* (Assemblies of God), *The Herald of Holiness* (The Nazarene Church), *The Christian Recorder* (AME), *The Star of Zion (AMEZ), The National Baptist Voice* (NBC), and *The Whole Truth* (Church of God in Christ). These periodicals studied were from the early 1960s through the mid to late 1970s. Since no accurate index exists of their content, they were analyzed from cover to cover for articles, editorials, and pictures that shed light on the topic.

Third, this dissertation paid very close attention to letters to the editor in these periodicals. With one exception, all the denominational magazines studied contained opportunities for congregant response. These letters to the editor offered a wealth of information in measuring the sentiment of those who were most active and vocal on either side of this debate.

In the chapters that follow, American Protestants are divided into three primary groups: mainline, conservative evangelical, and African-American Protestants. Mainline denominations include Episcopalians, Presbyterians (not the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), The Lutheran Church in America, and the United Methodist Church. With exception of the latter, there existed a strong emphasis upon Reformed theology in this group. In addition, there was also a considerable degree of socio-economic and liturgical affinity within this group. The study of mainline denominations occupies the first three chapters of this work. The first explores the debate over the war that took place before 1968. The second chapter explores the debate over the many attendant issues of the war. This debate took place primarily after 1968. The third chapter catalogs and explores the emergence of an informal formal conservative critique within these denominations largely during the second half of the war.

The conservative group was made up of non-liturgical groups such as the Southern Baptists, Assemblies of God, the Church of the Nazarene, and the Pentecostal Holiness Church. These groups share a strong affinity for nineteenth- and twentieth-century Wesleyanism as well as had socio-economic and liturgical similarities. That is to say, they had similar ways of thinking about God, thinking about the behavior God expected of them, worshiped in similar low-church ways and shared geographic and economic similarities. Yes, Pentecostal worship was a notable difference but not one that would warrant separation. Furthermore, they were united in a quasi-separatist view of the world. The study of conservatives occupies two chapters.

The temporal and thematic organization of conservative evangelicals proved challenging. They spoke robustly about the war prior to 1969 but the amount of discussion dropped off sharply after that. Thus, the three uneven chapters exploring conservative evangelicals will first explore concepts of war and peace that informed conservative evangelicals on the Vietnam War. The second chapter dives into the debate over Vietnam itself among these denominations through 1968. The third chapter explores how conservative evangelicals modified their speech and focus from 1969 onward.

The African-American group encompassed the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion, the National Baptist Convention, and the Church of God in Christ. Separating African-American Christianity was warranted for several reasons. While African-Americans could be found in most denominations, they were especially concentrated in several specific movements. African-American theology pulled them in one direction, the experience of the Civil Rights movement pulled them in another, and commitments to President Lyndon Johnson pulled them in yet another way. Their unique historical situation produced a unique response. The study of African-American denominations comprises two chapters. The first explores Martin Luther King's relationship with African-American churches. The second looks at African-American denominations and their perspectives on the Vietnam War.

Thus this study will provide an understanding of Protestants in the Vietnam War that incorporates the influences of inherited theology and pragmatic

realities. However, this study does not explore the subject alone. It builds upon a substantive study of American religion in the historical community.

Chapter 1:

The Historical Context

"So, there is nothing new under the sun" declared Qoehleth in the book of Ecclesiastes. For many intellectual endeavors, he spoke correctly. We spend much of our intellectual lives refining rather than creating. In that sense, this study does not differ. It is built upon and engages with a large body of prior research on religion and the life of America, some of which goes back to the earliest days of the republic.

While this work focuses upon religion in the 20th century, there are connections to larger historical patterns of religion in America. One of these larger trends is the growing power of evangelicalism. From the earliest days of the nation, evangelicalism provided not simply an alternative expression of Christianity but also foundation for contentious argument about sll kinds of political and social issues. Nathan Hatch's *The Democratization of American Christianity* and Patricia Bonomi's *Under the Cope of Heaven* shed light on the political consequences of evangelicalism and Paul Johnson's *A Shopkeeper's Millennium* illustrates the economic and social implications of this faith.[3]

I came to this study quite mindful of this history, This dissertation explores how the public resurgence of religious leaders and themes brought by Martin

[3] Nathan Hatch *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). Paul Johnson *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978). Patricia Bonomi *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Luther King's nonviolent struggle to secure civil rights extended to the Vietnam War. Liberal Protestants, who had found a new public voice in Martin Luther King's example brought that fervor to opposing the American intervention in Vietnam. Conversely, Conservative evangelicals, who had been put on the defensive by the civil rights movement, also reprised their role in the Vietnam debate as defenders of American honor I n a crusade against a Godless opponent. I find a gap between clergy and laity here that, though pronounced, is not new. Two classic works on early American religion, David Hall's *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment* and Alan Heimert's *Religion and the American Mind,* demonstrate the willingness of laity to challenge their sometimes more liberal prelates. My work demonstrates this trend during the Vietnam War.[4]

That divisions and tensions of the present have ample precedent in the past should not lead us to believe that the new was merely an extension of the old. Robert Wuthnow's *The Restructuring of American Religion* draws our attention to changes in religion during the second half of the 20th century.[5] In the religious boom of the period, denominational organizations increasingly reflected a corporate model and embraced suburban values. Concurrently, American Christianity witnessed a sharp decline in a corporate social identity. "Emphasis was placed primarily on the spiritual growth of individuals. The corporate body became subtly transposed into a service agency for the fulfillment of its individual

[4]Alan Heimert *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966). David Hall *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Beliefs in Early New England*. (New York: Harvard University Press, 1990).

[5] Robert Wuthnow *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

members."[6] Yet, growth and suburban life did not produce sedate churches. The perils of the Cold War, compounded by the issues of civil rights and the Vietnam War encouraged activism by both liberals and conservatives. "Liberals looks across the theological fence at their conservative cousins and see rigid, narrow minded, moralistic fanatics; conservatives holler back with taunts that liberals are immoral, loose, biblically illiterate, and unsaved."[7] Wuthnow also emphasized the decline of the traditional denominational powerhouses due to growing religious assimilation, interregional migration, a decline in regional identifications, and the growing respectability of evangelicals and non-denominational churches.

> The picture that begins to emerge, then, is one of greater social and cultural similarity among the major denominations and faiths that appears to have been the case in the 1940's and 1950's. While the memberships of the various religious bodies have by no means become indistinguishable from one another socially and culturally, considerable convergence has taken place… the reduction of these differences suggests that denominational divisions may be declining in social significance."[8]

In their place rose special purpose groups focused on moral and political issues of the day and which included people from a wide variety of churches. These groups increasingly displayed the distinctions of earlier denominations.

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[6] *Ibid*, 55.

[7] *Ibid*, 215.

[8] *Ibid*, 87.

Wuthnow's larger interpretive lens for the period is secularization, but not in the sense of Miller and more in the sense of Butler and Bercovitch. There continued an unintentional and ill defined conflating of the sacred and secular; a mixing of "greater complexity and greater internal variation than such notions about secularization generally admit."[9] With the themes of continuity and change in mind, a review of the historiography of mainline, conservative evangelical and African-American denominations during the 20th century generally and during the Vietnam War specifically help set the stage for the detailed analysis offered in this dissertation.

Set next to conservative evangelicals and African-American churches, the historiography on mainline denominations is comparatively weak. Studies of mainline denominations in the 20th century seem to appear against the background of reasons for the collapse of mainline denominations. Even works that document the apex of mainline power in the first half of the 20th century, like William Hutchinson's *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*, seem ultimately to address their decline. Hutchinson's perspective is ultimately not a failure of theology or method but of will.[10] The impacts of World War I, coupled with later attacks by neo-orthodox and Fundamentalists, found mainline modernist or liberal proponents lacking. Hutchinson, in his call modern liberals to be more optimistic and culturally active, did not see the decline of mainline

[9] *Ibid*, 297.

[10] William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992).

groups as a result of flawed ideology but of flawed means. In a similar vein, Norman Pott's in "From Guilt to Affirmation in the Mainline Churches" saw the prophetic stance taken by church leaders during the Civil Rights movement as unquestionably beyond inspection and attack. Opponents were portrayed as shallow consumerist church members gained in the 50's opposed to the new prophetic activism by leaders.[11] The role of the church was to provide comfort and confirmation of one's world view, not launch a challenge to it:

> The church which he or she joined to receive sanction for a way of life, to be assured that all was well with the country and God's blessing continued with us - - this same church was now confronting the country with its national fears and distortions and acting out not God's favor but God's judgment. *One of the basic tenants of the unwritten contract between countless individuals and the church was thus violated by the church itself.*[12]

He warned against accommodation as that would require a loss of identity. The numerical decline of the church was due to a sifting of the chaff and demonstrated that "many people became members for the wrong reasons."[13]

Sociologists like Wade Roof and William McKinney see the cause of decline not in ideology but in demographics, without acknowledging that the two might have a relationship.[14] Nonetheless, the core of their findings was still

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[11] Norman D. Pott "From Guilt to Affirmation in the Mainline Churches" *Christian Century* 1/24/1979 pg, 73.

[12] *Ibid*, 76. Emphasis added.

[13] *Ibid*, 77.

[14] Wade Roof and William McKinney *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

relevant. Simply put, driving the loss was a greater variety of theological and ideological choice available to religious Americans.

Why did the mainline lose out so heavily during the 1960s? My own research leads me to agree with those who blame an ineffectual, if bravely prophetic, leadership. Works like William Murchison's *Mortal Follies* demonstrated this perspective.[15] Landing somewhere between history and journalism, Murchison explored the fate of the Episcopal church as a means of understanding the similar fate of other mainline denominations. He points the finger of blame directly at denominational leadership that overtly emphasized social justice and alienated not only conservative elements but also sizeable centrist elements. Church leaders had "driven the first wedge between the more conservative sort of Episcopalian and his now conspicuously liberal leaders" and left a number "trapped, like many a centrist before and since, between angry polarities of viewpoint."[16]

Mark Oppenheimer's *Knocking on Heavens Door*, while focused more on religious expressions of the counter culture, also has relevance.[17] His study of Episcopalians and feminism, while not sharing the disposition of Murchison, did catalog the way those that sought reform repeatedly and aggressively forced the issue. Douglas Cowan's survey of conservative reaction in mainline churches,

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[15] William Murchison, *Mortal Follies: Episcopalians and the Crisis of Mainline Christianity* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009).

[16] Murchison, 63-64.

[17] Mark Oppenheimer, *Knocking on Heaven's Door: American Religion in the Age of Counterculture,* (Cambridge, MA: Yale University Press, 2003).

The Remnant Spirit, also points to leadership failure as a primary cause.[18] A "remnant faithful" decided not to leave their churches but to agitate from within not to hijack the church but to return it its traditional forms of worship and affirmation of inherited faith.[19]

My work does not seek to explain this decline, but it does seek to inform it. In my survey of the intense dissent against prophetic liberalism within mainline denominations , I move away from the external explanations given by sociologists. I also strongly reject Hutchinson's implied contention that liberal leadership only needed to fight back more forcefully. The attitudes and management styles of mainline leadership during the Vietnam War, in my view, were sufficiently combative. A cursory reading of my work would place me in the camp of those finding fault in the tactics of the prophetic liberals.

While I agree with much of this argument, I also acknowledge and demonstrate the attraction of popular conservative theology during the Vietnam War; something other historians do not consider. For example, Murchison, while wanting to affirm a conservative faith, unintentionally describes conservative thinkers as reactionary and not proactive. Likewise, Pott sees only consumerism and assimilation at work in the growth of conservatives. He does not consider that conservative theology provide a more consistent and stable world view.

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[18] Douglas E. Cowan *The Remnant Spirit: Conservative Reform in Mainline Protestantism* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 2003).

[19] Cowan, 2.

The most recent research on religion on the Vietnam War and mainline churches is atomized and relatively minimal. The study of American religion and the war in Vietnam is not new. Initial studies were undertaken by pollsters and sociologists. While these were meant to be of Christians in general, they invariably focused overwhelmingly on mainline churches. These early studies sought to catalog attitudes toward the war and perhaps explain the motivations of opponents of the war. Harold Quinley's pioneering study focused on the nine largest Protestant denominations in California; seven of the nine being mainline. [20] He found a "high level of disagreement among Protestant ministers over the course of action that should be adopted."[21] According to his work, Protestant ministers, though divided over what to do, were clearly more dovish than the general public. He also found a connection between theological positions and political attitudes. Those ministers more supportive of the war effort and increased military action were also more conservative theologically. Conversely, mainline ministers tended, to hold more dovish views, such as supporting an end to the bombing of North Vietnam. In attempting to explain the popular portrayal of clergy as opponents of the war, despite a distribution of attitudes, Quinley noted that the clergy most likely to oppose the war were also most likely to participate in protest activities or speak against the war. Hence, he saw a vocal minority among clergy as responsible for the reputation of clergy as activists. From my perspective, the more liberal clergy (within both mainline and

[20] Harold E. Quinley, "The Protestant Clergy and the War in Vietnam," The Public Opinion Quarterly 34:1 (Spring 1970): 43-52.

[21] Quinley, 44.

conservative evangelical denominations) were more often at regional and national levels of leadership in their denominations, and thus, more easily the targets of constituent anger.

Clarence Tygart, desiring to understand the motivation of clergy in anti-Vietnam protests, downplayed the role of theology and instead emphasized prior involvement in civil rights protests. Based on a survey of United Methodist and American Baptist Convention clergy in California, Tygart moved away from Quinley, who saw a relationship between theology and attitudes on Vietnam. Taking into consideration attitudes towards authority, theological stance, political outlook, and participation in previous social movements, Tygart perceived the last as decisive in making a clergyman into an opponent of the war.[22] According to Tygert, "Participation in a previous or concurrent social movement will have much more direct effect in increasing participation in future social movement than ideology. However, ideology is a necessary precondition for social movement participation."[23]

When we think of the anti-war movement, we quite properly remember it as a student movement. Jerold Starr surveyed freshmen at the University of Michigan, a cohort statistically representative of American youth in 1972. He took issue with those who did not see religion as decisive in determining one's position on the war. In his study, increased opposition to the war among those

[22] Clarence E. Tygart, "Social Movement Participation: Clergy and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement," Sociological Analysis 34 (1973): 202-211.

[23] *Ibid*, 210.

surveyed was matched by a decline in religiosity.[24] "Even when controls are applied for frequency of religious attendance, sex, father's education and family income, those with no religious preference are most opposed to war."[25]

Alongside these scientific studies of opinion within various parts of the American public, one can find unscientific polling measuring the war taking place within religious groups.[26] While all these studies are of value, they are not as rigorous as they should have been about what exactly constitutes opposition or support. Furthermore, the moral or theological motivations for supporting or opposing the war went unexplored.

More historical in nature have been those studies that focused on religious groups opposed to the war in Vietnam. Again, while not explicitly focused on mainline Christianity, the groups studied were made up of such a preponderance of mainline clergy and laity that that these studies constitute a *de facto* studies of mainline denominations.[27] Interestingly, no study has been done of those para-church groups that supported the struggle in Vietnam, namely Churchmen for Victory, the American Council of Christian Churches, or the Emergency

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[24] Jerold M. Starr, "Religious Preference, Religiosity, and Opposition to War," Sociological Analysis 36:4 (1975): 323-334.

[25] *Ibid*, 323.

[26] For example, for Catholics, see National Catholic Reporter, March 1, 1967 and September 17, 1967. For the Southern Baptist Convention see Kent B. Blevins, "Southern Baptist Attitudes Toward the Vietnam War in the Years 1965-1970," Foundations 23 (July-September 1980): 231-44 or Kenneth S. Hayes, "Datamatic Opinion Poll Conducted During the Southern Baptist Convention in Miami, Florida, May 30-June 2, 1967," Christian Index (June 15, 1967): 1.

[27] Para-church groups were groups that were informally connected to a denomination or religious perspective that sought to use their organizations to shape American society.

Committee for Peace by Victory. Jill Gill's study of the National Council of Churches (NCC) calculated the price paid by the NCC for attempting to be a leader on issues of morality.[28] Gill explored the ascendancy of a proactive leadership in the NCC which, buoyed by the influential role it played the civil rights struggle, recognized its access to the administration and sought to shape mistaken policy in Vietnam. Conversely, the Johnson administration, primarily through Dean Rusk, sought to woo the NCC to its side of the Vietnam debate.

The incoming Nixon administration recognized the changing religious landscape. As mainline groups lost membership and power, evangelicals prospered.[29] The NCC lost influence as Billy Graham and other evangelicals found favor with Nixon. Shunned by the new administration, the NCC also found itself increasingly ostracized by Protestants who saw it as an elitist liberal group. Hence, in Gill's opinion, the attempt to provide prophetic leadership resulted in an emasculation of the NCC from which it has not recovered. "When the NCC took what some perceived as elitist stands more representative of liberal church bureaucrats than millions of voting, church-going Americans, the White House shunned it as politically useless."[30] Again, the explanation for failure was not so much leadership out of step with reality but a lack of vision or morality on the part of the nation.

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[28] Jill K. Gill, "The Political Price of Prophetic Leadership," Peace and Change 27:2 (April 2002): 271-300.

[29] Benson Y. Landis, Ed. *Yearbook of American Churches: Information on All Faiths in the U.S.A. 1966* (New York: National Council of Churches, 1966), 195-210. Constant H. Jacquet, Jr., ed, *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, 1974* (New York: Abingdon, 1974), 229-240.

[30] Gill, 272.

The fullest study of a para-church group and its opposition to Vietnam is Mitchell Kent Hall's work on Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV).[31] CALCAV created a decidedly ecumenical, middleclass, moderate opposition group. Not at all pacifists, they opposed the war on pragmatic rather than moral grounds and thought that a proper perspective would help correct the administration's policies. Born of the civil rights movement and rising ecumenism, the group hoped to provide an outlet for religious based opposition. Hence, throughout the war, CALCAV's relationship with the secular protest movement was supportive yet distant Reflecting their middle class origins, CALCAV's membership was initially reticent about selective conscientious objection and civil disobedience and instead emphasized an educative role. However, as the war progressed, the organization's declarations and activities moved it gradually to the left. This mild radicalization of CALCAV led to a loss of members, especially conservatives and Jews.

To some extent, Hall wanted his study of CALCAV to be representative of the way Protestant mainline denominations wrestled with Vietnam. He tells the story of attitudes on the Vietnam War mutating. What did not seem to change was the conviction that Vietnam was wrong, less for moral than for pragmatic reasons. This war had been a just war, but its execution had been deeply flawed. Hall's study does not focus on theology or even church proceedings. Thus it is not surprising that the issue of morality was not central to his narrative.

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[31] Mitchell K. Hall, *Because of Their Faith: CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

Of course, in an avowedly ecumenical organization, it would be hard to express a theologically informed critique of the Vietnam War.

There exists one denominational study of a mainline church and its role in the Vietnam War. William Hale's "The Episcopal Church and the Vietnam War."[32] More descriptive than analytical, his study captured not only the tension created by the war but also conveys a limited sense of the degree of conservative opposition. However, focusing largely on debate within the House of Bishops, he missed the depth and tone of conservative revolt. Lastly, S. Ronald Park's brief analysis of conscientious objection in the United Methodist church during the Vietnam War simply found that one could not generalize the background, motives, and temperament of registered conscientious objectors during the war.[33] Most frustrating was the implication of his title and conclusion that no support within the United Methodist church was provided. He offered no support for this important claim. However, my own research shows that there is much validity to his claim. I find a significant gap to exist between confessional support for conscientious objection and support for that choice.

The study of conservative evangelicals is in a curious state. It is humorous to note that fundamentalists, evangelicals and some of the scholars working within that ideological and theological tradition bemoan their absence in the academy, yet they receive much more attention in these bastions of secular

[32] William C. Hale "The Episcopal Church and the Vietnam War" Seminar Paper 4/28/1988.

[33] S. Ronald Parks "Free (But Not Helped) To Be Pacifist" in *Proclaim Peace: Pacifism From Unusual Quarters* Theron Schalbach and Richard Hughes eds. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

humanism (some of it quite sympathetic) than do mainline groups and African-American groups. However, more important issues dominated the discussion. One is the failure of historians to adequately identify what is an evangelical and what is a Fundamentalist. Even contemporary conservative evangelicals scholars such as George Marsden, Joel Carpenter, and Alan Hertzke, fail to explicitly provide a sharp and clear distinction between the two. We know that Fundamentalists are more than just angry evangelicals and evangelicals are more than just culturally savvy fundamentalists. Yet, between them lies a gulf of unexplored theological disagreement.

Equally as important is the general description of Fundamentalists-Evangelicals. On the one hand, Leo Ribuffo's *The Old Christian Right* would paint them as shrill, anti-Semitic, antisocial belligerents.[34] I would go so far as to charge that he is biased against his subjects. These were "complex villains instead of simple ones" and could not be isolated from the mainstream by emphasizing their "paranoid style."[35] In seeming contradiction to these sentiments, Ruboffo challenges the left to deal more forthrightly with the conservative right. Such fair dealing and plain speaking might begin by reconsidering the label of "villain" as an appropriate description.

At the more sympathetic end of the spectrum, George Marsden and Joel Carpenter paint do not offer much of a corrective, beyond painting

[34] Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right From the Great Depression to the Cold War*. (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1983).

[35] Ribuffo, 12.

fundamentalist-evangelicals as a genial sort whose passion for the moral and spiritual wellbeing of men can at times offend the rest of us. Evangelicals were described as having "grown exceedingly weary of the incivility, doctrinal hair splitting, and church-rending tactics they had witnessed among fellow fundamentalists.[36] The lost decade of the 1930's was an aberration. The Carl McIntire's, a virulently separatist that delivered a super patriotic and passively racist message, of the group were exceptions which proved the rule

George Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture* and *Understanding Fundamentalism* is a very important contribution. Despite the objections I have made, Marsden moves beyond the familiar stereotype of Fundamentalists and their evangelical offspring as anachronistic ideologues tilting at windmills.[37] Marsden sees them instead as reasoned thinkers bringing an alternative message to the nation. In fact, he described them as offering a viable option for an American society set adrift ideologically by the breakdown of the New Deal consensus, Vietnam and the Civil Rights struggle. If there was conflict in American society over world views, it was due to the aggressiveness of liberals and antisupernaturalist evolutionists. The idea of virulent conflict was "first promoted by the opponents of religion."[38] "Given this actual hostility of many Darwinists toward traditional Christianity, it is not surprising that some

[36] Carpenter, 205.

[37] George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991); *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of 20th Century American Evangelicalism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[38] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism, 177*.

Christian groups replied in kind."[39] Fundamentalists and evangelicals did not go looking for a fight, the fight came looking for them.

Joel Carpenter's *Revive Us Again*, cut from the same cloth as Marsden's analysis, took this positive tone further.[40] Aside from accentuating their cultural, technical and organizational abilities, he emphasized fundamentalism and evangelicalism not as a refuge for those who could not accept modernity, but rather as an alternative adaptive religious option that had made an uneasy peace with modernism and most secularism. Perhaps the problem of perspective is connected to the problem of identification? The degree to which historians are able to distinguish between Fundamentalists and evangelicals is, perhaps, the degree to which they can be truly relative—stepping outside their own experience long enough to understand that of another.

My study reflects a via-media between these two poles. Conservative evangelicals, especially within mainline denominations, seemed to be provoked into a response by overtly aggressive leadership in a direction in which they did not wish to follow. Conversely, conservative evangelicals do seem to hide behind theology as a way of sidestepping the full implications of profound moral and political issues of their day. Furthermore, they think nothing of impugning the faith of those who seek to call the church to greater activity in problems of society. Both the liberal ministers who occasionally got lost in the prophetic spirit

[39] *Ibid,* 178.

[40] Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

and the conservative evangelicals who were too quick to label the prophetic as merely heretical fell victim to the sin of pride.

There does seem to be greater historical agreement of the understanding of fundamentalist and evangelical thought and eschatology. Paul Boyer's *When Time Shall Be No More* has provided us not only with a solid understanding of millennialism, dispensationalism, and inerrancy but also the very natural social and political expressions of Fundamentalist – evangelical theology.[41] In addition, scholars have noted the themes of tension within the thought of this group: individual free will vs. foreordination, evangelicalism vs. separatism, contempt for culture vs. adaptation of culture. At the same time, scholars have increasingly emphasized that evangelicalism was not monolithic. For example, Michael Lienesch's *Redeeming America* demonstrated the diversity that made up the New Christian Right.[42] Like the churches that sired them, New Christian Right para-church groups and organizations, in their emphasis upon morality politics, included a variety of dispositions and could both affirm accommodation and challenge at the same time. Yes, evangelicals demonstrated much greater public unity, but it was the unity of the herd, not the individual. Evangelicals could and did disagree with one another and chastise one another.

The study of fundamentalists and evangelicals seems to suffer from a common problem. Aside from Boyer's work, most historians of religion end up

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[41] Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief and Modern American Culture*. (Harvard, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994).

[42] Michael Lienesch, *Redeeming America: Piety and Politics in the New Christian Right.* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993).

doing a "history from above". One knows of leaders and organizations. However, there is very little interaction with the masses that empowered these movements. My approach, while addressing this issue, does not remedy it. I have placed great emphasis upon letters to the editor; however, the inclusion of denominational proceedings and articles form denominational publications means that leadership has at least an equal presence.

This "top down" approach leads to a neglect of the evangelical voice in the Vietnam debate. A couple of studies exist which look at evangelicals as a group. Andrew Pratt's "Religious Faith and Civil Religion: Evangelical Responses to the Vietnam War, 1964-1973" roundly criticized evangelicals for failing to embrace a prophetic strain of civil religion.[43] Failing to recognize the theological groundings of evangelical opinions, he wrongly finds their position on the Vietnam War "reprehensible." Conservative evangelicals were…

> pragmatic enough to realize that, given the cost of the war, it was not worth winning. But it was also loyal enough to refuse to let the reality of Vietnam soil America's mythic identity. And so, middle America made the decision, conscious or subconscious, to lose the war in order to save its unified mythic understanding of the country.[44]

His errors become more serious when he contends that conservative evangelical world views could not provide cultural coherence for more than a small minority of the American population. In the end, it appears that Pratt can not grant that

[43] Andrew LeRoy Pratt, "Religious Faith and Civil Religion: Evangelical Responses to the Vietnam War, 1964-1973." Ph.D. Diss (Louisville, KY: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988).

[44] *Ibid*, 273.

conservative evangelical choices were intellectually consistent, even if he disagreed with them.[45]

When speaking of particular denominations, Southern Baptists get an inordinate amount of the limited attention. Mark Oppenheimer's *Knocking on Heaven's Door* devoted a chapter to Southern Baptists and Vietnam War protests.[46] Unfortunately he saw the lack of receptivity to protests against the war as due to behavioral factors rather than ideological and theological commitments. While behavioral fears were present here (as they surely are in the conduct of all humans), this position reflected not just a reflexive reaction, but also some thought-out assumptions: a strong affirmation of the divine ordination of governance coupled with apocalyptic views of the Vietnam War encouraged a rejection of protestors. Furthermore, he argues that the Southern Baptist Church was receptive to contrary views than I have found.

Steven Henderson's "Social Action in A Conservative Environment" focused on the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention; a standing committee meant to speak to the denomination on key social issues of the day.[47] He recognized that this commission was ideologically isolated and under such constant organizational and popular pressure that it's declarations

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[45] Of less value than Pratt's work is Mary Wilson's "Evangelical Voices: Attitudes Towards the Vietnam War."[45] Limited sources, and a worn out emphasis upon Billy Graham and *Christianity Today*, it offers nothing not explored better by Pratt.

[46] Mark Oppenheimer, *Knocking on Heaven's Door: American Religion in the Age of Counterculture,* (Cambridge, MA: Yale University Press, 2003).

[47] Steven T. Henderson "Social Action in a Conservative Environment: The Christian Life Commission and the Southern Baptist Churches." *Foundations* 28:3, July-September, 1980; 245-251.

were at best reactive, defensive and general in nature. Henderson's work accurately portrays the frustrating position of this group.

Kent B. Blevins' "Southern Baptist Attitudes Toward the Vietnam War in the Years 1965-1970," another similarly sized study, used four state Baptist newspapers and found little movement in Baptist perceptions of the Vietnam War over time.[48] Blevins accurately captured the political perspectives but not the underlying theological motivations. He mildly chastised Baptist inability to fulfill their prophetic role due to their accommodation with surrounding culture. Blevins continued the trend of moral critique of others without understanding the theological perspectives of those one challenged.

W. Terry Lindley's "The Southern Baptists and the Vietnam War" attempted to argue that the Southern Baptist convention was marked not by unanimity of conservative attitudes towards Vietnam but rather reflected a wide variety of opinions.[49] While technically correct, it was an argument centered on semantics. It wrongly implied that the Southern Baptist Convention was anything but solidly behind the Vietnam War. Could one find dissenters? Yes. However, they were never significant enough to come close to challenging the overwhelming consensus. Were there varieties of opinions? Yes, but these opinions existed within strict boundaries.

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[48] Kent B. Blevins, "Southern Baptist Attitudes Toward the Vietnam War in the Years 1965-1970." *Foundations* 23:3, July-September 1980, 231-244.

[49] W. Terry Lindley "The Southern Baptists and the Vietnam War: A Diversity of Opinion" Ohio Valley Historical Conference, 1992.

Mitchell Kent Hall's study of the Church of God (Anderson)[50] was perhaps the best existent denominational study[51]. He argued that the Church of God maintained an officially pacifist stance born of its peace heritage and doctrine of personal convictions. However, on a popular level, there was strong support the military activity in Vietnam. While an anti-war component existed, it primarily manifested itself among youth and students and faculty of Anderson College and Seminary. Hall correctly weighed the influence of inherited tradition, popular theology and popular opinion. Furthermore, he used a research approach similar to mine, although on a much smaller scale. Nonetheless, there is great affinity between his work and mine:he anticipated general ideas that I also express in my work. The major difference between the pictures we present lies in the strength I see in the peace movement in the Church of God (Anderson). The peace movement in the Church of God (Anderson) had a significant theological and organizational heritage.

Lastly, Murray Dempster's *Pacifism in Pentecostalism* explores the rapid conversion of the Assemblies of God from a confessionally pacifist body to a non-pacifist body during this period.[52] He maintains that the rapidity of change was due to the shallowness of the church's pacifist confession when compared to

[50]The 19th century witnessed the proliferation of churches who took the name "Church of God" as their title. To distinguish between them, they are generally identified by the location of their regional headquarters.

[51] Mitchell Kent Hall, *A Time For War: The Church of God's Response to Vietnam,* M.A. Thesis (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky, 1980).

[52] Murray W. Dempster, "Pacifism in Pentecostalism: The Case of the Assemblies of God." In *Proclaim Peace: Christian Pacifism from Unexpected Quarters*, Theron F. Schlabach and Richard Hughes, eds. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

its pragmatic embrace of warfare. He also emphasized the power of acculturation in encouraging this change. Dempster's study helps frame the disconnect between a historical affirmation of pacifism in some of the churches I explore (Pentecostal-Holiness Church, The Assemblies of God, The Church of God (Anderson))and their embrace of warfare during the Vietnam War. Furthermore, the role of acculturation and assimilation help reinforce the idea that conservative evangelicals were not culturally distant from mainstream society, regardless what they or their opponents might say.

The historiography of African-American churches is in an anomalous position when compared to mainline and conservative-evangelicals. It appears that there is a strong contrast with slave religion orientated studies of the 18th and 19th centuries and the studies of organized black religious life. Because emancipation so radically reorganized the black experience (a theme best explored by Leon F. Litwack's *Been in the Storm So Long)*, there is no sense of continuity in the scholarship of African-American religion. It seems that scholars emphasize the organizational and ideological shifts contrasts before and after emancipation.

The starting point for discussion of the Black church in the 20th century is E. Franklin Frazier's *The Negro Church in America*.[53] Reflecting the thinking of anthropologist Frank Boaz, Frazier argued that the black church was the central social organization for African-Americans set adrift first by slavery and then by emancipation. Frazier makes a distinction between slave religion and the black

[53] E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1974).

church. The defining feature for black religion in the middle of the 20th century was the secularization of the churches. The black church, unlike its predecessor, slave religion, increasingly turned its attention from kingdom come to kingdom now. "In the strange new environment the Negro endeavored to explain his new experiences in terms of his traditional outlook on life which was saturated with his religion and the image of the world provided by his knowledge of the Bible."[54] The slave religion of the South could not do this. Thus, the black church adapted. They black church focused less on the world to come and more on the issues black's faced in this world. "The Negro churches lost their predominantly other-worldly outlook and began to focus attention upon the Negro's condition in this world."[55] It is important to note that Frazier uses "secularization" in a very different way from Wuthnow, Carpenter and others who study the white church. For Frazier it means the locus of the church's concern. For scholars of white denominations it means adopting the concerns and structures of civic society. Thus, the church could be expected to play an active role in the socio-economic issues of the day.

David Chappell's *A Stone of Hope* seems to make explicit Frazier's secularization thesis as well as the latent power of the black church.[56] Chappell's study of the role of religion and the black church in ending civil rights notes the

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[54] *Ibid*, 54.

[55] *Ibid*, 56.

[56] David Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

power of the prophetic that allowed southern black longevity and success in the struggle were northern white liberals wilted or turned away to other concerns. "What makes the civil rights movement matter are the prophetic ideas it embodies – not the liberal-progressive elements it also undeniably, inescapably contains."[57] Concepts of evil, sin, justice, and righteousness grounded in theology, empowered in ways political ideologies could not and meant the civil rights movement "defies sustained comparison with any nonreligous movement."[58] His exploration of Fannie Lou Hammer or comparison between King and white liberal thinkers demonstrate these differences. Albert Raboteau in "Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Tradition of Black Religious Protest" argued that the religious centered protests of the Civil Rights movement were far from new.[59] He maintained that for some time, Blacks had protested their lot informed by concepts of salvation, sin redemption and eschatology.

Yet, the black church can not simply be viewed as a progressive social and political institution. C. Eric Lincoln's *The Black Church Since Frazier* held

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[57] *Ibid*, 83.

[58] *Ibid,* 102.

[59]Albert Raboteau, "Marlin Luther King, jr. and the Tradition of Black Religious Protest" in *Religion in the Life of the Nation* , Rowland A. Sherrill, ed. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

Although not focused on religion, John Dittmer's *Local People* can also offer a correction to Lincoln's exuberance about the role of the black church.[59] His study of the struggle for civil rights in Mississippi found middle-class blacks as often proving an obstacle to reform. Among, these were ministers. As sure as they could and did promote the movement, some could resist it as well. My exploration of African-American churches echoes this theme. For example, leadership of the National Baptist Convention could chastise civil rights workers and protestors and declare an emphasis upon "productivity not protest." John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle For Civil Rights in Mississippi*. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

out great hopes.[60] Emphasizing a tension between Frazier's "negro church" and the "Black church", Lincoln saw the church as the vehicle for radical change in the future for new Black theology would be the means for "Blackamericans" to challenge social systems. Unfortunately, while new trends in black and liberation theology did emerge, neither they nor the Black Church seemed to be the source of major societal transformation he had hoped for. That said, it does seem that Frazier's contention about the nature of the relationship between religious leaders and their laity was correct. Martin Luther King, Jr. and mainline leaders could have heeded Lincoln's contention that the successful leaders of the church would be those who were "wise enough to work with the people though, and no oblivious of, the requirements of their faith."[61]

More recently, Barbara Dianne Savage's *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us* offers a gentle dissent from the Frazier inspired concepts of a monolithic united black church dominated by males.[62] Bringing in the story of women, and surveying the 20th century, she replaces a monolithic concept of African-American religion with a more diverse one, a vision of a unified religious blacks as more fractured and the assumption of African-American church's progressive political activism with a more ambivalent perspective. "The perception emerged that black religion and politics were innately compatible and mutually reinforcing. The power of this idea eclipsed the history and memory of *intraracial* conflicts

[60] C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1973).

[61] *Ibid*, 125.

[62] Barbara Dianne Savage, *Your Spirits Walk Beside Us: The Politics of Black Religion*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2008).

about the place of religion in political struggle."[63] In a sense, the black church is more like the white church.

A significant historiographic issue is perspectives on Martin Luther King, Jr. Who is King? Is he a southern black minister or is he a northern liberal reformer? Is he of the people or above them. Works like Chappell's stress a significant ideological distinction between King and northern white liberals and greater identity with fellow African-Americans. Yet, others seem to take subtle jabs at him. For example, Frazier wrote that "Gandhism as a philosophy as a way of life is completely alien to the Negro and has nothing in common with the social herniated of the Negro."[64] Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters* describes King as continually seeking to extend his influence personally and organizationally.[65] Furthermore, he describes a King constantly fighting or impeded by his own elitist preferences.

The mantle of leadership eventually reveals the frailties of the leader. My study of King does point to some of King's failures in leadership and his ideological distance from fellow African Americans clergy. At the same time, he was perhaps the most theologically consistent national religious leader, black or white, in America at the time.

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[63] *Ibid*, 270; emphasis added.

[64] Frazier, 79.

[65] Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-1963*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988.

On the subject of African-American public opinion on the Vietnam war and the black church beyond the role of Dr. King, there is a dearth of scholarship. The most useful study I have found is Elisse Yvette Wright's "Birds of a Different Feather: African American Support for the Vietnam War in the Johnson Years, 1965-1968."[66] Wright argued that, contrary to popular portrayals, African-Americans were more hesitant to oppose the war in Vietnam during much of Lyndon Johnson's administration because they did not want to destabilize support for a president who had done so much black civic and economic concerns. It was not simply an issue of pragmatic politics for blacks but also an expression of support for the greatest advocate of civil rights in mainstream American politics, Johnson's vice-president, Hubert Humphrey. My study reinforces her findings and extends them to the life of the church. Sadly, no scholarship exists on how African-Americans wrestled with the Vietnam War. This is ironic in the attention paid to African-American religion. While my study helps shed light on this issue, there is still a strange silence. Because of the nature of African-American religious periodicals, it is extremely difficult to gauge popular opinion. Bridging this technical hurdle will require some creativity or a different approach to the sources.

Therefore, as I delve into the way American Protestants wrestled with Vietnam, I do so conscious of the larger historical contexts at work. The context is not simply the 20th century, but also the American experience as a whole. For mainline and conservative evangelical churches it offers up the role of religious

[66] Elisse Yvette Wright, *Birds of a Different Feather: African American Support for the Vietnam War in the Johnson Years, 1965-1968*. Ph.D. Diss.: Ohio State University, 2002.

ideology as a political motivation. This offering helps refine the current historiography. My discussion of African-American churches reminds us that the religious engagement with Vietnam could not be entirely separated from political considerations, calculations and issues.

Chapter 2

Morally Reprehensible vs. Morally Responsible**:**
Mainline Concepts of War and the Debate over the Vietnam War

They eviscerated themselves in the name of Jesus. Mainline denominations – the bell cow of American religion – theologically and organizationally lived out the divisiveness of the Vietnam War era.[1] Contrasting views on Vietnam served as the catalyst for a firestorm of controversy. Competing concepts of the world, faith, and the church's role in the world fueled this fire. In retrospect, it seems clear that once lit, mainline churches could not extinguish the blaze. Thus, the end of the era left these churches emaciated numerically and financially. It left them suffering the cultural and moral wounds of a bloody fight none could win.

As part of a larger study of American Protestants and the Vietnam War, the next three chapters will explore mainline denominations. The denominations studied – The United Methodist Church, The Lutheran Church in America, The Episcopal Church, and The Presbyterian Church – represent the largest swath of American religion at the time, as well as best encapsulate – if anything can – 'normative' religion in America at the time. The other groups studied – conservative evangelicals and African-American denominations – represent major groups of American Protestantism and variations on the story told here.

[1] While some debate exists as to what constitutes a "mainline denomination," the term generally applies to the largest, most inclusive, and most geographically and demographically diverse Protestant churches in America.

By the end of this era, conservative evangelicals would hold the power in American religious society. However, mainline denominations needed first to implode.

Analyzing mainline denominations provided major obstacles in organization. Their size and inclusivity made generalizations more tentative than with other groups. In addition, the variation of thoughts and patterns across the group and within particular denominations made strict organization along thematic or temporal lines problematic. Conservative evangelicals and African-American denominations expressed much clearer patterns. Thus, what follows is an analysis that combines both thematic and temporal strands. The first chapter explores the debate over war and the Vietnam War specifically. This debate primarily took place during the early to mid-war years, 1964-1971. The second chapter explores the debate over the attendant issues of Vietnam that took place primarily within the middle years of the war, 1968-1971. The final chapter explores the nature of conservative reaction within these denominations as well as the emergence of formal groups meant to challenge their respective denominations. This rancor took place primarily during the last half of the war, 1968-1973.

At the heart of the divisiveness experienced in American during the 1960's lay the Vietnam War. However, this debate over one war, specifically, found itself informed by a foundational debate about the morality of war in general. This foundational debate in turn guided the discussion of Vietnam and its attendant issues. The justness of war informed perspectives on conscientious

objection. How one viewed a nation's use of war guided how one described the soldiers that participated in that war. This foundational debate, with a limited middle ground and polarized perspectives, set the meter for discussions that followed.

As long as men have fought, they have sought to justify their violence. The Christian tradition allows for such justification. Concurrent with the embracing of Christianity by the state, the late fourth-century theologian, Augustine of Hippo, explicated a just war theology that served as the basis for formal and informal evaluations of war. This theology implied that a country could take up arms against another and have the blessing of morality if their cause was just. A just cause either acted in self-defense or pre-empitvely acted to stop a greater evil. If a just war took place, the Christian had an obligation to fight justly. This expectation generally fell into three categories. First, armies were to avoid intentional civilian casualties and minimize incidental consequences to non-combatants. Second, the fighting could not cause more evil than it sought to remedy. Third, an army could not use excessive force nor wreak excessive destruction. Thus, armies were expected to rely on the minimum amount of force needed to meet the objective.[2]

In the modern age, the influences of just war theology have seen codification in international agreements and found refinement among political scientists. More recently, just war thinking was secularized and brought in the

[2] Philip Schaft, Ed. *Nicea and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church; Volume IV, St Augustine: The Writings Against the Manicheans and Against the Donatists*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clarck, 1887).

idea of criminality. However, the basic structure provided by Augustine remained in use. Yet, there appeared increasing emphasis upon restricting wars of aggression by limiting what constituted a valid use of force. Informed by World War II, writers, such as the influential Michael Walzer, emphasized just war as a way of criminalizing those leaders that pursued a war unjustly. More recent scholarship, due to the decreasing number of traditional wars between states and an increase of internal conflicts, has used the just war theory to evaluate and punish the use of violence by leaders on their own people.[3]

Opponents of just war thinking challenged the idea that war ever had just motives or means. Yet, in a pattern that plagued mainline leadership, the Achilles heel of mainline organizational communication lay in the ambiguity with which they could approach issues. Faith does not thrive in a fog and equivocation fueled dissent. For example, the social creed of the United Methodist Church firmly declared that the church "stood for the repudiation of war and for the discovery and development of all reasonable methods to attain peace." They affirmed war as "utterly destructive" and which served as the "greatest collective social sin and a denial of the ideals of Christ." With finality they stated: "We stand upon this ground, that the Methodist Church as an

[3] Simeon O. Ilesanmi "Just War Theory in Comparative Perspective: A Review Essay" *The Journal of Religious Ethics* vol. 28, No. 1 (Spring, 2000), pp. 137-155. Brian Orend, "Michael Walzer on Resorting to Force" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* Vol. 33, No. 3 (September, 2000), pg 523-547; Michael Walzer, *Arguing About War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, (New York: Baker Books, 1977) James H. Smylie "American Religious Bodies, Just War, and Vietnam" *Journal of Church and State* (No 11, March, 1969) pp, 383-408. William McDonald, "Historical Brief on the Standing on War and Peace by the Traditional Peace Churches." Presentation to the Social Concerns Commission of the Church of God, 1971.

institution cannot endorse war, nor support or participate in it."[4] And in three words – "as an institution" – ambiguity disempowered bold declarations. They continued to equivocate and, having declared the utter sinfulness of war, recognized "the right of the individual to answer the call of his government in an emergency according to the dictates of his Christian conscience."[5] Confessional ambiguity could only serve to spread divisiveness. The United Methodist Church, while not alone in such ambiguous approaches, best illustrated this lack of moral clarity. Lutherans decried "the futility of war" and its sinfulness, while at the same time declaring it one's obligation to the state.[6] Presbyterians, too, fell into this conundrum of both challenging the use of and participation in war while affirming its legitimacy. Synods expressed publically their extreme discomfort with the just war concept, yet at the same time affirmed the validity of the idea and war itself.[7] The importance of such observations lay not in the volume, but in the fact that such moral ambiguity remained an ever present subtext to more overt discussions of definitive moral declarations.

Ambiguity aside, these churches expressed distaste for the concept of just war. Rejection of war was based in part not on a commitment to pacifism but for

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[4] John W. Langdale and Alfred F. Smith. *Doctrines and Disciplines of the United Methodist Church 1940*. New York: The Methodist Publishing House, 1940: 1712.

[5] John W. Langdale and Alfred F. Smith. *Doctrines and Disciplines of the United Methodist Church 1940*. New York: The Methodist Publishing House, 1940: 1712.

[6] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 8:2 (January 21, 1970): 49. The Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Deerfield, IL. Hereafter "Archives ELCA"

[7] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1969: 53. Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA. Hereafter "Archives PHS"

more pragmatic reasons. For some, modern technology mandated opposition to war. Some Methodists denied the reality of just war in a nuclear age, for "armaments no longer [held] hope of security, but only the threat of nuclear destruction." Such weapons meant that warfare always resulted in "atrocity" and "genocide."[8] In fact, failure to end war meant that humanity "would incinerate [them]selves in one final blast and mushroom cloud."[9] Pragmatism and opposition to war could also find expression among Lutherans. For example, Lutheran expressed opposition to war and the commitment to seek its end within the context of a resolution affirming the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty.[10] With an ultimate weapon available, these opponents felt that "sooner or later all Christians [would] have to recognize that all wars [were] unjustifiable under modern circumstances."[11] As fear of nuclear weapons led some to oppose the Vietnam War, domestic needs also brought forth opposition. Again, this opposition found origin not in pacifistic idealism, but in pragmatic concerns. Church leaders warned of the destructiveness of war and military spending, not

[8] Leon T. Moore and J. Wesley Hole. *Journal of the 1964 General Conference of the Methodist Church, Volume II*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1964: 1287. Chambers Library, Oklahoma City University, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Hereafter "Chambers Library."

[9] "The Episcopal Address." *Daily Christian Advocate*, no. 2:2 (April 21, 1970): 7. United Methodist Archives, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey. Hereafter "Archives UMC."

[10] Jon L. Joyce. "Ohio Congregation Adopts Resolution Opposing War." *The Lutheran*, no. 7:6 (March 19, 1969): 29. The Nuclear Proliferation Treaty committed signitors, possessing nuclear weapons or not, to prevent the expansion of nuclear weapons in non-nuclear states. Archives ELCA.

[11] Elson Ruff. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:16 (July 31, 1968): 50. Archives ELCA.

on the battlefield, but on national economies and national needs. "A sense of stewardship" compelled nations and their citizens to reject the concept of war.[12]

More recent pressures notwithstanding, the core opposition to war centered on ancient religious commitments. Opponents of war emphasized concepts of a global Christian community. "The time for solemn and careful discussion…has long passed," declared one parishioner and ideas of war had to yield to superseding commitments of "brotherhood."[13] In light of such truths, Lutheran leadership counseled parishioners that one could not see war as "inevitable or theologically justified."[14] Those who denied such commitments found themselves labeled as "false prophets whose creed seems to be that the way to peace is to kill."[15] Christ himself provided a model for the rejection of war. Opponents of war asked incredulously, "What if he had told Peter to draw his sword and fight a limited warfare against the enemy? There would have been no cross, no crown."[16] Thus, "Jesus taught us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute" others, declared another parishioner.[17] With such a model in Christ, some readers doubted how anyone, especially Christian leaders,

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[12] Leon T. Moore and J. Wesley Hole. *Journal of the 1964 General Conference of the Methodist Church, Volume II*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1964: 1290. Chambers Library.

[13] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:21 (October 12, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.

[14] "Churches Urged to Avoid the Idea that War is Right." *The Lutheran*, no. 2:10 (May 6, 1964): 30-31. Archives ELCA.

[15] Albert P. Stauderman. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 9:13 (July 7, 1971): 50. Archives ELCA.

[16] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:21 (October 12, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.

[17] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:6 (February 28, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

could "pray for victory out of one side of their mouths and preach the gospel of Christ out of the other."[18] These opponents of war did not deny the cruel reality of violence. However, they affirmed that "the only way to resist violence [was] with love and non-violence."[19] They saw such resistance not as a new ethic but an old one: "Christ and the early Christians accomplished much more with their methods of non-militant resistance against great wrongs."[20] Thus, modern contexts, concepts of brotherhood, Christ's actions, and the practices of the early church formed a core reason for rejecting the concept of just war.

Yet just as strongly as some mainline moderates rejected the concept of just war, an even larger and louder contingent supported the concept almost entirely on religious grounds. Those that declared the justness of war also expressed those thoughts with confusing ambiguity. Episcopalians declared war as necessarily inescapable, yet at the same time stated that "there [was] no question whatsoever that all Christian men [were] opposed to war."[21] Some Methodists committed Christians to challenging "materialistic ideologies" via the "preservation and growth of democratic institutions" while at the same time affirming a commitment to peace and non-violence.[22] Bishops affirmed just war

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[18] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:6 (February 28, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[19] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 10:12 (June 21, 1972): 49. Archives ELCA.

[20] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 7:23 (December 3, 1969): 49. Archives ELCA.

[21] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 516. The Archives of the Episcopal Church, San Antonio, Texas. Hereafter "Archives EC."

[22] Leon T. Moore and J. Wesley Hole. *Journal of the 1964 General Conference of the Methodist Church, Volume II*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1964: 1333. Chambers Library.

in one sentence and in the next declared that one's loyalty lay not with the nation but with God.[23] Presbyterians affirmed the necessity and justness of war, yet at the same time found that "in violence and war the powers of sin and death [were] at work."[24] They "justified" war while at the same time affirmed it as "always wrong in the context of Christ's command to love."[25] Conservative evangelicals did not find themselves plagued by such ambiguities and their organizational consequences. This lack of clarity meant that both sides could be right and wrong and left churches without clear theological centers.

Yet, while supporters of just war echoed the ambiguity of their opponents, they shared little else. A darker view of the world, shared by conservative evangelical denominations, served as the starting point for support of just war. The reality of sin and human sinfulness foundationally informed these attitudes. Repeatedly, church members declared that "sinful man" found himself "incapable of living in complete and total peace" and thus, just war existed as a consequence of "the fallen nature of man."[26] Episcopal bishops pointed to the "sin inherent in the world," which required that the United States remain "strong

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[23] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1964: 980-982. Archives EC.

[24] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1969: 694-696. Archives PHS.

[25] *Minutes of the Fifth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America.* Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1970: 61. Archives ELCA.

[26] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 516. Archives EC.

militarily" and not hesitate to "wage war."[27] Methodists echoed this thought and saw that "the only way man can escape the guilt of war [was] by resigning from the human race."[28] These voices saw war as man's natural state.[29] So pervasive was this moral pessimism that an occasional voice found hope in the midst of tragedy. Wrote one conservative parishioner: "The basic contradiction of humanity [was] that almost every step taken in advancement of civilization has been born in conflict."[30]

Embracing the reality of a sin stained world meant embracing the justness of war out of a commitment to stop a greater evil. Incredulously, supporters of just war saw pacifists as encouraging "worse evil than the limited warfare necessary" to prevent it.[31] Yes, "any war [was] horrible but it's a choice of picking the lesser of two evils," wrote one pastor.[32] Among the evils of pacifism were eventual "slavery and tyranny."[33] Supporters of just war demanded of pacifists "a logical solution, one which [would] not result in the enslavement of a people or

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[27] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1964: 982. Archives EC.

[28] Sigmund C. Schade. "The Christian Life and Military Service." *Good News,* no. 3:4 (April-June 1970): 35-36. Archives UMC.

[29] John F. Ameling. "Communication: War and Unfair Comparisons." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:20 (October 29, 1970): 19. Archives UMC.

[30] Sigmund C. Schade. "The Christian Life and Military Service." *Good News,* no. 3:4 (April-June 1970): 36. Archives UMC.

[31] "U.S. Policy in Vietnam justifiable, pastor says." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:5 (March 1, 1967): 40. Archives ELCA.

[32] "Serviceman's Morale is High in Vietnam, Dr. Youngdahl says." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:6 (March 15, 1967): 38. Archives ELCA.

[33] "Open Forum." *Christian Advocate*, no. 9:17 (September 9, 1965): 5. Archives UMC.

additional aggression." Failure to stop such evil, failure to embrace war had "no ethical defense" and was "morally reprehensible."[34]

Supporters of just war also affirmed it as an expression of a "brother's keeper" mentality. Surveying the past, parishioners wrote of a world history "filled with accounts of Christians who fought to the death to maintain their freedoms and rights to worship God according to their belief." Lutherans and Episcopalian parishioners repeatedly asked if they were "not taught to be our brother's keeper?"[35] Others answered they were and as long as a countries' "motives [were] based in Christianity" and they were " truly concerned about… fellow man" one could be assured of the sanctity of war.[36] So then, to come to the aid of another with military might expressed Jesus' commandment to "love thy neighbor."[37]

Supporters of just war also saw it as a tool sanctioned by God. Speaking to opponents of just war, supporters pointed to Jesus' actions: "Jesus is the Prince of Peace, but he allowed his disciples on one occasion to carry two swords for protection."[38] Individuals could rest assured that God used both

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[34] "U.S. Policy in Vietnam justifiable, pastor says." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:5 (March 1, 1967): 40. Archives ELCA; "Open Forum: Letters to the Editors." *Christian Advocate*, no. 13:16 (September 18, 1969): 6. Archives UMC.

[35] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:3 (February 2, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA; "Letters." *The Episcopalian*, no. 131:6 (June 1966): 3. Archives EC; "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:6 (February 28, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[36] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:6 (February 28, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[37] Sigmund C. Schade. "The Christian Life and Military Service." *Good News,* no. 3:4 (April-June 1970): 36. Archives UMC.

peace and war "to redeem responsive persons." Beyond redemption, God also used war to reprove: "God has always used war to chastise and chasten sinful people." Therefore, supporters of just war described it's opponents as "irreligious in rejecting the possibility" that a nation at war acted "as an agent of God."[39] These supporters turned to Old Testament Israel as proof. "When the Jews were being imposed upon by neighboring peoples, the God of Moses, Joshua, and David told the leaders to get out and subdue their enemies and He would back them."[40]

Supporters of just war also moved beyond simply defending their position to disempowering the moral critique of war. Supporters agreed "war [was] madness…it [was] the scourge, the disease, of all mankind."[41] Supporters conceded that "Christians everywhere abhor, hate, violence, and war of any kind."[42] Proponents of just war would readily grant the ultimate shame and immorality of war.[43] Yet, as supporters made these concessions, they simultaneously lifted the issue out of the plane of idealism to the plane of pragmatism. "The structure of civilized society rests on the use of force," wrote

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[38] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editors." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:4 (February 19, 1970): 6, Archives UMC, The reference here is to Luke 22:38.

[39] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:10 (May 15, 1971): 6. Archives PHS.

[40] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:11 (June 1, 1971): 8. Archives PHS.

[41] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 511. Archives EC.

[42] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:20 (September 25, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[43] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1969: 695. Archives PHS; "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 10:15 (August 16, 1972): 49. Archives ELCA.

one pastor who conceded the madness of war.[44] Mankind "must face reality" and must participate and support some wars, wrote a parishioner who abhorred war.[45] In "our sinful and broken world…military action" lies a "tragically necessary evil," wrote an Episcopalian who saw war as sinful. To end war unilaterally "would not mean peace" but "merely one less participant in an unended conflict," wrote a lady who found all wars immoral. In short, writers repeatedly disempowered critiques by granting what they claimed the most – that war was morally untenable. However, these supporters would shake their heads and look at the sad reality of the needs of civilization: "All wars are immoral…if we are to pass judgment on a particular war, it should be based upon policy and purpose, not morality."[46]

The lack of a common ground, the ability to use the same scripture and theological concepts, made the just war debate largely irreconcilable. Opponents emphasized compassion while supporters emphasized responsibility. Perhaps the major, unexpected, distinction lay in the way supporters sought to remove morality from a moral argument. If such distinctions existed around the idea of war in general, the rancor only increased when focused on a particular war.

Temporal organization of the debate over the Vietnam War itself does not lend itself to neat categories with sharp boundaries. A multitude of voices sounded different opinions at varying times. If any clear temporal shifts existed,

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[44] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 511. Archives EC.

[45] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:20 (September 25, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[46] "Message Forum." *The Episcopalian*, no. 135:10 (October 1970): 7. Archives EC.

they expressed themselves early and late in the war. It does appear that early discussion of Vietnam sought to emphasize an informative approach that sidestepped debate or significant commentary. For example, early Presbyterian reporting on the war focused on relief efforts without commenting on the moral implications.[47] Other articles explored the war from the perspective of a detached foreign policy briefing.[48] Even reports on early protests against Vietnam merited a middle of the road commitment to reporting without judgment.[49]

The roles of Kent State and the invasion of Cambodia was the other salient temporal feature. In a debate that wove back and forth with limited reference to historical turning points, these two events not only received the greatest reference but also seemed to sharpen the rhetoric.[50] Opponents of the war recognized that these events "produced a more receptive atmosphere" for resolutions openly critical of the war.[51] Leadership felt emboldened to speak more resolutely against the war.[52] These events helped cement "moral outrage"

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[47] Juliet Blanchard. "The Sows, Seed, and Cement War in Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 18:9 (May 1, 1965): 25-26; "News & Comment: A Slim Measure of Hope for Saigon's Refugees." *Presbyterian Life,* no. 19:21 (November 1, 1966): 26-27. Archives PHS.

[48] Elwyn Smith. "In Search of An Asian Policy." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:6 (May 15, 1967): 15. Archives PHS.

[49] "Saturday Thoughts: After the March." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:10 (May 15, 1967): 23. Archives PHS.

[50] On May 4, 1970, members of the Ohio National Guard shot unarmed students protesting the Vietnam War at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. Four students were killed and nine others were wounded. In early May 1970, American and Vietnamese forces invaded North Vietnamese and Vietcong strongholds and staging areas in Cambodia.

[51] "Too Much, Too Little." *The Episcopalian*, no. 135:7 (July 1970): 13.

at the war.[53] At the same time, supporters of Vietnam increasingly turned to an emphasis upon salvation and souls after Kent State and Cambodia.

However, aside from these two key features, the informal debate over Vietnam in mainline churches lacked clear temporal references or turning points. While formal declarations did follow a general pattern, informal debate among and between leadership and laity did not do the same. There were those who supported the war as just, those who opposed it as unjust, and a small middle ground that saw it as failed policy in need of redirection.

Opposition and support of the Vietnam War revolved around implicit just war thinking. Opponents of the Vietnam War emphasized unjust means with minimal emphasis upon cause. Conversely, supporters of Vietnam emphasized Vietnam as a just cause with limited discussion of means. This diametrically opposed perspectives within the same organizations encouraged institutional instability. The ability of both sides to use different sides of the same argument revealed the significant theological and intellectual weaknesses of just war thinking as a means of moral judgment.

In decrying the injustice of the Vietnam War, mainline opponents, while focused on means did briefly reject the war as an unjust cause. Repeatedly, these opponents, overwhelmingly Presbyterians, pointed a scolding finger at the government's motives. At times, they criticized American foreign policy which led

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[52] Henry McCorkle. "The Issue is Joined." *The Episcopalian,* no. 135:6 (June 1970): 8-9. Archives EC.

[53] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1970: 88. Archives PHS.

to involvement. Vietnam displayed a need for a "shrewder" policy to replace the current one which was nothing "but failure."[54] These opponents asked, "Why [did] such a strong country need to prove its might to North Vietnam? The United States stands to gain nothing."[55] The fact that "there [was] no recognized international border within Vietnam and therefore, there [were] not two sovereign nations" meant that America had no justification for involvement.[56] Hence, if America had no just motive for involvement the fighting proved a "[waste] of thousands of American and Vietnamese lives."[57]

Beyond a foreign policy based critique, those that doubted the cause as just expressed distrust in the administration. By 1966, the American public was losing faith in the Johnson administration on Vietnam, and even in its domestic agenda. A seemingly endless war in Asia and increasing social conflict at home, despite the passage of civil rights laws, led to distrust of the Johnson administration and in the government generally. This trend found expression in the religious debate over Vietnam. William Miller, editor of *Presbyterian Life* and critic of the government declared his and others' doubts about the validity of American involvement since they found the government guilty of "repeated falsehoods" and the inability of the public to "know truthfully what policy-makers"

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[54] "News and Comment: Criticism of U.S. Vietnam Policy Mounting." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 18:7 (April 1, 1965): 31. Archives PHS.

[55] "News and Comment: Crypto-Civil War in Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 18:10 (May 15, 1965): 30-31. Archives PHS.

[56] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1972: 390-392. Archives PHS.

[57] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 19:5 (May 1, 1966): 6. Archives PHS.

did.[58] Leadership charged that "continued deception about the origins and intent of the policy pursued by [the U.S.] government" helped make Vietnam an unjust cause.[59] The government's "illusionary justification of policy" meant that one could rightfully doubt the cause for America's involvement.

Some, primarily Methodists, moved beyond the charge of national deception and labeled the U.S. as the aggressor. The U.S. involved itself in Vietnam not for defensive purposes, but for conquest and gain. The Vietnamese – with no distinction of North or South – were the just ones, for they fought "for their homeland while … the Americans [were] the intruders or aggressors."[60] In Vietnam, critics incredulously asked if America had "a right to impose its will so violently on other nations."[61] In fact, some argued that America's racism undergirded its unjust intervention: "Blind racism led our forefathers to conquer and exterminate the people of the soil of this land [the American Indians]. This is the same racism that has led us into a war in Southeast Asia in which we 'waste gooks'."[62]

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[58] William L. Miller. "News and Comment: How a Government Behaves." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 19:1 (January 1, 1966): 25. Archives PHS.

[59] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1972: 390. Archives PHS.

[60] "News and Trends: American Pastor Reports on North Vietnam." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:19 (October 15, 1970): 25. Archives UMC.

[61] Elson Ruff. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:2 (January 17, 1968): 50. Archives ELCA.

[62] J.M.W., "Personal Perspective: Racial Psychosis and the War." *Christian Advocate*, no. 15:10 (May 13, 1971): 2. Archives UMC.

However, criticisms of a failed policy foisted by a duplicitous aggressive government notwithstanding, challenges of the justness of Vietnam centered on means not cause. Moderate opposition to the Vietnam War repeatedly cited the conduct and consequences of the war as the paramount reason for its immorality. Some looked at the war and rejected it for fear of the potential cataclysmic consequences of the war. Informed by the threat of nuclear weapons, some feared this war would trigger a cataclysmic World War III.[63] From the earliest days of the war, concerned voices noted the way "localized military action" contained the "danger of escalating into a nuclear war on a global scale."[64] As the war escalated so too did concerns of a nuclear annihilation. Calling for cessation, the Presbyterian Committee on Church and Society warned that escalation raised "the specter of World War III and the possibility of nuclear holocaust."[65] A fear echoed by Episcopalians too.[66] In fact, in one poll, 62% of church leadership and clergy opposed the war out of a conviction that it would trigger a new World War.[67] This conviction of imminent nuclear holocaust, in

[63] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1963: 332-333. Archives PHS.

[64] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1965: 437. Archives PHS.

[65] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1967: 323-326. Archives PHS.

[66] Leland Stark. "Now, Mr. President, About Vietnam…" *The Episcopalian*, no. 132:9 (September 1967): 10. Archives EC

[67] "The Reader Opinion Poll on Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:6 (March 15, 1968): 24-25. Archives PHS.

part, propelled churches to urge their government to seek peace.[68] This concern was not theoretical, as exhibited in 1962. In October of that year, the Cuban Missile Crisis demonstrated how the world's super powers came to the brink of nuclear annihilation over a third world country. Thus, critics could see how Vietnam could potentially push nations over the brink. At the same time, there did not appear to be a unique Asian context for this concern. Some in government feared that in Vietnam, American might launch nuclear weapons at yet another Asian people, as Edwin Reischauer, Ambassador to Japan, made clear this concern in his testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee[69]

Mainline churches also expressed abhorrence of the Vietnam War due to its environmental consequences. To be sure, this theme never expressed itself apart from other criticisms of the war. Yet, emphasizing environmental consequences did demonstrate a conviction that one could not separate the creation from the creator. Lutherans expressed grave concern over the "vast destruction of natural… resources."[70] Church leaders shuddered at the "destruction by Americans of vast acreages of crops by defoliation from the air."[71]

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[68] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1966: 26-27. Archives PHS.

[69] Edwin Reischauer, *Future U.S. Role in Asia and in the Pacific* Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 90th Congress, February 29, 1968. http://web.lexis-nexis.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/congcomp/document?_m=a62c639fb6e95d83e51e771214fe4ef2&_docnum=2&wchp=dGLzVlz-zSkSA&_md5=706f055456efdcf13eaed56b6ce02a2a .

[70] *Lutheran Church in America: Minutes of the Third Biennial Convention.* Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1966: 814. Archives ELCA.

[71] Robert M. Brown. "A Christian Views Vietnam: Why I Oppose Our Policy In Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:2 (January 15, 1968): 14-16. Archives PHS.

Methodists decried the "more than 20 million craters in those lands" and defoliation of "1/8 the acreage of South Vietnam" as an "intolerable monstrosity."[72] Repeatedly, mainline denominations and parishioners were appalled at the environmental consequences.[73] In this study of Protestants and Vietnam War, only mainline denominations, not conservative evangelicals nor African-American denominations, let their concerns over the war include the environmental consequences. However, one should not assume that environmental concerns did not figure into conservative evangelical thought. One could find articles in Baptist periodicals in the early 70s calling for greater environmental consciousness; however, these environmental concerns occurred in a domestic setting, not in foreign policy. In Vietnam, conservative evangelicals emphasized souls and salvation and expressed no concern about the environment.

However, the heart of the rejection of the Vietnam War lay not in concerns over an incipient World War III, a duplicitous government, or environmental destruction but rather in the suffering of people. The human toll of the war declared the war's injustice. Surveying the destruction of Vietnam, opponents knew of "no Christian teaching that glorified hunger, encourag[ed] injustice, or condon[ed] killing."[74] America's guilt was sure, for America perpetrated "acts of

[72] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume II.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 1045. Chambers Library.

[73] "Seminary Professors Take Stand on Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:10 (May 15, 1967): 27. Archives PHS; *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 85-86. Archives EC.

[74] "Message Forum." *The Episcopalian*, no. 135:10 (October 1970): 7-8. Archives EC.

inhumanity that [were] morally intolerable." Leaders sought to awaken the American "people to a sense of responsibility and conscience for [their] involvement, including the use of torture, terrorism, and deliberate retaliation."[75] Articles, letters, and statements across mainline denominations pointed to the suffering and connected the destructiveness of the war with its illegitimacy.[76] Opponents repeatedly spoke of the "destructiveness of the war," the "ruthless slaughter," the "rising toll of casualties," and the "extermination methods on a weak people" which served to "destroy a valid foreign policy."[77] Repeatedly, opponents of the Vietnam War largely bypassed or granted the justness of the cause and focused upon the way American conduct made this war immoral.

This general abhorrence of human suffering found specific expression in several ways. First, opponents pointed out the irony that America's fighting destroyed those it sought to deliver. Repeatedly, America was described as a Good Samaritan gone awry, the war destroyed "the very people whose freedom the United States [intended] to defend."[78] Writers contrasted the Vietnamese

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[75] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1966: 67-68.

[76] Barbara G. Kremer. "Vietnam's Other Army." *The Episcopalian*, no. 132:7 (July 1967): 12; "Open Forum: Letters to the Editor." *Christian Advocate*, no. 10:12 (June 16, 1966): 6.

[77] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:21 (October 12, 1966): 49, Archives ELCA; Emerson D. Bragg, J. Wesley Hole, and Charles D. White. *Journal of the Last Session of the Evangelical United Bretheren Church, Last Session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church and the Uniting Conference of the United Methodist Church and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church Volume I*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968, 513-79, Chambers Library; "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:21 (October 11, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[78] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1968: 390. Archives PHS; *Minutes of the General*

with the United States and destruction with salvation: "The American presence in Vietnam is destroying a nation in the name of liberating it."[79] A utilitarian ethic seemed to inform this line of reasoning. George Regas, an influential Episcopalian Bishop whose ministry in Pasadena, California emphasized world peace and justice wrote an editorial that surveyed the goals and consequences and declared of the Vietnam War, "Mr. President, the jury is in. The cost is too great."[80] With such clear evidence of immorality, church members castigated fellow parishioners and in jeremiad style declared "Lutherans are most certainly lazy, lax, selfish, and cowardly to sit idly by without openly protesting mass murder in Vietnam. How could the Americans' role in Vietnam ever, in any manner, be interpreted as God's will?"[81]

Second, concern about human suffering also focused upon civilians. Robert McAfee Brown, a leading Presbyterian, castigated "a war in which the civilian casualties [were] incredibly disproportionate to military casualties."[82] Resolutions would "abhor indiscriminate warfare" in which the "civilian

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Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1966: 399. Archives PHS.

[79] Robert M. Brown. "A Christian Views Vietnam: Why I Oppose Our Policy In Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:2 (January 15, 1968): 14. Archives PHS.

[80] George F. Regas. "Mr. President, The Jury is in." *The Episcopalian*, no. 136:6 (June 1971): 8. Archives EC.

[81] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:2 (January 17, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[82] Robert M. Brown. "A Christian Views Vietnam: Why I Oppose Our Policy In Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:2 (January 15, 1968): 14-16, 39. Archives PHS.

population" bore the "direct ravages of the conflict."[83] It seems that the term "civilian" intentionally excluded the suffering of fighting forces and especially the suffering of the Vietcong and North Vietnamese. Did such language imply that the enemy suffered justly? Carefully crafted resolutions pointed in that direction. One declaration on the "moral crisis" of the Vietnam War pointed to the "death, pain and homelessness of millions of civilians in Vietnam."[84] Furthermore, one also witnessed a creep of utilitarian ethics with explicit and implicit emphasis upon proportionality. It was not simply the suffering of innocent civilians, but the amount of civilian suffering. For example, a group of Presbyterians in Cleveland found America's actions in Vietnam "immoral," for American forces did not seek to reduce the loss of lives among Laotians, Cambodians, and Vietnamese, while emphasizing a reduction of casualties among American fighting forces.[85] Similarly, Episcopalian calls to donate money to relieve the suffering described Vietnam as a "war in which civilian casualties [were] greater than the military;"[86] if only the weapons and fighting made the "distinction between men, women, children and soldiers."[87] In fact, in an accounting of the suffering, numbers

[83] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1968: 395. Archives PHS.

[84] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1971: 564. Archives PHS.

[85] *Ibid,* 75-76.

[86] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 85-86. Archives EC.

[87] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume I*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 380. Chambers Library.

repeatedly noted the civilian casualties, not the military ones.[88] Thus, it was not simply a concern for suffering but also who and how many suffered. Reflecting an Augustinian emphasis upon proportionality and concern for non-combatant suffering, opponents saw this war as unjust.

Third, concerns about suffering also focused on children. Opponents witnessed the indiscriminate nature of death and suffering in Vietnam and bemoaned a war in which "bombs and bullets wound[ed] children as well as soldier."[89] Others cried out, "We are burning children in Vietnam…a truth which no amount of anticommunist or patriotic clichés can ever justify."[90] The story of "Saigon Shoeshine Boy," a story detailing the travails of a refugee boy in Saigon, demonstrated the way the suffering of children specifically guided thinking on the war. The story, accompanied by numerous pictures, declared that "just or unjust, war [was] the heritage" of the children of Vietnam.[91]

Of course, the weapons of Vietnam produced the suffering of Vietnam. Critics of the war also seemed shocked the way modern technology and the weapons of war joined together to bring heightened levels of destruction and suffering to the country. Where America had gone to Vietnam to "liberate its people" their "modern weapons" were guilty of being "increasingly destructive

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[88] *Ibid,* 1045.

[89] "Wanderers in a Wandering Land." *The Episcopalian*, no. 131:3 (March 1966): 10-13. Archives EC.

[90] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:16 (August 15, 1967): 4. Archives PHS.

[91] D.E. Ronk. "Saigon Shoeshine Boy." *The Episcopalian*, no. 133:5 (May 1968): 30-32. Archives EC.

both to people and country."[92] Although the United States may have meant well, "unfortunately, the power of U.S. weaponry [was] so great that it [was] consuming the good the U.S. would do in that country."[93] Two military tactics caused particular horror.

First, the use of napalm caused readers to "stand up and cry 'Shame!' upon a so-called Christian nation for using this vile weapon," caused them to "tremble to think what a just and avenging God may do to a people who…acquiesce in the use of a frightful means of destruction."[94] On numerous occasions, descriptions of the use of napalm, not other weapons, accompanied concerns about suffering.[95] As one seminary professor wrote, the use of this weapon defied "the restraints observed by civilized nations."[96] To some degree, opponents of Vietnam used the discussion of napalm to challenge not the military, but American supporters of the war. Critics chastised Christian citizens "to show a conscience over this ruthless" weapon.[97] They described conservative Christians who endorsed such barbarity as "bully-boy Christians

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[92] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1967: 325. Archives PHS.

[93] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editor." *Christian Advocate*, no. 11:5 (March 9, 1967): 6. Archives UMC.

[94] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life,* no. 19:21 (November 1, 1966): 4. Archives PHS.

[95] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 85-86. Archives EC.

[96] "Seminary Professors Take Stand on Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:10 (May 15, 1967): 27. Archives PHS.

[97] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editor." *Christian Advocate*, no. 11:2 (January 26, 1967): 6. Archives UMC.

who obviously believe[ed] that when it [came] to extending the kingdom of God, nothing beats cold steel, except maybe hot napalm."[98] As with much of the previous discussion, unjust means invalidated what might have been a just cause. Or, as one Presbyterian editorialist exclaimed, the use of napalm demonstrated that "evil methods [were] capable of destroying an otherwise noble purpose."[99]

Second, moderate critics expressed shock over the bombing in Vietnam. The concern over bombing focused partially on its indiscriminate nature. Although American fighters were "useful in direct military action," the "bombing of civilian areas" went "to lengths passing all considerations of humanity and common sense."[100] Sadly, the nature of the fight and American weaponry made it "practically impossible to avoid hitting some civilians."[101] This failure of Western technology to distinguish between civilian and combatants left some disillusioned.[102] The concern over bombing also focused partially on the sheer amount of destruction wrought on Vietnam by American planes. American military might, sadly, produced a "destructively efficient technology."[103] On

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[98] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:14 (July 5, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[99] Edward Friske. "In My Opinion: We Must Question the Escalation Mindset." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 19:2 (January 15, 1966): 30-33. Archives PHS.

[100] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:9 (May 1, 1967): 4. Archives PHS.

[101] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:21 (October 11, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[102] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume I*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 380. Chambers Library.

[103] *Ibid,* 1041.

television, parishioners witnessed the massive destruction caused by American bombs and declared that "to bomb a nation back to the stone age [was] genocide."[104] Again, unjust means discredited a potentially just cause. American weapons produced a situation in which opponents resolved that "every war [was] evil but most of us believe that some wars have not been so evil as the situations they were waged to remedy."[105] The Vietnam War was not such a war.

While a utilitarian-inspired concern for suffering abroad drove opposition to the war, so too did the domestic impact encourage opposition. Repeatedly, in vague critiques, mainline critics expressed "grave concern" over the "tragic diversion of attention" away from America's domestic needs to the rice fields of Vietnam.[106] America could not bear two heavy burdens – pressing economic and social needs at home and a war abroad - and Vietnam deflected "national resources from … great domestic problems."[107] Such a shift in priorities made the war an "intolerable monstrosity" and demonstrated that the nation failed to "act responsibly."[108] The point at which America admitted failure in Vietnam and

[104] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:5 (February 14, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[105] Elson Ruff. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:19 (September 28, 1966): 50. Archives ELCA.

[106] *Lutheran Church in America: Minutes of the Third Biennial Convention.* Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1966: 814. Archives PHS.; "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:2 (January 17, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[107] *Minutes of the Fifth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America.* Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1970: 61. Archives ELCA.

[108] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume II.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 1045. Chambers Library.

refocused its attention on domestic problems was the point its healing began.[109] Again, informed by a utilitarian mindset, religious critics took the words of Jesus which spoke to the tension between material and spiritual riches, and applied them to their domestic critique of Vietnam: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his own soul? What does it profit a nation if it gains the whole world for democracy and loses its own soul?"[110] If the domestic critique moved beyond ambiguity, it focused upon the needs of urban America. The war represented the immoral, "continued diversion of resources from the heightened crisis in American cities."[111] The War on Poverty and the Great Society could use money spent abroad.[112] Opponents counseled that the money spent on troops could also be spent instead on civil rights, urban development, or education in America.[113]

Critics especially grew angry when they described the "military industrial complex" as the recipient of the funds diverted from domestic needs. President Eisenhower coined this phrase in 1961 in his farewell address upon leaving office

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[109] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1970: 883-954. ArchivesPHS.

[110] George F. Regas. "Mr. President, The Jury is in." *The Episcopalian*, no. 136:6 (June 1971): 8. Archives EC.

[111] Emerson D. Bragg, J. Wesley Hole, and Charles D. White. *Journal of the Last Session of the Evangelical United Bretheren Church, Last Session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church and the Uniting Conference of the United Methodist Church and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church Volume I*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968, 513-791. Chambers Library.

[112] William L. Miller. "News and Comment: The Budget and the Vietnam War." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 19:3 (February 1, 1966): 25. Archives PHS.

[113] Robert M. Brown. "A Christian Views Vietnam: Why I Oppose Our Policy In Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:2 (January 15, 1968): 16. Archives PHS.

to describe the growing power of the defense industry and its ties with the American government . The phrase entered the debate over Vietnam via the anti-war movement. Its use in religious opposition demonstrated ideological connections of religious opponent's based opposition to Vietnam with secular protests. However, religious opponents to Vietnam did not so much see the military industrial complex as an evil entity in and of itself but rather as an entity gaining too much power and resources. Church members sounded concern about not only the nature of the "military industrial complex and its impact upon efforts to meet basic social needs" but also the growing "influence upon… society" of this entity.[114] Methodist writers railed against the way the military industrial complex consumed billions upon billions of dollars and the way they came "to dominate national policy with no effective system of checks and balances."[115] Thus, church reports on the complex came to question the power of this group "during a time when society's needs in education, housing, employment, medical care, and crime prevention [were] unmet."[116] While those inside the church also used the phrase "military industrial complex," the stated relationship between domestic needs and the description of the military industrial complex itself demonstrated a much more conservative conception of this entity.

[114] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1968: 38.

[115] James Armstrong. "A Choice: Individual or Collective Conscience." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:12 (June 11, 1970): 8.

[116] 8:954-957 the Board of Church & Society report titled "The Military Industrial Complex" Chambers Library.

Yet, the concerns of the domestic front did not stop with urban economic needs or a misplaced emphasis upon the military industrial complex. The injustice of the war also found expression in the psychic toll on the nation: "We brutalize our young men by sending them to ravage and rape both friend and foe abroad."[117] Eventually, the violence abroad led to "an escalation of violence in [the United States];" and thus the Vietnam War victimized both soldier and citizen.[118] The war resulted in Americans "desensitized to human agony."[119] Repeatedly, writers described a plague of "moral numbness" due to the war.[120] This anesthetizing, in part, made the war unjust.

Taken together, opponents of the Vietnam War in mainline denominations emphasized the unjust means as the basis of their critique. There existed limited description of the war as an unjust cause based primarily upon the deceit and aggression of the American government. However, the environmental, human, domestic, and psychic tolls served as the primary focus. The subtle language of utilitarianism served as the tie that bound these four primary critiques together. The consequences of the war tipped the scales of morality in favor of opposition. Americans may have salvaged and clung to the justness of the war if it had

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[117] "Communication: Church Rebels and Bishop Kennedy." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:18 (October 1, 1970): 9. Archives UMC.

[118] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1970: 88. Archives PHS.

[119] "Comment: On Getting Used to Death." *Christian Advocate*, no. 11:4 (February 23, 1967): 5. Archives UMC.

[120] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 86. Archives EC.; Robert M. Brown. "A Christian Views Vietnam: Why I Oppose Our Policy In Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:2 (January 15, 1968): 16. Archives PHS.

produced more limited negative consequences and more readily apparent benefits.

Just as one found voices declaring the injustice of the Vietnam War in these churches, so too did one find numerous voices declaring the justness of Vietnam. These individuals sought not to defend the means – thought they did seek to disempower moderate critiques of unjust means – but rather focused upon Vietnam as a just cause. In some sense, they recognized the quandary they faced. As one Presbyterian soldier wrote to his leadership, "Tell me I'm not doing wrong, sir. Tell me loud and clear that the blood around here isn't spilled in a war that doesn't make sense."[121] Where moderates denominational leadership answered him with ambiguity, conservative supporters responded clearly.

There existed significant support for the war among mainline laity who were both more conservative than and felt disconnected from their more moderate leadership. As mentioned earlier, sociological studies demonstrated the more dovish attitudes of mainline clergy than laity. The strong presence of conservative attitudes among mainline laity – who in hindsight are perhaps viewed more moderate or liberal than in actuality – expressed itself in several ways. For example, editors of denominational magazines recognized that their commitment to freedom of speech encouraged the publication of letters and articles of dissent. These editors went on to note that the overwhelming majority of letters they received from readers expressed support for America's position in

[121] James Gittings. "A Reporter's Vietnam Notebook." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 19:5 (March 1, 1966): 10. Archives PHS.

Vietnam.[122] At the local level, one found repeated attempts to pass resolutions critical of the war referred to committee to die a quiet death.[123] In committees charged with focusing on social concerns, attempts by local moderates to force the issue in debates met not with approval but simply commendations for their efforts in "making church members aware" of the problems in Vietnam.[124] Those statements that did pass at the local lever were often reflective and not directive in tone.[125] Conservatives allowed declarations of Vietnam as an issue of "prayer, dialog, study and *personal action"* but absent calls to end violence or pursue peace talks.[126] At times, the national meetings could only lump resolutions opposing Vietnam together and then point back to previous resolutions as having addressed them.[127]

The degree of conservative support for Vietnam in mainline denominations also found numerical expression. For example, letters to the editor on Vietnam generally found no less than a 60/40% split in favor of America's participation

[122] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:12 (June 7, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[123] A. J. Horn. "Iowa Considers Vietnam Policy." *The Lutheran*, 6:12 (June 8, 1968): 41. Archives ELCA.

[124] "West-PA.-W.Va. Synod Debates Overtime on Peace Resolutions." *The Lutheran*, no. 8:14 (July 15, 1970): 33. Archives ELCA.

[125] *Minutes of the Fifth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America.* Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1970: 661. Archives ELCA.

[126] Olin G. Darnel. "Ending War Voted Major Concern for Pacific Northwest Lutherans." *The Lutheran*, no. 10:11 (June 2, 1972): 32. Archives ELCA.

[127] *Minutes of the Fourth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America*. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1968: 602-603. Archives ELCA.

and actions in Vietnam.[128] Poll numbers also revealed the degree of support as well as the division between laity and leadership. As mentioned previously, a poll of Presbyterians in early 1968 found that 62% declared their disapproval of the president's handling of the war. However, 61% also agreed with the statement that "the United States should use all military strength (short of nuclear weapons) to achieve victory." What at first glance appeared as opposition to the war was actually a reflection of a much more conservative stance among laity. These numbers were comparable to those of conservative evangelicals *after* the Tet Offensive. The tension between laity and leadership also found expression in attitudes on the consequences of the war. Of the laity, only 39% thought that the war in Vietnam would trigger World War III, whereas nearly two-thirds of the clergy did. An even stronger majority of 66% opposed the cessation of bombing in North Vietnam.[129]

The Gallup poll of churches in the spring of 1968 served as the strongest measure of mainline attitudes toward Vietnam, and one that reinforced the idea of the strength of conservative opinions within mainline churches and the split between laity and leadership. The numbers in the Gallup poll followed the pattern mentioned previously and revealed that 70% of respondents negatively critiqued the handling of the war while 62% opposed an end to the bombing of North Vietnam, and 58% felt American should do everything short of nuclear war to win. If one excluded the United Church of Christ – a statistical outlier and the

[128] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:5 (February 14, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[129] "The Reader Opinion Poll on Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:6 (March 15, 1968): 24-25. Archives PHS.

most liberal American denomination – the percentages grew significantly more conservative. In short, mainline church members, up to this point, expressed very strong commitment to the war in Vietnam; all the while church leaders pushed statements of opposition to Vietnam. At the same time that roughly 60% of mainline church members sought more vigorous participation in the war, a majority of Americans agreed the war was a mistake and turned against it. Of course, as the Gallup poll of churches echoed, to see the war as a mistake did not necessarily mean one opposed the war. Some could see the war as a mistake out of a desire for more vigorous participation. Thus, a Harris poll in April 1968, which sought to identify people as "hawks" or "doves" on the war found that Americans were evenly split with 44% identifying themselves as hawks and 41% identifying themselves as doves. While no direct comparison of church members to the general public exists, if one compared the numbers of those who favored doing everything short of using nuclear weapons in the Gallup poll, 58%, to those in the general public who identified themselves as hawks, 44%, a much more conservative image emerges. Furthermore, another poll taken in the same time period found that 48% of the general public favored escalation of the war in Vietnam. When compared to mainline church attendees, one finds a 10% gap. [130] Thus, members of America's most liberal Protestant religious institutions still expressed opinions more conservative than the general

[130] Dominic Johnson and Dominic Tierney, *Failing to Win: Perception of Victory and Defeat in International Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006). Lou Harris poll as quoted in Robert S. McNamara *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*. (New York: Times Books, 1995), 25.

public.[131] However, the conclusion that religious Americans held generally more conservative views is not so simple. A deeper reading of poll numbers of the general public at the same time leads to pause rather than automatic assumption that a hawkish stance was a militaristic stance. For example, a survey of the general public in 1966 found that a strong majority favored sending 500,000 more troops, using chemical weapons, and intensive bombing in Vietnam. Yet, further study of this poll revealed that they sought these measures not out of a desire for a military victory but rather as a way of shortening the war via a negotiated settlement.[132] Thus, as with the general public, a conservative stance did not necessarily mean a more militaristic one. While no data exists to see if such a conclusion was a valid interpretation of mainline support for the war, enough of a pattern exists from the general public to caution against hasty generalizations.

If one moves outside of polls and to expressed opinions, there existed significant support for the Vietnam War. These supporters focused upon it as a just cause and an attempted to deflect opponents' critique of the war's means. The starting point for the defense was an emphatic declaration that America acted not as the aggressor. In a broad sense, supporters found it difficult to entertain the notion that America could ever be the aggressor. "The military stance of the United States abroad in any area is for defensive purposes only,"

[131] Lunch, William. & Peter Sperliech. "American Public Opinion and the Vietnam War." *The Western Political Quarterly.* 32:1 (March 1979) pg 21-44.

[132] Lou Harris, *The Anguish of Change* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1973): 58-61.

maintained one Methodist.[133] Debates on war argued that the United States had "never invaded another country to take over their government, to take over their land."[134] More specifically, in Vietnam, Americans "were not invaders" but rather came at the "request of the South Vietnamese government and people."[135] In fact, they believed a Christian nation had the obligation to involve itself in Vietnam. As one letter to the editor made clear via analogy, "As we sit back in comfortable chairs we don't hear the robbers and murderers say that our house will be next."[136] Evidently, morality obligated America's military assistance to other nations, "even if they [did] not always appreciate it."[137]

Instead, proponents maintained that the war resulted from communist aggression and chastised peace advocates for failing to appreciate this fact.[138] The war would easily end when the communists and North Vietnamese ended their invasion and stopped their insurgency.[139] The Christian citizen, therefore, had an obligation to actively stop this evil aggression: "Assassinations, mass murder, torture, and massive intimidation of innocent people…cannot be

[133] Charles M. Crowe. "Communication: More Realities on Vietnam." *Christian Advocate*, no. 10:15 (July 28, 1966): 9.

[134] "Proceedings." *Daily Christian Advocate*, no. 7:12 (May 19, 1964): 704. Archives UMC.

[135] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:21 (October 11, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[136] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:9 (April 24, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[137] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:5 (February 14, 1968): 48. Archives ELCA.

[138] John F. Ameling. "Communication: War and Unfair Comparisons." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:20 (October 29, 1970): 19. Archives UMC.; Charles M. Crowe. "Communication: More Realities on Vietnam." *Christian Advocate*, no. 10:15 (July 28, 1966): 9. Archives UMC.

[139] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:21 (October 11, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

condoned even passively by Christians of the world."[140] In light of such aggression and atrocities, America had a "clear moral responsibility" to respond militarily.

The fact that the war sought to stop or prevent a greater evil also deemed the war just according to supporters. While shuddering at violence, churches still sought to affirm the righteousness of military force and military service, for "in a sinful world, force" was "often required to restrain evil."[141] One may recall that opponents of Vietnam argued that the war caused a greater evil. Contrastingly, these voices warned that if the nation did not prosecute this regretful war heartily, Americans would "only open the door for a greater [and] more hopeless war."[142] Yes, the South Vietnamese government was no paradigm of virtue but "the alternative [in Vietnam was] an even more oppressive government."[143] Notably, their concern of a greater evil did not find clear connection to communism as found among conservative evangelicals. To be sure, some did express concern of a loss in Vietnam leading to the entire Pacific becoming a "Communist lake."[144] However, unchecked atrocities served as the greater evil envisioned in Vietnam. A "great cruelty and ruthlessness and utter disregard of what" Christians took "for

[140] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:7 (March 27, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[141] *Minutes of the Fourth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America*. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1968: 635, 739-762. Archives ELCA.

[142] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:12 (June 15, 1967): 6. Archives PHS.

[143] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 23:13 (July 1, 1970): 6. Archives PHS.

[144] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:3 (February 2, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.

granted as basic human rights" in Vietnam compelled involvement.[145] With the reality that people in Vietnam were "still killing each other off…the only decent thing to do [was] push toward a settlement which would resolve the issue."[146] Vietnam needed America's involvement.

Defending the justness of America's cause meant recognizing that God used war as a tool. Drawing heavily on Old Testament imagery, one reader viewed the military actions of the United States through the lens of a new Israel with soldiers as noble servants of God.[147] Revealing a tension between laity and leadership, one parishioner made clear that God was a God of war as well as peace:

> At one time it was considered an honor to be able to fight for Christ and the ideals of Christendom. It is still regarded as such by the Marines in Vietnam. More than once, God commanded his children to destroy every inhabitant of a city. This was done to maintain the ideals we hold so dear today. One will find more accounts of wars won for the glory of God in the Bible than he will of settlements. I can't help but feel that if we were at the battle of Jericho, our pious theologians would be sitting around the perimeter saying, 'Why can't we bring this to the conference table?'[148]

Those that did not entertain the sanctity of war were "irreligious in rejecting the possibility" that the United States acted "as an agent of God." Although this group submitted that they regretted war, they maintained more strongly that God

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[145] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:21 (October 11, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[146] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 10:15 (August 16, 1972): 49. Archives ELCA.

[147] Here the concept of judge is the Old Testament one of a *shophet*. This judge was not a decision maker but a military leader ordained by God and empowered by Spirit of Yahweh.

[148] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life,* no. 19:18 (September 15, 1966): 4. Archives PHS.

had “always used war to chastise and chasten sinful people.”[149] If God used war and this war was just, and if the United Stated “claim[ed] to be on the side of God,” then there existed no “substitute for victory.”[150]

Yet for all the defense of Vietnam as a just cause, supporters could not avoid the central challenge of those who opposed the war. The reality of suffering, especially of the innocent, in Vietnam needed some rejoinder to maintain the claim of morality. In an insightful move, supporters of the war did not deny or side-step the issue of Vietnamese suffering. They disempowered moderate critiques by granting their argument and then shifting the discussion. Supporters of Vietnam contrasted the accidental suffering caused by American forces with the intentional suffering caused by the enemy: “I can’t think of American bombings killing North Vietnamese civilians without also thinking of Vietcong mortar shells and grenades killing South Vietnamese civilians. And the thorny thing is that we know the Cong do it deliberately.”[151] Although the American military strategy made it “practically impossible to avoid hitting some civilians,” the “Vietcong had deliberately tortured women and children.”[152] Supporters of the war counseled the critics to go to Vietnam and to see the good

[149] “Letters.” *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:10 (May 15, 1971): 6. Archives PHS.

[150] “Letters to the Editor.” *The Lutheran*, no. 5:8 (April 12, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[151] “Open Forum: Letters to the Editor.” *Christian Advocate*, no. 11:10 (May 18, 1967): 6. Archives UMC.

[152] “Letters to the Editor.” *The Lutheran*, no. 5:21 (October 11, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

done by American troops with the evil intentionally done by the enemy to its own people.[153]

The contrasting of accidental and intentional suffering encouraged conservative anger at moderate hypocrisy. Conservatives perceived moderate critics of the war, with their cries of suffering, as hypocritical in their attacks on the U.S. How could claims of war crimes not include communist forces? "For some reason… [critics of Vietnam] make no complaint about the Communist killing of thousands of village chiefs, Vietcong bombings of civilians in Saigon, the use of children as shields against rifle fire."[154] This hypocrisy in reporting angered some parishioners against "church people [who got] all hot and bothered about bombing the Vietcong…but I have yet to see a church paper come out in protest against the wanton and planned massacre of South Vietnamese by the Vietcong."[155] Clearly the death of individuals in a military convoy was less "barbaric" than "the systematic murder of innocent villagers as a reprisal."[156] In this sense, conservative critics had a legitimate complaint. There existed only very minimal criticism of the communist atrocities in mainline statements on the war. They laid the weight of moral judgment upon the United States. If suffering was the issue, why then was that inflicted by North Vietnamese forces

[153] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editors." *Christian Advocate*, no. 12:18 (September 19, 1968): 5. Archives UMC.

[154] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:8 (April 12, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[155] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editor." *Christian Advocate*, no. 11:10 (May 18, 1967): 6. Archives UMC.; Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:5 (February 14, 1968): 48. Archives UMC.

[156] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:5 (February 14, 1968): 49.

ignored?[157] Conservative supporters seemed to grow tired of the avoidance or side-stepping of communist atrocities. The absence of balance raised conservative ire and challenged moderate consistency:

> So why all the crocodile tears about atrocities and mass killings and coddling concern for a few civilians in North Vietnam who happened to get in the target area of air bombing by Americans and the fallout of their own weapons? The great middle ground of American consensus are not so immature as to regards such concern as even Christian. They know that hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians have been mercilessly exploited for years by the Vietcong.[158]

Supporters of Vietnam also emphasized the normative nature of suffering in war against a moderate emphasis upon the exceptional nature of suffering in Vietnam. If "all war is dirty and miserable business," why express horror about the suffering in this one?[159] Supporters heard the complaints of others and agreed, "no doubt that war [was] miserable and cruel."[160] To those that expressed shock over napalm, bombings, or the other weapons of war, conservative supporters made clear that "the purpose of war [was] to kill the enemy."[161] Supporters preferred that the suffering confine itself to the combatants, but "as usually happen[ed] in the inhumanity of armed conflicts,

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[157] Daily Christian Advocate 3:11(4/28/1972) pg 672, Archives UMC. Archives UMC.

[158] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editor." *Christian Advocate*, no. 11:8 (April 20, 1967): 6. Archives UMC.

[159] Charles M. Crowe. "Communication: More Realities on Vietnam." *Christian Advocate*, no. 10:15 (July 28, 1966): 9. Archives UMC.

[160] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:5 (February 14, 1968): 48. Archives ELCA.

[161] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:4 (February 15, 1968): 40. Archives PHS.

civilians [were] caught up in the millstream of fighting and … suffered many casualties."[162] A just war made suffering regrettable but expected.

Thus, within mainline churches, opponents and supporters of Vietnam had nearly irreconcilable positions. They emphasized different perspectives with critics focused upon the means and supporters focused upon the cause. Critics chastised the inhumanity of supporting the war; supporters saw it inhuman not to prosecute evil. Critics pointed to suffering; supporters scoffed at the hypocrisy of concerns over suffering. Critics shifted the discussion by implicitly embracing a utilitarian ethic that made their position intellectually troubling; supporters shifted the discussion by presenting a red herring focused on the accidental and normative nature of suffering.

For overall organizational health, it would have been best if the different groups remained in their separate denominations. Unfortunately, those representing the two disparate positions shared the same organizations; organizations they looked to for leadership on the debate. While dissent did not necessarily spell doom, these churches entered the debate on Vietnam already having experienced ideological instability encouraged by the civil rights movement and the counter culture. This insatiability made them more vulnerable to the upset caused by the debate over the Vietnam War. Further compounding the instability was a leadership out of step with the majority of their members.

[162] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume II.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 1046. Chambers Library.

Thus far, this study has focused upon the organizational pulse of the debate: the internal debate, the positions, and perspectives. However, mainline denominations made statements for and to their churches about Vietnam. These statements served as the starting or focal point for most previous denominational explorations of Vietnam. However, focusing only on statements minimized the internal tension and debate, as well as painted a false picture of overt opposition to Vietnam. Furthermore, studies generally point to statements at one point in time and failed to consider the changes in attitude over time within mainline denominations. Official statements on Vietnam were marked by greater ambiguity than most people realize. Furthermore, official pronouncements proceeded through three different stages as the war progressed: prayerful anxiety, disappointed calls for peace, and moral outrage demanding an end.

The early years of the war, 1964-1967, witnessed declarations of anguish set within a conservative milieu. Leaders authored notes of distress that hoped for peace but either way committed or commended their churches to prayer. The early fighting elicited ambiguous statements of the troublesomeness of the war. The House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church "recognized the anguish" caused by the war and "commended" efforts toward negotiated peace while calling for "continual prayer" on the situation.[163] Episcopalian leadership in the House of Bishops submitted statements for consideration which expressed unrest over civilian casualties and the environmental toll of the war. However, statements of anger were often tabled. When brought back for a vote, one found paragraph-

[163] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 51. Archives EC.

long harsh statements of moral critique replaced by milder, one sentence declarations of the "anguish of conscience."[164] Even these milder statements passed only by razor thin margins. On the other hand, the House of Deputies of the Episcopal Church, made up of laity, offered no moral critique and in more conservative and ambiguous tones, simply declared that "honest, dedicated persons, including Christians, differ about the war in Vietnam; about the wisdom and morality of [U.S.] involvement."[165]

Recognizing the disconnect between the clergy-led House of Bishops and the laity-led House of Deputies, the House of Bishops sought a joint committee of both houses to issue a statement, knowing that one authored by either house probably would not pass the other.[166] The House of Deputies, recognizing they held an implicit veto, refused to concur with the House of Bishops and instead suggested a joint public hearing where all sides could present their cases. Expressing the concerns of laity, the House of Bishops wanted no official statement, simply a non-binding public meeting that people could attend at will.[167]

The strength of conservative thought found expression within church committees as well. The Episcopalian Committee on Social and International Problems questioned the "terror of the undeclared war in Vietnam," but

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[164] *Ibid.* 85-86, 102-103.

[165] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 510-517. Archives EC.

[166] *Ibid,* 509-510.

[167] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 510-511. Archives EC.

opponents, by a significant majority, deleted this clause.[168] Among clergy, the vote was 31 to 44 against the proposal, while amongst laity the vote was 5 to 73 against the proposal. These numbers point not only to significantly different political attitudes between leadership and laity but also to disconnect between leadership and the laity they sought to lead in a volunteer organization.[169]

Presbyterians, too, followed this pattern. As with other mainline denominations, Presbyterians counseled ambiguity early on. They called neither for escalation nor withdrawal, but instead sought to "declare deep misgivings" and called for a day of prayer on the situation.[170] The result of a special committee to study Vietnam was a Christian education guide, largely historical in nature, which sought to empower "true Christian dialog [*sic*]" on the war. The guide recognized the political and diplomatic complexity of Vietnam, affirmed both those who supported and opposed the war, and called on Christians, "in penitence," to "respect and sustain one another as persons who disagree[d] about what responsibility require[d] them to do."[171]

The lack of a separate body for clergy and laity made the divisions not as readily apparent, yet they existed nonetheless. For example, committees, such as the Committee on Church and Society, that strayed too far left in their early

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[168] *Ibid,* 514-515.

[169] *Ibid*.

[170] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1967: 323-326. Archives PHS.

[171] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1968: 153-155, 393-398. Archives PHS.

statements on Vietnam – namely, one that feared a nuclear war – found their warnings amended by a majority of conservatives who commended "the President and Congress in maintaining a strong and firm position in all negotiations, recognizing that a show of weakness would encourage aggressive activity on the part of those nations whose ideologies and policies our nation opposes."[172] In addition, after the moderate "Declaration of Conscience" by the Committee on Church and Society, *all* letters to the editor in the following issues of *Presbyterian Life,* the official organ of the church, opposed the declaration.[173]

Lutherans who sought early critique of the war found themselves a limited group. The church found itself presented with resolutions both supportive and mildly critical of the war in Vietnam.[174] A vociferous and repeatedly extended formal debate resulted in which conservatives successfully amended original notes of mild concern to include declaration of the clear and present danger of communism. In the end, the Lutheran Church in America counseled that "in Vietnam, Christians must take cognizance of the fact that simplistic solutions [were] unrealistic." It also called on its churches "to engage in intensive study and free discussion of the Vietnam question."[175]

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[172] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1964: 318. Archives PHS.

[173] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:14 (July 15, 1967): 4, 34. Archives PHS

[174] *Proceedings of the Biannual Convention of the Lutheran Church in America* (Mineapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House), pg 57, 1966. Archives LCA.

[175] Minutes of the Annual Convention of the Lutheran Church in America, 1966. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1966), 813-814, Archives ELCA.

One notes the absence of the United Methodist Church. The national meeting of the United Methodist Church took place quadrennially and thus met only twice during the Vietnam War. This infrequent gathering both prevented many national pronouncements by the church and served to bottle up tensions within the denomination, only to have them explode in their infrequent meetings. Other mainline denominations provided more frequent opportunities for venting of spleens by both moderates and conservatives.

Neither side could be happy with this first stage. Moderate critics wanted stronger, or some, language of critique. Conservatives desired commendation of the president's policies or no action or at worst. However, organizationally, moderates held the upper hand. First, clergy controlled the mechanisms of power. Second, they also generally succeeded in passing resolutions of study and discussion. As the war progressed from bad to worse, they could only find their opinions emboldened and supported by the earlier resolutions of study passed.

From 1968-1970, resolutions on Vietnam moved from anguish to disappointment. Building on the language of resolutions from previous years, mainline opponents of the war moved out of ambiguity and offered clearer critique of the Vietnam War. For example, the Lutheran Church in America's Committee on Church and Society's challenge of the war began by referencing the church's 1966 statement calling Lutherans to study and discuss the war. They encouraged the Lutheran church "to culminate these years of study" by

calling for an immediate end to the war.[176] Conservatives could not marshal the votes needed to stop critique of the war but did succeed in preventing the call for an immediate end and withdrawal from the war, as moderates desired.[177]

The formal division between clergy and laity in the Episcopal Church effectively silenced public pronouncements by the church as a whole. The House of Bishops issued a declaration that showed greater critique and opposition to Vietnam than in previous years. Accompanied by a moral evaluation, the bishops called for a "rapid withdrawal" of U.S. forces. While the Bishops passed these motions, the much more conservative House of Deputies tabled these criticisms.[178]

Presbyterians also stepped away from the ambiguity of anguish and issued stronger criticism of the war. Calling the "deliberate de-escalation of the Vietnam War as the wisest policy," the statement contained greater moral critique, yet not the strong moral rebuke that emerged after 1970.[179] Within this time period, Presbyterians moved from de-escalation as the wisest choice to recognition of the failure of America's policies in Vietnam absent the language of blatant immorality.[180]

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[176] Minutes of the Annual Convention of the Lutheran Church in America, 1966. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1970), 644, Archives ELCA.

[177] *Ibid,* 661-663. Archives ELCA.

[178] *Journal of the Special Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1969: 43-44. Archives EC.

[179] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1968: 394. Archives PHS.

Lastly, Methodists too witnessed stronger critique of the war accompanied by stronger moderate control of church statements. They passed resolutions "commending" the president for seeking to bring the war to an end through peace negotiations. Notably, by a very narrow 557 to 564 vote, they defended the motion from amendment by conservatives who saw it as a "condemnation of the government."[181] However, this limited success did not lead to total success. Resolutions calling for an immediate end to the fighting remained unfinished business despite the support of major committees in the church.[182] It should be noted that the United Methodist Church did contain both lay and clergy representation. However, the distribution of votes meant that clergy generally held the upper hand. Furthermore, moderate success did not mean the absence of significant division. Within the Board of Christian Social Concerns, the primary committee responsible for statements on society, dissenters argued that the resolution presented did not reflect the division of the board.[183] In fact, conservatives rallied enough votes to get statements on Vietnam referred for further study on very close votes of 28 to 26.[184]

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[180] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1970: 883, 954. Archives PHS.

[181] Emerson D. Bragg, J. Wesley Hole, and Charles D. White. *Journal of the Last Session of the Evangelical United Bretheren Church, Last Session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church and the Uniting Conference of the United Methodist Church and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church Volume I*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968: 513-515. Chambers Library.

[182] Charles D. White. *Journal of the 1970 Special Session of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1970: 571.

[183] *Minutes of the Board of Christian Social Concerns.* (March 19, 1969): 15. Archives UMC.

[184] *Ibid*, 16.

From 1971 forward, the tone of official statements moved from one of disappointment to moral rebukes of the nation. However, conservatives, perhaps recognizing their limited power, responded with increasing anger. Among Episcopalians, the House of Deputies continued its stalling tactics. However, this impediment did not prevent the House of Bishops from using its strongest language. The Bishops' Committee on Society and International Affairs castigated the "repressive character" of the war and the use of "inhumane methods and weapons of war."[185]

Yet, even at this stage, dissension still occurred within bodies seemingly supportive of criticism of the war. For example, a House of Bishops resolution strongly critical of the war passed by a vote of 86 to 37. However, recognizing the anger on the right, they sanctioned the unusual move of allowing opponents of the resolution to register their names against it. Nearly all the names recorded came from the South and southern plains.[186] Also, one found the strength of conservative anger and the split between laity and clergy expressed in other ways. After Bishop Regas of California wrote a scathing attack of the Vietnam War in an article entitled "Mr. President, The Jury is In," the Episcopalian received such an overwhelming number of letters to the editor in opposition to the article that the editor had to devote a portion of the magazine to cataloging the negative responses.[187]

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[185] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1970: 351-352. Archives EC.

[186] *Ibid.*

The Presbyterians also followed the pattern of sharper critique accompanied by conservative protest. In "The Moral Crisis of the United States in Indochina," the Board of Church and Society declared that, upon application of "Just War criteria," the war in Vietnam did not pass muster.[188] The report made ending the war a moral imperative. While this strong critique passed, conservatives chafed at the resolution. Parliamentary tactics, which not only severely limited formal debate but also allowed no time for responses from the floor, sharply angered them. Statements that demanded America shoulder the majority of the moral burden angered them as well.[189]

The division within the United Methodist Church broke out in more overt ways. The church, spurred to action by the bishops and the Board of Christian Social Concerns, declared the war an "intolerable monstrosity."[190] These declarations passed by a narrow five to four ratio. More complex were resolutions with alternative minority and majority reports. The very existence of conservative minority reports spoke to the level of internal division. Attempts to substitute a minority report for a majority one on Indochina lost by a relatively close 405 to 534 vote. Their attempts to stop condemnation of America having

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[187] "War Forum." *Episcopalian*, no. 136:8 (August 1971): 2-3. Archives EC.

[188] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1971: 564-571. Archives PHS.

[189] *Ibid,* 365-371, 418-421.

[190] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume II.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 1045. Chambers Library.

failed, opponents succeeded in forcing passage of a declaration that allowed delegates to record their names as having voted against the majority action.[191]

Thus, during the Vietnam War, formal statements by mainline churches went through a process of anguished ambiguity, counseling prayer, and study. Moderates followed these resolves with a heightened sense of failure and calls for peace based upon prior statements. Lastly, opponents made clear the moral failures of Vietnam. Throughout the process, conservative supporters of the war opposed these statements. To a certain degree, statements of growing opposition to Vietnam were not surprising. However, the level of internal rancor does stand out. The level of dissent between moderates and conservatives, and between clergy and laity, found expression in numerous ways. Thus far, the tension found expression in the formal apparatus of church organizations. To be seen is the way the rancor over the Vietnam War found expression in an informal conservative critique and more formal allegiance to conservative mainline parachurch organizations.

Yet, the contention in mainline churches over war and the Vietnam War itself was not the sum of the debate over Vietnam. The Vietnam War fueled debate over a number of attendant issues. In addition, the disagreement over Vietnam fueled a heated discussion over the nature and mission of the church

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[191] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume I*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 438; John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume II.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 1040, 1044. Chambers Library.

itself. Thus, to understand mainline churches during this period requires an understanding of these related issues.

Chapter 3

Prophets or Patriots?:
Debating the Attendant Issues of the Vietnam War Within Mainline Churches.

Many of the words and emotions spilled on the Vietnam War focused not on the war itself, but rather on the attendant issues of the war. These debates illustrated a schism within mainline denominations over not only politics, but also the role and attitudes of church leadership. Participants in these debates used harsh language which often painted their opponents into a moral corner and served only to heighten tensions within these organizations. The debates reveal an absence of consensus. Unfortunately, it seems neither side in these debates, leadership nor laity, sought to build the bridges of consensus imperative in volunteer religious organizations. Neither side truly talked to each other but rather defended themselves or castigated the other. In addition, mainline church leadership did not help themselves by placing increased emphasis on taking up the prophetic mantle which embraced contention and challenge. In light of the social challenges faced by the church and the church's failure to serve as a lead change agent for justice, taking up such a mantle was understandable. However, when speaking to their own congregants, the church leaders' tones only exacerbated the tension made apparent in the formal debates of these denominations.

The debate over attendant issues served as the strongest point of connection between civil rights protest and opposition to the war. As a general rule, very few followed the lead of Martin Luther King, Jr. and proclaimed

opposition to the war as concomitant with support for civil rights. Later chapters will demonstrate King paid dearly for such a stance. Although the research of Clarence Tygart demonstrated a link between civil rights protest and opposition to Vietnam among clergy, no similar study explored the connection among laity. Furthermore, no one has studied the opposite- the connection between the opposition to civil rights and support of the Vietnam War. The succeeding chapters on conservative evangelicals address this link and find a connection. Among mainline denominations, clear links in the discussion – both positively and negatively – were not as prevalent. Only occasionally did statements or letters in support of protests, dissent, or civil disobedience explicitly made a clear reference to civil rights protests or war protests. More often than not, the discussion over these attendant issues was sufficiently vague to allow one to read it in both a civil rights and Vietnam context. Thus, it seems that on some of the debate of attendant issues the debate over civil rights informed debate over the Vietnam War.

The role and expression of dissent served as one of the central points of debate. Churches wrestled not only with the validity of dissent but also its proper expression and how to portray those that participated in dissent. To be sure, mainline Christians could support dissent simply from political perspectives. The sacredness of freedom of speech served as the cornerstone of this viewpoint. Expression of dissent on the war played a vital role in American society for "a free America" and depended "on intelligent criticism from the people."[1] Churches

[1] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:2 (January 19, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.

submitted resolutions to national bodies, calling on the church to "affirm the right of people to express dissent and disagreement over any national policy."[2] Yet the continual affirmation by church leaders of the freedom to express negative opinions in "the interest of free speech" made clear conservative opposition to the dissent expressed.[3]

Supporters of dissent defended those who opposed the Vietnam War from the charge of disloyalty. Episcopalian Bishop Daniel Corrigan – a leader of social reform championing the rights of Native Americans in the 1930s, civil rights in the 1960s, the rights of gays in the 1970s, and peace throughout – told laity that "it [was] not treason to disagree with the U.S. Government" over policy in Vietnam.[4] Presbyterian leadership, likewise, counseled conservatives that they not share the guilt "of impugning the loyalty or integrity of those with who we disagree."[5] Repeatedly, reports by church leadership warned of "increasing numbers of citizens, including some in high office," who equated "dissent with disloyalty.[6]

Yet, as individuals affirmed the right of dissent as an expression of freedom of speech and defended critics of the war from the charge of disloyalty, there existed a stronger emphasis upon a moral affirmation of dissent.

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[2] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1966: 67-68. Archives PHS.

[3] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:12 (June 7, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[4] *The Episcopalian*, no. 131:3 (March 1966): 45. Archives EC.

[5] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1967: 53. Archives PHS.

[6] *Ibid,* 324.

Supporters of dissent maintained that critics of the war actually brought a message of hope.[7] Protests were not the domain of rabble, but rather faith-filled celebrations, seeking a call to righteousness. Protests also found description as divinely inspired "festivals of joy and life."[8]

Yet not all was joyful. Supporters of dissent connected critics to the biblical text. The message of dissenters found portrayal as a "judgment" from God.[9] Connecting dissenters to Old Testament prophets, those ridiculed for speaking against the war found parallels in "Isaiah running naked through the streets, Hosea naming his children; or Jeremiah crashing the earthenware jar."[10] Others used more subtle language and pleaded in defense of dissent, "How long, O Lord will it be immoral to object to an immoral way?"[11] (The reference was probably to the prophet Habakkuk's seminal cry, "How long O, Lord? How long?")[12] Biblical defense of dissent also had a New Testament framework and compared the actions and speech of dissenters to the actions of Jesus in the temple: "One would hardly expect Jesus to stand aside while the temple was

[7] George Reese. "We Reserve the Right to Disagree with Anybody." *The Lutheran*, no. 3:24 (December 8, 1965): 11-13. Archives ELCA.

[8] "We Protested For Peace." *The Lutheran*, no. 7:24 (December 17, 1969): 24-26. Archives ELCA.

[9] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967, 51-517. Archives EC.

[10] "Communication: Church Rebels and Bishop Kennedy." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:18 (October 1, 1970): 9. Archives UMC.

[11] "Open Forum." *Christian Advocate*, no. 15:10 (May 13, 1971): 5. Archives UMC.

[12] The book of Habakkuk begins with the prophet crying out with this phrase, pleading for God to intercede and deal with the sin abounding in Israel.

being used by the establishment." Jesus' "sense of justice and social morality" lent credibility to dissent.[13]

At the same time, support for dissent found opposition, limits and qualifications. For example, after an article supportive of dissent appeared in a Lutheran publication, letters to the editor in subsequent issues ran four to one against the article.[14] Even within national church boards with the most moderate constituency among mainline churches, statements of support for dissent met with great discussion and boards often re-referred and re-drafted them. Among Episcopalians, despite the support of the House of Bishops, the more conservative House of Deputies, dominated by laity, refused to concur in support of dissent.[15] In addition, supporters of dissent warned of the increasingly "deplorable features" of protestors. They found protestors guilty of "rancor, animosity, and villain making."[16]

Opponents of dissent and the anger over dissent and protestors, in part helped reveal the gap between clergy and the laity they led. For example, a parish in Louisiana chastised the national church for any role it played in

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[13] "Open Forum" *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:10 (May 14, 1970): 5. Archives UMC.

[14] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:2 (January 19, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.

[15] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1970: 271-272. Archives EC.

[16] William Miller. "Opinion: Dissent, Dialogue, And Law." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:23 (December 1, 1967): 24. Archives PHS.

supporting dissenters, marches, or demonstrations.[17] Narrations of debate of resolutions on dissent noted how clergy "overwhelmingly" approved these statements, yet they were defeated because a majority of the lay delegates voted against them.[18] Laity acted not only with their votes but also their pens. Letters to the editor expressed anger at the way "clergymen [lent] their clerical garb to the protests." These ministers no longer impressed their laity "with the validity of the cause or the integrity of demonstrators… [they were] weary of them all."[19]

The anger at dissenters and their clerical supporters centered, in part, upon the pragmatic consequences of dissent. Letters to the editor expressed anger at the dissenters whom they saw as prolonging the war.[20] Yet, the consequences of dissent angered opponents less than dissenters themselves did. Some felt convinced that participators in dissent held "membership…in leftist organizations." In fact, "every piece of literature" among these groups found authorship in a "Fabian Socialist or a Marxist of some tendency."[21] However, the charge of communism occurred minimally, unlike among conservative evangelicals.

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[17] "Censure for a Church." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 3:2 (February 1964): 1. DuPont Library, University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee. Hereafter "DuPont Library"

[18] "The Law – And a Man's Conscience." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 4:7 (July 1965): 1. DuPont Library.

[19] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:24 (December 15, 1967): 4. Archives PHS.

[20] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:1 (January 5, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.; "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:2 (January 19, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.

[21] Elizabeth Osth. "Behind the War Protests." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 6:12 (December 1967): 12-13. DuPont Library.

More frequently, critics focused upon the moral failings of dissenters. Some felt convinced that dissenters failed to exhaust their spiritual responsibilities. Before publically challenging the war, critics needed to participate in more "prayer and fasting."[22] Opponents of dissent repeatedly pointed to Christ.[23] Critics challenged "anyone to prove by the Four Gospels, that Jesus of Nazareth led any street demonstrations protesting the unjust laws of the Roman government."[24] The life of Christ spoke not only to dissenters but also the church leadership that encouraged it: "Jesus was in the midst of dissent and controversy wherever he went. He never attempted to solve problems presented to him by conferences…He never forwarded any created thing as the solution to any problem."[25] In fact, a true reading of the biblical text made clear that, rather than dissent, "Christians [were] to be submissive to the authority of the land." To do less was a "disservice to God."[26]

Critics of dissent also portrayed participants as sinners. Letters to the editor perceived dissenters as guilty of pharisaical self-righteousness."[27] In fact, convinced of the fallen state of dissenters and protestors, conservatives saw

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[22] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editor." *Christian Advocate*, no. 10:10 (May 19, 1966): 6. Archives UMC.

[23] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editors." *Christian Advocate*, no. 12:15 (August 8, 1968): 5. Archives UMC.

[24] Ralph C. Shae. "I Dissent." *Christian Advocate*, no. 12:9 (May 2, 1968): 13. Archives UMC.

[25] "Message Forum." *The Episcopalian*, no. 135:10 (October 1970): 7. Archives EC.

[26] "In Favor of Dissenters." *Christian Advocate*, (1969): 5. Archives UMC.

[27] "Open Forum." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:16 (September 3, 1970): 5.

them as focal points of evangelism: “Campus Chaos is God’s Opportunity,” heralded one article.[28] These sinful dissenters and their connection to the church led some to be “alarmed at the loss of image of [their] church.”[29]

If dissent caused division and found only limited support, acts of civil disobedience fared even worse. Mainline churches voiced very limited support of civil disobedience. Rather than affirm it as a positive right, churches did not prohibit its reality: “We cannot say, in good conscience, that a Christian must never break the law” after “much thinking and praying and soul searching,” declared the Lutheran Church in America. In the United Methodist Church, the presence of a statement recognizing the potentiality of civil disobedience caused the greatest debate in 1968. The Board of Christian Social Concerns affirmed “the right of non-violent disobedience in extreme cases as a viable option.” The church recognized rather than embraced civil disobedience within very strict parameters and then with the understanding that individuals must “accept penalties” for their actions.[30] While the report passed, it went down to a temporary parliamentary defeat. In a highly unusual move, opponents made a

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[28] James Engel. “Campus Chaos: God’s Opportunity.” *Good News,* no. 3:2 (1969): 21. DuPont Library.

[29] “Letters.” *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:18 (September 15, 1968): 4. Archives PHS.

[30] Emerson D. Bragg, J. Wesley Hole, and Charles D. White. *Journal of the Last Session of the Evangelical United Bretheren Church, Last Session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church and the Uniting Conference of the United Methodist Church and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church Volume I*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968, 513-791. Archives UMC.

judicial appeal – which required only one-fifth of the delegates to move – to refer the report to the Judicial Council on the grounds it was unconstitutional.[31]

Popular opposition to civil disobedience significantly outweighed support or recognition. A church survey found that 94% of the respondents "held negative attitudes towards civil disobedience."[32] Part of this attitude originated in the conviction that the American experience disqualified civil disobedience. Editorials recognized that, generally, one had an obligation to follow God rather than man. However, American democracy implicitly limited this confession, for "where the conscience of the nation can find expression in free elections to choose leaders and influence laws they adopt, [citizens] have to stop for the red lights no matter how impatient [they] may be."[33] Thus, in America, one had to "test the constitutionality of any law believed unjust or unconstitutional through the appropriate channels of the judicial process."[34] The good of the nation meant a rejection of civil disobedience, for "the very existence of a free, democratic society is dependent upon the voluntary respect and obedience of the law by every individual regardless of personal convictions."[35] To embrace civil

[31] *Ibid,* 791.

[32] Scott Wood. "Civil Disobedience By the Authorities." *Christian Advocate*, (1971): 9-10. Archives UMC.

[33] Albert P. Stauderman. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:4 (February 7, 1968): 50. Archives ELCA.

[34] Emerson D. Bragg, J. Wesley Hole, and Charles D. White. *Journal of the Last Session of the Evangelical United Bretheren Church, Last Session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church and the Uniting Conference of the United Methodist Church and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church Volume I*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968: 789. Archives UMC.

[35] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:11 (June 1, 1968): 6. Archives PHS.

disobedience in a democratic America led the nation down the road of "chaos", "tyranny" of the few, and destruction of "our court of law".[36]

Beyond civic convictions lay religious convictions. Opponents of civil disobedience maintained that Christians had unique obligations to the law. Conservative opponents denounced civil disobedience as leading to "violence and anarchy" and as "contrary to sound Christian doctrine."[37] Scripture and church tradition proved dissenters wrong:

> The temple cleansing was done, in Jesus' words, in accord with Old Testament Scripture, and had no civil implications…the classic example in Acts 4 of Peter and the Disciples defying orders from the Jerusalem council had nothing to do with civil disobedience…Martin Luther did not set the patterns and style of draft burners.[38]

Opponents felt convinced that God demanded first and foremost submission. Repeatedly, writers explicitly or implicitly referenced I Peter 2:13 – "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" – and sought to disempower Peter's declaration in Acts 5:29 – "we ought to obey God rather than man" – in an act of defiance against religious leaders. Quoting 1 Peter 2:13, one critic of civil disobedience maintained that to disobey laws and the government was to disobey "God's secular representative." Therefore, "to break any law, when it does not directly inhibit the responsible functions of the Church,

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[36] Bragg, 789.; "Open Forum." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:11 (May 28, 1970): 5. Archives UMC.

[37] "Resolutions: The Christian Duty of Obedience." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 6:2 (February 1967): 21. DuPont Library.

[38] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editors." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:3 (February 5, 1970): 5. Archives UMC.

is just as great an offense as breaking a moral law given by God."[39] To allow civil disobedience by Christians was to encourage moral relativity. As one letter to the editor responded after reading a religious defense of civil disobedience, "I am going right over to my neighbor who disagrees with my reasoning and pour paint all over his new car. After all, I know my heart is right."[40]

The idea of protesting the war, of dissenting in word or deed, caused great debate within mainline churches. However, the issue of conscientious objection served as the most debated issue besides the war itself. Depending on one's perspective, conscientious objection served as a tangible expression of the sacredness of dissent and protest or the flawed morality of those that opposed the war.

Generally, the early Christian church found military service and membership in the Christian community irreconcilable. The institutionalization of the church and the wedding of the church and the state under the rule of emperors Constantine and then Theodosius helped ensure that the church now sanctioned military service.[41] This expectation of military service as a Christian duty went largely unchallenged until the rise of Anabaptists in the 15th century.

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[39] James H. Watt. "Christians and the Law." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 6:8 (August 1967): 7-8. DuPont Library.

[40] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editors." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:4 (February 19, 1970): 5. Archives UMC.

[41] Constantine's rise to power secured the recognition of Christianity as a sanctioned religion of the Roman Empire. Christ was said to have appeared to Constantine in a vision shortly before a pivotal battle. Christ instructed Constantine to fight under the Christian banner. Later, Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the state religion.

This branch of the Protestant Reformation sought not only to separate the church and state, but also could not reconcile violence with the Christian witness. These Anabaptists groups and Quakers were largely responsible for the presence of religious objection to warfare in the American landscape. Notably, Pentecostal and Holiness movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries – informally connected to Anabaptist thought – helped slightly broaden the base of religious conscientious objection in American society. Politically, conscientious objection gained slow recognition. Early in America's history, the right of faith based conscientious objection varied by state. The Civil War, with the introduction of conscription, made no exception for conscientious objection. However, the opportunity to purchase a replacement did allow a potential means to remedy that problem. In World War I and II, the United States did allow for religious conscientious objection but with the expectation of non-combatant service. It was not until a Supreme Court decision in 1971 that secular-based conscientious objection was recognized.[42]

Denomination structures expressed tepid support for conscientious objection at first. Early recognition of conscientious objection seemed wooden. Early in the war, the Presbyterian Church would simply reaffirm its 1944

[42] Paul Alexander, *Peace to War: Shifting Allegiances in the Assemblies of God.* (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing House, 2009). Peter Borck, Ed. *Liberty and Conscience: A Documentary History of Conscientious Objection in America through the Civil War*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Peter Brock *Freedom From Violence: Sectarian Nonresistance from the Middle Ages to the Great War*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991). Albert N. Keim *The Politics of Conscience: The Historic Peace Churches and America at* War*, 1917-1955.* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988). James W. Tollefson and Grant Stolefus, *The Strength Not to Fight: An Oral History of Conscientious Objection and the Vietnam War*. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1993). William McDonald, "Historical Brief on the Standing on War and Peace by the Traditional Peace Churches." Presentation to the Social Concerns Commission of the Church of God, 1971.

declaration "recognizing" conscientious objection.[43] In similar impassive fashion, the Executive Council of the Lutheran Church in America adopted a statement that declared:

> A member of the church who is convinced that he is called to bear a witness for peace through conscientious objection to military service should, prior to the time of his registration, state his position in writing to the president of his synod, sending a copy of his statement to the secretary of the church.[44]

Statements such as these recognized conscientious objection without supporting it. Furthermore, they offered these recognitions in statements with an antiseptic feel to them.

Further graying the picture, mainline churches discussed conscientious objection and military service in ambiguous tones. The church held "in fellowship" both people who prayerfully decided to serve in the military and those who prayerfully declined service as immoral.[45] Within the very reports which affirmed the religious basis of conscientious objection, churches made clear their "admiration for, and support of, the men and women of our Armed Forces."[46] Both those who fought and those who resisted held a "common claim on the

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[43] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1963: 196. Archives PHS.

[44] *The Second Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America.* Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1964: 145. Archives ELCA.

[45] Leon T. Moore and J. Wesley Hole. *Journal of the 1964 General Conference of the Methodist Church, Volume II*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1964: 1294. Chambers Library.

[46] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1967: 340. Chambers Library.

ministry of the Christian community."[47] To a certain degree, the problem was less the presence of ambiguity. Complex issues are rarely easily solved. Yet a divided nation and divided churches saw only encouragement for further division by their leadership which affirmed both sides in a very divisive issue. Recall, mainline churches had and were facing the upset of the civil rights movement. The Vietnam War simply did not add instability to stability but instability and discord to existing instability and discord. Aside from the organizational implications, spiritually, people desired clear boundaries from their faith by which they could order their lives and make sense of the world. As will be seen, conservative churches brought ideological clarity to the war – unafraid of offending those who disagreed – and the American people repaid that clear moral guidance with membership.

Part of the problem of conscientious objection lay in the conviction that Christians held conflicting loyalties. On the one hand, mainline churches affirmed that Christian teaching held "that civil authority [was] given by God to provide order in human society, and that just human law [was] a reflection of immutable divine law which man did not devise." On the other hand, they recognized that one could not affirm these laws as "eternal and immutable" and as such, the Christian reserved the "right to obey God rather than man."[48] On this point of conflicted loyalties, both moderate supporters of conscientious

[47] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1968: 393. Archives PHS.

[48] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1964: 142-982. Archives EC.

objection and conservative opponents could agree.[49] But which had supremacy when the private conscience of the individual and the collective conscience of society conflicted?[50] Supporters and opponents offered different answers to these questions.

At the end of the day, defense of conscientious objection rested upon the primacy of the individual conscience guided by God over the collective conscience of the nation. On more than one occasion, denominations counseled parishioners to "obey God rather than man."[51] The individual, not society, alone determined the will of God in his life. Writers challenged mandatory service, for it "impinge[d] upon a man's freedom to decide what [was] the will of God for him."[52] If "Christ was speaking to him in different terms," one could not take the "easy path" and succumb to societal pressure.[53] In fact, the collective conscience of the state stood flawed before the individual since one could "expect even the

[49] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 375-376. Archives EC.

[50] James Armstrong. "A Choice: Individual or Collective Conscience." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:12 (June 11, 1970): 7. Archives UMC.

[51] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1964: 142-982. Archives EC.; Leon T. Moore and J. Wesley Hole. *Journal of the 1964 General Conference of the Methodist Church, Volume II*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1964: 1294. Chambers Library.

[52] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:7 (March 29, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[53] Joe W. Walker. "What Do We Mean…Backing a CO?." *Christian Advocate*, no. 13:1 (January 9, 1969): 13. Archives UMC.

most enlightened state to protect its interest and preserve its structures by denying its citizens certain liberties."[54]

Surprisingly, this defense of conscientious objection based on the individual's determination of the will of God in his life lacked an expressed, significant, biblical foundation. Although one found use of the catch phrase from the book of Acts, biblical rhetoric and a biblical theology were two different things. Occasionally, supporters sought to connect the choice of conscientious objection to the biblical text. One supporter saw conscientious objection as a fulfillment of the commandment "thou shall not kill" and an embrace of the "Prince of Peace."[55] Still another letter to the editor pointed out how "the way of the Cross did not appear a reasonable answer in Roman occupied Jerusalem!"[56] However, these atomized expressions proved the exception. It seems that moderate supporters sought to create a religious argument without dialog with the biblical text. This despite the fact that there existed ample evidence from the New Testament to support non-violence and individual determination of the will of God and ample evidence from both the Old and New Testament for sacred disobedience to power structures. Yet they made very limited use of these sources.

Perhaps the lack of a sound biblical foundation for an argument that had ample potential biblical support betrayed a commitment to conscientious

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[54] James Armstrong. "A Choice: Individual or Collective Conscience." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:12 (June 11, 1970): 7. Archives UMC.

[55] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 8:21 (November 4, 1970): 49. Archives ELCA.

[56] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 9:6 (March 11, 1971): 49. Archives ELCA.

objection in word alone. True, a survey of declarations found generous calls for tangible support of conscientious objectors. Denominational bodies called to "render every assistance" to those embracing the difficult choice of conscientious objection.[57] Churches, like the Central Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, trained its pastors to provide counseling to individual objectors.[58] National bodies published legal advice and directives to those embracing conscientious objection.[59] Denominational committees committed their churches to the legal and financial aid of not only conscientious objectors but also their families.[60]

However, it seems that faith lacked works. For example, the Episcopal Church failed in an attempt to establish and fund draft counseling centers based upon the 1967 convention's support of the sanctity of conscientious objection.[61] Among Lutherans, one found repeated petitions to provide tangible support for conscientious objection by providing "meaningful alternatives to military

[57] Leon T. Moore and J. Wesley Hole. *Journal of the 1964 General Conference of the Methodist Church, Volume II*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1964: 1294-1332, Chambers Library; Joe W. Walker. "What Do We Mean…Backing a CO?." *Christian Advocate*, no. 13:1 (January 9, 1969): 13. Archives UMC.; *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1969: 699. Archives PHS.

[58] L. David Harris. "Church Policy on Objection Put to Work." *The Lutheran*, no. 7:12 (July 2, 1969): 34-35. Archives ELCA.;

[59] Ralph C. Shae. "I Dissent." *Christian Advocate*, no. 12:9 (May 2, 1968): 13-14. Archives UMC.

[60] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1968: 396.

[61] *Journal of the Special Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1969: 44-45. Archives EC.

service."[62] That is to say, the Lutheran Church in America strongly supported conscientious objection in word yet lacked any systematic process to support this choice.[63] The Methodist church witnessed a nearly 250% increase in the number of conscientious objectors from 1968 to 1970. However, it took until April 1971 for the *Christian Advocate* to find a United Methodist minister willing to openly talk about his experiences and be identified. Such attitudes reflect shallow tangible support for conscientious objection during much of the war.

As the war progressed, it appears that attitudes on conscientious objectors changed. Through much of the war, support for conscientious objection remained wooden and formal. Late in the war, attitudes towards conscientious objectors grew increasingly positive and some even turned the tables on those who sought military service. "Americans who have conscientiously refused to participate in the Vietnam War are morally vindicated," declared the Presbyterian Board of Church and Society.[64] These conscientious objectors had prevented even further escalation of the Vietnam War."[65] Concurrently, some began expressing doubt about military service and shifted the burden of proof to those who sought to fight. One author demanded the church require "men to show cause why they should be permitted to kill before

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[62] *Minutes of the Fifth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America.* Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1970: 54-55. Archives ELCA.

[63] *Ibid,* 597-598.

[64] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1971: 569. Archives PHS.

[65] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 9:21 (November 3, 1971): 49. Archives ELCA.

being permitted to join the armed forces."[66] Others who echoed this thought wrote that "the proof of validity rests to the greater extent with Christians who decided *not* to object," for, "When did I belong to Caesar?"[67]

Opponents of conscientious objection would agree that one's soul belonged to God, but that one also still had an obligation to divinely ordained governance. They also viewed with skepticism the claim of the individual conscience as sacrosanct. In place of supporters who argued either/or, conservatives maintained both/and. The choice was not between God or country. Instead, they strongly affirmed the idea of dual citizenship.[68] Opponents of conscientious objection saw in it a denial of one's earthly obligations.[69] Thus, opponent of statements on conscientious objection proposed substitute motions titled "Statement on the Rights and Duties of the Christian Citizen in the Emergencies of War."[70] In these, they declared that "the Christian [was] duty bound to bear arms and to offer his life if need be in defense of his country."[71] Opponents of conscientious objection affirmed military service

[66] Clarke Moses. "Effective Church Support for Conscientious Objection." *Christian Advocate*, no. 13:16 (September 18, 1969): 13. Archives UMC.

[67] Barbara Hertz. "Can A Christian Be a Killer?" *The Lutheran*, no. 9:15 (August 4, 1971): 21. Archives ELCA. The phrase is a reference to the New Testament book of Matthew. In response to a question meant to trap him on a point of theology, Jesus responded that one should "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's." Matthew 22:20-22.

[68] "Letters." *The Episcopalian*, no. 132:10 (October 1967): 4. Archives EC.

[69] *Minutes of the Fourth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America*. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1968: 739-741. Archives ELCA.

[70] *Ibid,* 740.

[71] *Ibid,* 756-762.

to *both* God and country as a "militant civic responsibility" and "the only way to save American society."[72] Thus, since the Christian had a sacred obligation to both God and state, one disobeyed God when they failed to serve the state. Opponents pointed to I Peter 2:13 and reminded people to "submit [them]selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." If one disobeyed laws or the government, then one "disobeyed God's secular representative." [73] By refusing to serve, one provided "comfort to the enemies of democracy and of Christianity." These individuals saw military service as a Christian responsibility laid upon the individual by the "Lord Jesus Christ and all the New Testament."[74]

If opponents of conscientious objection lifted up the obligation to both church and state, they brought low the role of conscience. They derided those who emphasized conscience as a pharisaical "do-gooder" and "the greatest Do-Gooder in the world" was Satan: "The criteria of the Do-Gooder is his conscience…Man without God is under control of Satan."[75] In short, one could not defer to conscience, for Satan could influence the individual conscience. These opponents also saw the emphasis upon individual conscience as a slippery slope. A flawed conscience could soon affirm any act as immoral based upon one's perspective of God's call.[76] Aside from doubting conscience

[72] "What is Happening to Our Children?" *The Christian Challenge*, no. 4:7 (July 1965): 9. DuPont Library.

[74] "Letters." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 2:7 (July 1969): 7. Archives PHS.

[75] "The Christian and the Humanist." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 4:12 (December 1965): 4. DuPont Library.

[76] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:6 (March 15, 1968): 4. Archives PHS.

generally, critics of conscientious objection doubted the conscience of conscientious objectors specifically, and considered these individuals to operate with flawed moralities. In curious circular reasoning, the objectors' acts of conscience, in rejecting military service, served as proof of their flawed conscience:

> I have the greatest respect for Christian conscience, but I have a deep suspicion of the conscience which leads a man to tear down his country. Surely the soul of man is dead who can stand and see his country engaged in conflict and his brother man making sacrifices, and then listen to his conscience to tell others to resist the draft.[77]

These critics maintained that biblical teaching recognized "that a man's conscience may be motivated by other causes than particular religious formulations."[78] Hence, the person who embraced conscientious objection surely did "spit in Caesar's eye."[79]

Having dispatched with both the primacy and purity of conscience, opponents went on to question the character, spirituality, and morality of objectors themselves. Conscientious objectors were described as shallow Christians uninformed by the biblical text and guided by Satan.[80] Their behavior

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[77] T. Gordon Ott. "Draft Counseling." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 7:6 (June 1968): 12-13, 21. DuPont Library.

[78] *Minutes of the Fourth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America*. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1968: 759. Archives ELCA.

[79] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:6 (March 15, 1968): 4. Archives PHS.

[80] "The Christian and the Humanist." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 4:12 (December 1965): 4. DuPont Library.

was deemed not "ethically normative."[81] They were referred to not as refugees, but as deserters.[82] Those that refused military service were guilty of "complete selfishness and lack of concern for one's fellow man."[83] Even their masculinity was questioned. These objectors were referred to as "spoiled brats," guilty of "copping out" and lacking the strength to endure death or prison for their beliefs.[84] Thus, they lacked the fiber to stand for their convictions.[85] The church had to end support for conscientious objectors in order to help "make men" of them.[86]

Opponents sought to put their convictions into action and, with some success, limited support of conscientious objection among their churches. They amended declarations of tangible support to more general calls to "minister" to conscientious objectors.[87] They spoke out against ministers offering counseling to these objectors[88] They also pushed for the removal of counseling center funds.[89]

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[81] *Minutes of the Fourth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America*. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1968: 758. Archives ELCA.

[82] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 8:16 (August 19, 1970): 49. Archives ELCA.

[83] "Switchboard." *The Episcopalian*, no. 134:11 (November 1969): 49. Archives EC.

[84] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 8:20 (October 21, 1970): 49. Archives ELCA.

[85] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 9:7 (April 7, 1971): 48. Archives ELCA.

[86] *Ibid*.

[87] *Minutes of the Fourth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America*. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1968: 758. Archives ELCA.

[88] Emerson D. Bragg, J. Wesley Hole, and Charles D. White. *Journal of the Last Session of the Evangelical United Bretheren Church, Last Session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church and*

After initially wrestling with conscientious objection, churches, in more limited fashion, struggled over selective conscientious objection. Denominational leadership seemed willing to support selective conscientious objection as a formality. The Presbyterian Church first affirmed the *right* to selectively conscientiously object without much discussion in 1968.[90] Episcopalian discussion on the issue revealed a halting recognition of it on the grounds of intelectual consistency.[91] Lutherans too affirmed that "a man need not be opposed to participating in all forms of violent conflict in order to be considered a bona fide conscientious objector."[92] Only a handful of actions or articles revealed the origins of this support. In Methodist and Presbyterian writings, it seemed that logical consistency served as the basis of recognition of selective conscientious objection. The United Methodist Church's Board of Christian Social Concerns recognized that "just as it [was] possible that those who presently object to all war may some day support a given war, so those who object to a specific war may consistently refuse to participate in each war they confront during their

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the Uniting Conference of the United Methodist Church and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church Volume I. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968: 789. Chambers Library.; Charles D. White. *Journal of the 1970 Special Session of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1970: 551-571. Chambers Library.

[89] *Journal of the Special Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1969: 44-45. Archives EC.

[90] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1968: 397. Archives PHS.

[91] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 376-378. Archives EC.

[92] *Minutes of the Fourth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America*. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1968: 635. Archives ELCA.

lifetimes."[93] Articles detailing the anguish of selective conscientious objectors supported the idea that just as one could find all war immoral, so too could one find a single, specific war immoral. Either way, the church could not force someone to participate in an immoral action but did expect objectors to "Accept the legal penalty of their actions."[94]

Opponents of selective conscientious objection challenged this stance as they did the previous one. Committees charged with leading the church on social issues, and generally the most forward-thinking groups in denominations, experienced deep division. For example, in the Episcopal Church, the House of Bishops reported a resolution on selective conscientious objection out of committee without recommendation. While the Bishops did go on to recognize the right of selective conscientious objection, the laity in the House of Deputies squashed the issue by a two to one margin.[95] When the Lutheran Board of Social Ministry issued a declaration of support for selective conscientious objection, letters to the editor in the church's official organ, with one exception, entirely opposed to it. These letters made clear the conviction that selective conscientious objection weakened the nation. It encouraged avoiding service "at a critical time."[96] Those that participated helped not only "undermine" the nation,

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[93] Charles D. White. *Journal of the 1970 Special Session of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1970: 564-565. Chambers Library.

[94] Alexander C. Wilson. "My Son Deserted the Army." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:8 (April 15, 1971): 18-19. Archives PHS.; *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 376-378. Archives EC.

[95] *Ibid,* 76, 378-379.

[96] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:13 (June 19, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

but also left the country with "sharply weakened defenses."[97] Beyond the military consequences, a person could selectively choose to oppose "a particular civil rights law, a particular gun control law, a particular income tax law, a particular traffic law, or a particular" expectation of the denomination that sanctioned selectivity.[98]

Opponents of selective conscientious objection used even harsher language describing this group than they did general conscientious objection. Letters to the editor described the choice as "naive," "childish," and fraught with "stupidity."[99] They portrayed selective conscientious objection as an "impractical and immoral idea."[100] Those who made use of it were "young cowards" and "bums" unfit "to be called humans."[101] Alluding to the parable of the Good Samaritan, they described selective conscientious objectors as the robbers who set upon the innocent traveler or the priest and Levite who refused to help when needed.[102]

Throughout the discussion of conscientious objection there existed no measurable rhetoric in support of pacifism either in conjunction with support for conscientious objection or apart from it. There existed some pacifist

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[97] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:16 (July 31, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[98] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:16 (July 31, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[99] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:13 (June 19, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[100] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:10 (May 15, 1971): 6. Archives PHS.

[101] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:13 (June 19, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[102] *Ibid*.

organizational presence in the United Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, although this group had a marginal impact, at best. Its annual report made clear that members spent most of their time speaking to like-minded people. They had a budget of $3,000 but an annual breakfast at the Presbyterian General Assembly consumed nearly one-third of it.[103] In succeeding years, the group's budget shrank by nearly 20%. In 1973, it reported a membership of 800 people, but only 139 made financial contributions that year. Furthermore, they used the concept of 800 "members" liberally, since by their own confession, this represented "the informal membership of the fellowship."[104] The state of the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, coupled with the absence of pacifist language, provides a sense of the support for and presence of pacifism within mainline denominations.[105]

Slightly more substantively, one could point to expressed attitudes against pacifism. Opponents made clear that supporters of "peace and dogmatic pacifism" were not the same.[106] Some derided members of peace churches as hypocritical in their calls for pacifism. They viewed them as opportunists who joined such churches to "save their own skins."[107]

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[103] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1972:1363-1365. Archives PHS.

[104] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1973: 1240-1242; *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1974: 1221-1224. Archives PHS.

[105] Peace fellowship studies: We must lead them in the ways of peace.

[106] *The Christian Challenge*, no. 5:8 (August 1966): 9. DuPont Library.

[107] Mary Emlen. "Friends – or Quakers?" *The Christian Challenge*, no. 5:10 (October 1966): 3. DuPont Library.

The debates over dissent, civil disobedience, conscientious objection, and selective conscientious objection represent the most contentious and vocal points of debate outside the war. Yet these were not separate issues with separate participants. In a general sense, supporters and opponents on one issue took similar positions on other issues. While one can understand perspectives and rhetoric used on particular issues, one also walks away with a larger sense of seething dissension and schism within these denominations. As demonstrated, the fault line was political, theological, and elitist.

A number of lesser issues percolated within these denominations, too. These lesser debates provide a basis for comparison with conservative evangelical and African-American denominations on these same issues. For example, one could not discuss world problems during the Cold War without encountering the fear of communism. The size of this discussion in mainline churches and the notes of reservation on the issue, when compared to conservative evangelicals, made evident that, while fearful, mainline churches did not see in communism an apocalyptic challenge. Furthermore, the fact that some leaders counseled co-existence, a voice not heard in the other groups studied, reinforced both a lessened sense of threat and distinctions between laity and leadership. Both these features found no resonance in other groups explored.

Mainline church members did see communism as a religious threat. However, they were convinced that their leadership did not recognize this obvious truth. Denominational scholars, like Floyd Filson of Presbyterian

Theological Seminary, received questions from parishioners who wondered "why don't ministers pray to God to remove the communist threat?"[108] Others found their national bodies guilty of "treason to both God and country" for passing resolutions that seemed soft on communists.[109] The demanded that church leadership had "only one position to take," that of "the total destruction of Godless communism."[110]

Parishioners opposed communism and called for more vigorous action by their leadership because they feared materialist and godless communism. They emphasized Christianity as the antithesis of communism. Some declared that "the Christian religion [stood] in direct opposition to materialistic ideologies prevalent in many places in the world."[111] Thus, the church needed to assist in drawing a line in the sand to stop the expansion of the "godless society" of communism.[112] The concept of "Godless Communism" applied to both the system and the soldier. Hence, the soldier, as Satan's evangelist, also needed to be stopped.[113]

Yet what did it mean to describe a group as "Godless Communists?" At minimum it meant description of people less as human and more as savage

[108] Floyd Filson. "We've Been Asked." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 16:10 (May 15, 1963): 40-41. Archives PHS.

[109] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:7 (March 27, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[110] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:7 (March 27, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[111] Leon T. Moore and J. Wesley Hole. *Journal of the 1964 General Conference of the Methodist Church, Volume II*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1964:1294-1332. Chambers Library.

[112] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:3 (January 31, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[113] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:5 (February 14, 1968): 48. Archives ELCA.

beasts who only responded to force.[114] Communism also meant a loss of civic and religious freedom. They narrated America as "involved in a struggle against an adversary who oppresses religion, liberty, and the respect for human dignity." America stood in contrast to godless communism, for it "shed its blood in defense of the liberties of the world community."[115] More than any rhetoric, members feared enslavement. Communists sought a "tyrannical slavery" and would "enslave people all over the world, country by country.[116] With such a threat, there remained no question "of which side of the fence the church should stay in."[117]

More significantly, laity described communists as the enemies of religion. In general they felt convinced that "our atheist brothers do not care about God, and sin" and had "no respect for human dignity."[118] With an eye toward more moderate brethren, they asked if they were "prepared to live in a world where the only god [was] the state, where there [were] no Bibles, no teachings of our Savior, where there [was] no salvation?"[119] Yet, if communism threatened religion generally, mainline Christians felt that communism targeted them

[114] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:4 (February 18, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.; "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:2 (January 19, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.

[115] "Letters." *The Episcopalian*, no. 132:10 (October 1967): 4. Archives EC.

[116] "Letters." *The Episcopalian*, no. 131:6 (June 1966): 3. Archives EC.; "U.S. Policy in Vietnam justifiable, pastor says." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:5 (March 1, 1967): 40. Archives ELCA.; "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:5 (March 1, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.; "Open Forum: Letters to the Editors." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:4 (February 19, 1970): 6. Archives UMC.

[117] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:1 (January 5, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.

[118] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:5 (March 1, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[119] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:8 (April 10, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

specifically. Communism sought to "dominate the world and exterminate the church."[120] These served as its interrelated goals, for "long ago Communist leaders recognized that the greatest obstacle to converting the world to their own religion was a strong organized Christianity."[121] Hence, "the communists [were] the enemies of Christianity" and in fighting against it the Christian struggled against sin.[122]

For all the fear of communism, some held out hope. These contrasting voices not only demonstrated the majority opinion, but also gave rise to anger by the laity at their bishops and clergy. Leadership in the Episcopal Church did not describe communism with broad brush strokes of evil, but rather recognized its divergent forms and expressed a "hope for peaceful co-existence" with the communism most laity feared.[123] Likewise, a Lutheran editorial chastised those who thought "of Communists as all one kind of people." Instead of labeling all communists as godless, the editor called for church members to "keep alert for the various shadings of opinion in countries under Communist domination."[124] Laity, in anger, responded en masse. All subsequent letters to the editor on the article rejected the message of coexistence or shades of communism.[125]

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[120] "Open Forum." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:15 (August 16, 1970): 5. Archives UMC.

[121] "War Forum." *Episcopalian*, no. 136:8 (August 1971): 3. Archives EC.

[122] "Proceedings" Daily Christian Advocate 3:11 (4/28/1972) pg 669. Archives UMC.; "Unconditional Peace." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 5:10 (October 1966): 4-5. DuPont Library.

[123] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 512. Archives EC

[124] Elson Ruff. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:8 (April 10, 1968): 50. Archives ELCA.

[125] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:10 (May 8, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

Following the pattern, Methodist leadership also faced challenges. When they called for a willingness to meet with communists anytime and anywhere to promote peace, conservative laity sought, without success, to remove such expectations.[126] While, leadership held out a branch of hope and encouraged a reasoned study of communism, laity, dominated by fears of enslavement and religious annihilation, felt such moves foolhardy and increasingly questioned their leadership.

Mired in debate, the perspectives on soldiers provided the sole point of agreement. Mainline perspectives on soldiers provided a point of affinity with the way conservative evangelicals discussed the soldiers and military life. Army life – not necessarily the same thing as the military machine of destruction – resonated with positivity. As an institution, it brought out "the best qualities of a man."[127] Servicemen reentered society more "disciplined, reliable, and self assured; his perspectives [were] much wider, he [had] matured."[128] Most importantly, the army sought to empower people's faith. "During the whole training period," wrote one Methodist, for "each new man entering the military,

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[126] Emerson D. Bragg, J. Wesley Hole, and Charles D. White. *Journal of the Last Session of the Evangelical United Bretheren Church, Last Session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church and the Uniting Conference of the United Methodist Church and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church Volume I*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968: 514. Chambers Library.

[127] "No Question-God is alive, combat chaplain found in Vietnam." *The Lutheran*, 6:11 (May 22, 1968): 36-37. Archives ELCA.

[128] Edward I. Sawnson. "When Your Serviceman Comes Home." *The Episcopalian*, no. 134:5 (May 1969): 11. Archives EC.

everything possible [was] done to guide him to a living faith."[129] Such an army produced men of faith. Authors, editors, and readers described soldiers as possessing a glowing spirituality. Soldiers appreciated "the real meaning of their lives found only in Christ."[130] They transformed the rigors of life into "personal praise of God" and could always be found willing to worship even when in the field.[131] They always greeted the chaplain with a hearty "welcome aboard" and generous "smiles."[132] Even when faced with life's toughest trials, the soldier, thought tempted, returned to his faith. One article described how a newly married young soldier received a "Dear John" letter and momentarily turned to alcohol and drugs before wisely finding refuge in God.

With such positive descriptions of soldiers' spirituality, the agents of the destruction wrought by the Vietnam War, criticized by moderates, received praise for their servanthood. They served the home front by "standing between [the U.S.] and Red slavery and torture."[133] Their actions of benevolence abroad garnered praise as "missionaries for the United States."[134] While men of war,

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[129] Sigmund C. Schade. "The Christian Life and Military Service." *Good News,* no. 3:4 (April-June 1970): 34. Archives UMC.

[130] "Whistling bullet seen as stimulus to worship in Vietnam." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:5 (May 2, 1966): 37. Archives ELCA.

[131] "Liturgy in Vietnam bunker punctuated by roar of guns." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:3 (January 31, 1968): 30-31. Archives ELCA.

[132] "Vietnam Chaplain Climbs to "Crow's Nest" to Hold Services." *The Lutheran*, no. 7:7 (April 2, 1969): 35-36. Archives ELCA.

[133] "An Editorial: Prayer for Our Boys in Vietnam." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 5:1 (January 1966): 2. DuPont Library.

[134] Charles Devries. "Men Pray in Vietnam." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:6 (March 30, 1966): 6-9. Archives ELCA.

they served the Vietnamese, expressing "love to [their] fellow man."[135] In fact, with salvific tones, these solders sacrificed their lives so that the world would be a better place to live[136]

This praise of army and soldier, to be sure, emanated primarily from laity, conservative mainline publications, and chaplains. There existed little such praise of the soldier within mainline declarations. Yet mainline leadership recognized they could not simply lump the soldier in with the war they castigated. Therefore, there existed repeated attempts to separate the soldier doing the fighting from the war they criticized. In the midst of statements of doubt about the Vietnam War, the Episcopal Church made clear their gratitude to the soldiers "for the loyalty, devotion, and self-sacrifice" they demonstrated in service.[137] Presbyterians cautioned against "the danger…of misinterpreting our concern and directing it toward those personally involved rather than toward the issues themselves."[138] Thus, churches made clear, while criticizing the war, their "admiration for, and support of, the men and women of [the] Armed Forces."[139] However, did such obligatory distinctions create a problem? It seems difficult to believe that leadership and membership could easily separate the destruction

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[135] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran,* no. 5:21 (October 11, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[136] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editors." *Christian Advocate*, no. 13:15 (July 24, 1969): 6. Archives UMC.

[137] *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1967: 513. Archives EC.

[138] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1967: 52-53. Archives PHS.

[139] *Ibid,* 340.

from the agents of destruction. Such declarations surely rang hollow in conservative ears. Perhaps mainline attempts to love the sinner but hate the sin only further muddied the waters.

The issue of patriotism also served as a minor point of tension. Among conservative evangelical denominations, one witnessed a robust affirmation of patriotism and a connection of fidelity to country with fidelity to God. In these denominations, nearly a totality celebrated their nationalism without qualms. Within mainline denominations, some sought to celebrate America while others sought to moderate nationalist fervor. This later act encouraged anger by mainline conservatives at leadership. In some sense, supporters of traditional patriotism viewed allegiance to nation as concomitant with allegiance to God. A Lutheran letter to the editor found those lacking traditional patriotism guilty of "treason" to God.[140] Presbyterians encouraged believers to serve their nation in the name of Christ as an expression of obedience to Him.[141] Methodists too felt convinced that their "allegiance, as Christians, [was] to God *and* country."[142]

However, some sought to temper this fervor. In an article responding to emphasis upon super-patriotic flag waving and the castigation of college professors who refused to do so, one author argued that "a Christian might well

[140] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran,* no. 6:7 (March 27, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[141] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1963: 178-179. Archives PHS.

[142] Sigmund C Schade. "The Christian Life and Military Service." *Good News,* no. 3:4 (April-June 1970): 37. Archives UMC.

refuse to fly the flag at this time" and still be a patriot.[143] Writers sounded notes of caution over traditional conservative approaches to patriotism and declared that "flag-waving" was not "the only way to show national pride."[144] These writers counseled caution less because they offered alternative expressions of patriotism and more as a way of affirming dissent with the state. Thus, Paul Simon, a Lutheran and governor of Illinois at the time, declared that "patriotism will always be needed," but it should be a "properly understood" patriotism that allowed the country to "admit past mistakes."[145]

Others, though, used stronger language and chastised patriots who found it "impossible…to conceive that God shower[ed] blessings on countries other than the United States." Such patriotism "domesticated God" and made the "American way of life synonymous with the Christian way of life."[146] Hyper-patriots were guilty of "deifying" the state.[147] Not only was America no different than any other nation but also the nation did not have any particular claim on righteousness.[148] Some writers shocked audiences by declaring that America

[143] George Reese. "We Reserve the Right to Disagree with Anybody." *The Lutheran*, no. 3:24 (December 8, 1965): 11-13. Archives ELCA.

[144] John R. Scotford. "A New Kind of Patriotism." *The Lutheran*, no. 7:1 (January 1, 1969): 20-22. Archives ELCA.

[145] Paul Simon. "Patriotism: More than Waving Flags." *The Lutheran*, no. 9:13 (July 7, 1971): 10-13. Archives ELCA.

[146] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:7 (March 27, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[147] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editor." *Christian Advocate*, no. 10:10 (May 19, 1966): 5-6. Archives UMC.

[148] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1966: 399-400. Archives PHS.

was not truly a "Christian nation."[149] Therefore, American Christians needed to distinguish between God's righteousness and the ideals and actions of the nation.[150] In light of such truths, some asked how it was "possible for … Christians to pledge allegiance to the battle flag of any one nation and at the same time also to give allegiance to the Prince of Peace."[151]

Charges of idolatry informed the critique of patriots and patriotism. When conservatives called for patriotism, moderates "refused to join in the idolatrous worship of the state."[152] Unquestioning patriotism committed the "dual sins of heresy and idolatry by denying the sovereignty of God."[153] In this critique of idolatry, moderates swam against the flow of their denominations' laity. Responding to the immensely popular recording "Day of Decision" – a hyper-patriotic poem backed by the singing of "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "America the Beautiful" – one editor warned that the masses were "not given to much introspection" and thus could not appreciate "the idolatry inherent in such linkage."[154] Consequently, the church held the "prophetic task" of debunking the

[149] "My Question is." *The Lutheran*, no 7:23 (December 3, 1969): 44. Archives ELCA.

[150] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:7 (March 27, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[151] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 22:18 (September 15, 1969): 34. Archives PHS.

[152] Floyd Filson. "We've Been Asked: Rendering to Caesar and to God." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 18:4 (February 15, 1965): 30. Archives PHS.

[153] William P. Thompson. "The Gospel, Law, and Order." *Presbyterian Life*, no 21:24 (December 25, 1968): 9-11. Archives PHS.

[154] James Wall. "Comment: To the Rescue of Patriotism." *Christian Advocate*, no. 10:12 (June 16, 1966): 2. Archives UMC.

patriotism that tried to play "God over the lives of men."[155] Moderates felt they had to encourage people to "lose faith in the truth of American mythology" in order that the "gospel of love and justice" could reign supreme.[156]

Conservative supporters of patriotism expressed their anger at this lack of national fidelity by moderates and moderate leadership. Church members asked in frustration, "Can't somebody in some publication in our Christian Education curriculum ever say anything good about America?"[157] They fumed at church leaders and resolutions and the way they were "daily being fed the big lie that this [was] one of the most evil societies and countries in all of history."[158] Such perspectives on the nation "desecrate[d] the memory of those who… died in the cause of freedom."[159] In a very telling criticism which both displayed anger at leadership and hinted at the reasons for the numeric success of conservative evangelicals, conservative Presbyterians noted how the Southern Baptist Convention "seemed astute enough to realize that national solidarity and firmness was an all important key" to the success of the nation domestically and

[155] Robert M. Brown. "A Christian Views Vietnam: Why I Oppose Our Policy In Vietnam." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:2 (January 15, 1968): 39. Archives PHS.

[156] Scott Wood. "Civil Disobedience By the Authorities." *Christian Advocate*, (1971): 10. Archives UMC.

[157] "Editorial: What are our differences?" *The Presbyterian Layman*, no 3:3 (March 1970): 8. Archives PHS.

[158] C. Phillip Hinerman. "Bad Old America." *Good News,* no. 4:3 (1971): 40-41. Archives UMC.

[159] Jane P. Evans. "Effect of the Vietnam Pronouncement Is Deplored By a Concerned Layman." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 5:8 (October 1972): 7. Archives PHS.

abroad.[160] On yet another point, conservative laity had opportunity to grow distant from leadership.

Differing perspectives on patriotism and the conviction of moderates and moderate leadership that they should challenge their nation and laity revealed the existence of a different mindset among leadership in mainline denominations. Moderates took on a burden of social responsibility. This emphasis was not new. Since the early 20th century, as expressed in the Social Gospel movement, mainline leadership had emphasized social justice issues. While World War II and Neo-orthodoxy reduced the emphasis upon liberal social justice issues in mainline churches, the civil rights movement encouraged a renewed emphasis on this theme. With this social justice heritage, mainline leaders felt that the nation and the church needed someone to speak to them firmly about the moral realities of the war. Some within the church encouraged such a stance. One letter to the editor criticized the Lutheran Church in America for failing to march "at the head of great social movements instead of following along after the riots and wars have shaken things up" and then be "forced … to take a position."[161] Likewise, the Women of the Church, a female auxiliary of the Episcopal Church, "demand[ed] a clearly spoken word for their leaders" on the Vietnam War.

Leadership, slightly encouraged by laity but more by their own convictions, - as letters to the editor calling for such a role were very limited – felt compelled

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[160] Jane P. Evans. "Effect of the Vietnam Pronouncement Is Deplored By a Concerned Layman." *The Presbyterian Layman,* no. 5:8 (October 1972): 7. Archives PHS.

[161] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran,* no. 5:8 (April 12, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

to awaken the church from its perceived moral slumber. In speaking to the United Methodist Church, Bishop Armstrong – a strong advocate for peace and the youngest person elected bishop – declared the guilt the bishops felt for "not addressing those issues that [were] determining the destiny of earthbound people beyond these walls, persons who even now [were] being victimized and brutalizes by…war in Southeast Asia."[162] Church leadership had to guide the "moral conscience" of the church. Propelled by biblical or personal expectations, the presiding bishop of the United Methodist Church, adopting the language of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, declared: "Methodists do not steer away from issues merely because they are controversial. We abhor a timid spirit that cries peace when there is no peace and keeps silence when corruption grows and justice is outraged."[163] Clergy had a divine mandate to lead and disturb the church and nation.[164] In relationship to the state, the church provided not "uncritical loyalty and unquestioning obedience but… prophetic guidance and judgment of the law of God."[165] There existed no room for ambiguous "pontifications," but only statements by "church prophets" which spoke

[162] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume I*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 333-334. Chambers Library.

[163] "The Episcopal Address." *Daily Christian Advocate*, no. 7:1 (April 27, 1964): 16. Archives UMC.; The phrase "peace, peace" is a play on Jeremiah's condemnation of Israel's priests who too were guilty of hyper-patriotism.

[164] Floyd Filson. "We've Been Asked: Rendering to Caesar and to God." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 18:4 (February 15, 1965): 30. Archives PHS.; "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:23 (November 8, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[165] *Lutheran Church in America: Minutes of the Third Biennial Convention.* Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1966: 453-454. Archives ELCA.

"distinctively" and "courageously."[166] This prophetic perspective desired and created discontent and conflict. Yet, this creation of dissent did so in denominations already dealing with the upset of the civil rights movement and counter culture. Furthermore, to some degree, mainline leadership shared the same guilt of biblical manipulation as conservatives. They utilized the role and speech of the Old Testament prophet to speak to the issues of the day, however absent a strong centering of the message on the will of God and the Kingdom of God.[167] Unfortunately, they treated the role of the prophet more as an end than a means.

The attendant issues of the war and the war itself were fraught with division and contention. To some degree, churches could not avoid this strife. However, church leadership did not help the situation, not only by standing apart from laity, but also by embracing distance and at times goading their parishioners. Again, mainline churches already faced a decade of dissent and instability. The debate over the Vietnam War severely heightened the tensions present. Clergy and denominational leaders, in embracing the prophetic might have found solace in knowing that they held the moral high ground. However, the role of faith was ultimately to speak morality and ethics into the lives of people and not simply pass judgment on them.

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[166] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran,* no. 5:8 (April 12, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[167] This description of mainline leadership resonates with David Chappel's criticism of white Northern liberals during the struggle for civil rights in the South. In his work, Northern liberals did not appreciate the fount of religion and the power of the prophetic. In my work, I argue that mainline moderates, also strong supporters of civil rights, really only understood it in part. David Chappel *Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004)

Chapter 4

Souls Not Society:
Mainline Conservative Anger During the Vietnam War

Conservatives within mainline denominations grew increasingly restless as the war progressed. Irritated at the opinions, resolutions and methods of church leadership, they soon made clear their frustration in very tangible and organizational forms. Their dissent existed from the earliest stages of the war; however, it increased as the war progressed. Especially after 1968, mainline churches witnessed an outpouring of conservative anger. At the heart of their criticism lay an alternative vision of the church that deemphasized social concerns and highlighted spiritual ones. This alternative mandate was contrary to that offered by mainline prophets.

The alternative vision of conservative mainline parishioners found expression informally in a critique of the political activity of the church as a whole and the political activism of church leadership. In addition, the alternative vision found formal expression in the emergence and/or growth of conservative organizations tied to particular denominations. These conservative para-church groups served as an organizational outlet for conservative mainline parishioners who lacked power or a voice in their respective denominations.

Conservative anger was partly political and partly theological. Politically, conservatives grew increasingly irritated at the activism of the church on the political issues of the day. Vietnam did not suddenly inspire political activism by

the church. The Civil Rights movement encouraged political activism on the part of clergy. The Vietnam War built on this foundation. Research of clergy activism found that activism in the Civil Rights movement disposed clergy to actively oppose the Vietnam War.[1] Declarations from churches echoed the results found by these studies. Earlier statements of anger at the failure of church leadership on social issues referred to not only war but also riots.[2] Hence, conservative anger did not emerge with the Vietnam War; it had simmered for some time. However, the debate over the Vietnam War encouraged this anger to boil over. Angered at the activism of the church in the Civil Rights movement and further angered by an apparent lack of support for America's fighting forces abroad, conservative anger expressed itself in several ways.

An informal conservative critique of activism by the church and church leaders served as one means of expression. This critique by conservatives questioned the authority of church statements critical of the war or society. These individuals emphasized a distinction between speaking for and to the church. Presbyterian laity made clear that "no individual [was] permitted to speak for the Church but only to the Church and that anyone who [did was] subject to discipline."[3] Yet conservatives saw church leadership as bypassing this requirement and making public declarations that encouraged the assumption that

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[1] Quinley, Harold, E. "The Protestant Clergy and the War in Vietnam." The Public Opinion Quarterly. 34:1 (Spring 1970): 43-52.

[2] Source Proceedings.

[3] "Editorial: What are our differences?" *The Presbyterian Layman*, no 3:3 (March 1970): 8. Archives PHS.

they spoke for the church and not as individuals. Church boards repeatedly recognized this critique, and the attendant latent anger, and explicitly stated that the boards only spoke for themselves and not the denominations.[4] The fact that the denomination felt it necessary to repeatedly include these obligatory statements distinguishing for whom they spoke provided a sense of the nature and degree of conservative anger.[5] Conservatives also discounted multi-denominational or multi-religion statements of critique that they quickly pointed out as "merely the position of the individual signers."[6] However, it seems that what angered conservatives were not so much corporate declarations but the content of those declarations. Thus, a report by the United Methodist Church's Board of Christian Social Concerns which commended President Johnson's actions in Vietnam did not contain the addendum that they spoke only for themselves and not the church.[7] In addition, no letter to the editor chastised the board's statement for giving the appearance that they spoke for the church. The positive content made the obligatory addendum and letters of criticism unnecessary.

In an attempt to limit criticism, conservatives emphasized the separation of church and state. They separated the two to protect the state from the church.

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[4] "Social Concerns Urge Parley With Vietcong." *Christian Advocate*, no. 9:21 (November 4, 1965): 23. Archives UMC.; *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1971: 351. Archives PHS.

[5] "News and Trends: Viet Nam War Urge Unilateral Withdrawal." *Christian Advocate*, no. 11:9 (May 4, 1967): 3. Archives UMC.

[6] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 23:13 (July 1, 1970): 6. Archives PHS.

[7] "News and Trends." *Christian Advocate*, no. 12:9 (May 2, 1968): 21. Archives UMC.

Letters to the editor critical of church statements on the war declared that "there [was] separation of church and state" in the country" to protect the state.[8] Writers criticized the "invasion" of the church into secular civic matters, and they argued that such forays violated Scriptural distinctions between the "jurisdictions" of the church and state.[9] When a national church meeting or church leader expressed criticism of Vietnam, one could expect parishioners to write and declare that it was "no more appropriate for the General Assembly to dictate policy to our government than it would be for the government to interfere in church matters."[10]

If a wall of separation did not work, conservative critics denied the church had a political mission. The attitudes of Presbyterian letters to the editor after a statement of concern on Vietnam affirmed this view:

> I have always looked to the church for spiritual and moral guidance and to the United States Government to declare political policy and conduct military campaigns…Whatever decisions are made on the Vietnam situation, let us arrive at them as a nation, not as a church.
>
> it possesses strong political undertones which, in my estimation, must remain removed from the church.[11]

Conservatives demanded that churches "stick to religion" for those who insisted "in putting the Church in politics [were] only going to succeed in wrecking the

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[8] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:6 (February 28, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[9] Albert J. Lindsey. "The State's Sphere is Not the Church's." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no 3:4 (April 1970): 5. Archives PHS.

[10] "Letters." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 3:8 (September 1970): 4. Archives PHS.

[11] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:14 (July 15, 1967): 4, 34. Archives PHS.

Church."[12] The argument presented saw political involvement as the antithesis of the mission of the church. Members criticized bishops who would "turn the efforts of the church to political action and away from Christian teachings," wrote one.[13] Laity demanded that "the Church should teach the Gospel and stay out of politics."[14] This denial of politics, at times, also applied to the expression of political debate within denominational publications.[15] Critics also denied the political activism of the church by emphasizing the biased nature of those making statements. They challenged the "lack of objectivity" in church publications. However, they notably criticized not their theology but perspectives on "social, economic, and political subjects." The politics of the critic determined the existence of subjectivity.[16] Of course, as with the distinctions over speaking to and for the church, the issue was not politics but the type of politics. In a sense, conservative mainline critics did not follow the lead of conservative evangelicals who affirmed social and political involvement. However, conservative evangelicals redefined the words to mean benevolence ministries and traditional morality politics.

If one could not discount the right of political speech by churches and church leadership critics, then one could, with validity, point to the destructively

[12] "Letters." *The Episcopalian*, no. 132:3 (March 1967): 3. Archives EC.

[13] "Message Forum." *The Episcopalian*, no. 135:10 (October 1970): 7-8. Archives EC.

[14] "Letters." *The Episcopalian*, no. 132:10 (October 1967): 4. Archives EC.

[15] "War Forum." *Episcopalian*, no. 136:8 (August 1971): 2. Archives EC.

[16] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1967: 49. Archives PHS.

divisive consequences of these statements. Their denomination's statements on Vietnam "only served to divide the church and hence should be avoided," declared one church in Portland.[17] Such divisiveness and such political "hostility" garnered pharisaical comparisons: "The Pharisees used every possible device to put Jesus in just this position." However, Jesus avoided this trap, for "He would not judge a man's faith by his politics."[18] Others communicated this perspective pictorially. A rare political cartoon in mainline publications (something usually reserved for conservative denominations and perhaps fitting that conservative mainline reactionary groups use the medium of conservative evangelical denominations) showed a decrepit and dying elderly patient – the mother church – receiving a transfusion from a healthy and assumedly conservative "good Christian donor." However, the transfusion would do no good for a demon, a minion of Satan, and drained the lifeblood of the church into a bowl labeled "politically orientated groups."[19]

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[17] "Portland Presbyterians Register and Objection to The Vietnam Declaration." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:3 (March 1968): 3. Archives PHS.

[18] Malcolm Nygren. "The Church and Political Action." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no 2:5 (May 1969): 6 Archives PHS.

[19] "The Patient in Serious Trouble." In *The Christian Challenge*, no. 7:6 (June 1968): 23. DuPont Library.



With such a conviction of the divisiveness of politics, some felt that the only through "an individual poll of the membership" of the entirety of the church could a denomination speak on political matters.[20] Calling for such a poll – a pragmatic impossibility – in reality intended not accurate political expression but none.

The conservative critique also emphasized the church's ignorance. The starting point for this critique was the unqualified nature of the church: "So far the government hasn't told us how to run our churches, so let's not tell the

[20] "Letters." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 5:6 (June 1972): 11. Archives PHS.

government how to win wars."[21] The church's ability lay in theology and ecclesiology not politics.[22] At times, critics pointed to a general lack of competency by the church. Conservative critics maintained that local ministers could speak on issues in which they held "some competence."[23] Of course, their occupation as ministers meant that they truly had no competence outside of religious matters. Denominational leadership likewise met with skepticism for they pontificated "on subjects they [had] no competence."[24] Unfortunately, the church, in speaking on the war, attempted to solve problems far too "complex and difficult" for it, a problem on which they lacked the "full and complete facts."[25]

The conservative critique allowed for political activism only by the individual and rejected the corporate politics of the church. "What role or influence should the Church as a corporate body have in the great problems of society which are strongly political and economic?" asked one writer rhetorically.

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[21] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:8 (April 12, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[22] "War Forum." *Episcopalian*, no. 136:8 (August 1971): 29. Archives EC.; "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:14 (July 15, 1967): 34. Archives PHS.

[23] "Objectives of the Presbyterian Committee." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:1 (January 1968): 1. Archives PHS.

[24] Roger Hull. "The Voice of Dissent." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:2 (February 1968): 2. Archives PHS.

[25] Emerson D. Bragg, J. Wesley Hole, and Charles D. White. *Journal of the Last Session of the Evangelical United Bretheren Church, Last Session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church and the Uniting Conference of the United Methodist Church and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church Volume I*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968: 513-791. Chambers Library.; Malcolm Nygren. "The Church and Political Action." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no 2:5 (May 1969): 6. Archives PHS.

Such problems called for individual action by citizens.[26] An Episcopalian declared that "the Church must not *corporately* be committed" to a political perspective. The corporate church could not even "make concrete suggestions" on these issues.[27] To some degree, conservative evangelicals created a straw man. They painted a picture of virulent political activism without conceding that moderates saw the war not as a political imperative but a moral one. They never fully embraced the fact that there existed legitimacy to the questions of morality.

Their claims of church ignorance called for deference to foreign policy professionals. One could not challenge the president's policy when he was in a better position to know.[28] Conservatives chastised moderates for trying to pressure the president who knew much more and much better.[29] In light of reality, conservatives called on moderates to "quit playing God. God knows how to guide America's chief executive better than we do."[30] Thus, a conservative prayer for the president would ask for forgiveness for "being hard headed and

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[26] "Editorial: Christian Involvement." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:7 (July 1968): 6. Archives PHS.

[27] George M. Murray. "We Must Keep Our Priorities Clear." *The Episcopalian*, no. 134:8 (August 1969): 16. Archives EC.

[28] Emerson D. Bragg, J. Wesley Hole, and Charles D. White. *Journal of the Last Session of the Evangelical United Bretheren Church, Last Session of the General Conference of the Methodist Church and the Uniting Conference of the United Methodist Church and the General Conference of the United Methodist Church Volume I*. Nashville: The Methodist Publishing House, 1968: 514. Chambers Library.

[29] Herbert Kaiser. "SE Asia Policy is Challenged by a Layman." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no 3:8 (September 1970): 7. Archives PHS.

[30] Thomas A. Carruth. "Praying for Our President." *Good News,* no. 6:1 (1970): 8. Archives UMC.

unyielding when we have wanted the President to do things our way."[31] The charge of ignorance also pointed out the lack of diplomatic training by moderate critics. They encouraged the church to leave foreign affairs to those "who [knew] what they [were] doing."[32] Surveying the critics of America's war policy, writers wondered about their qualifications:[33] "How many of these men and women had served with the Departments of State or Defense? How many hold advanced degrees in political science? Decisions regarding…our present efforts in Vietnam…should be left to those best qualified by experience and training to make them."[34]

This general claim of ignorance on foreign policy applied especially to clergy. Surveying clerical activism, one Lutheran decried, "Why do clergymen, who [were] so limited in their own field of endeavor feel they [were] expert in so many tangent areas?[35] Ministers had "too narrow" an understanding of the world's troubles to comment constructively.[36] Apparently, theological training did not qualify them to speak to issues of morality. Repeatedly, be it in letters to individual ministers, bishops of the church, notable clergy, or church organizations, conservatives doubted the competence of the clergy to speak on

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[31] Thomas A. Carruth. "Praying for Our President." *Good News,* no. 6:1 (1970): 10-11. Archives UMC.

[32] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:8 (April 12, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

[33] "Letters." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 5:6 (June 1972): 11. Archives PHS.

[34] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 20:14 (July 15, 1967): 34. Archives PHS.

[35] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:1 (January 5, 1966): 49. Archives ELCA.

[36] "Letters." *The Episcopalian*, no. 131:6 (June 1966): 3. Archives EC.

issues of the war.[37]

Not satisfied with emphasizing clerical ignorance, conservative attacks of "activist" clergy and leadership questioned their sincerity. They chastised these clerics as hypocritical "peace-loving clergy" who supported "peace loving Reds" who killed thousands upon thousands.[38] They derided these church leaders as individuals who cried "only for peace – but not for freedom" and that they cared "more for the communists than for those opposing them."[39] Conservative critics could not fathom how ministers made use of American liberties to protest a war conservatives saw as providing those same liberties to the Vietnamese people.[40] Thus, activist clergy found comparison with the priest and Levite on the road to Jericho who passed by the suffering Samaritan.

Conservatives also attacked the moral fiber of activist clergy and church leadership. Surveying pastors in protest, one writer felt convinced that "if God got a good look at them, he would laugh his head off." These clergy avoided "looking after their congregations" and instead chose to look silly.[41] Their flawed perspectives arose from a "myopic" world view and living "in an insular world."[42] Lacking vision, popularity, and personal strength, clerical opponents of the war

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[37] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 21:4 (February 15, 1968): 5-6; "General Board of NCC Calls for Many Changes in U.S. Foreign Policy." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:4 (April 1968): 4. Archives PHS.

[38] "The Peace-Loving Clergy." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 5:4 (April 1966): 3. DuPont Library.

[39] "A Word about Capt. Smith." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 6:1 (January 1967): 11. DuPont Library.

[40] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:1 (January 3, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[41] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:11 (June 1, 1971): 8. Archives ELCA.

[42] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:13 (June 19, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

used “the church as a crutch.”[43] Aside from attacking personal failures, critics castigated the goals of these clergy. Clerical leadership made “use of the Vietnam situation to elevate their personal egos.”[44] Or, as fellow travelers, they sought “the instigation of revolutionary activity.”[45] These clergy failed in their primary obligation, to serve as true ministers of the Gospel. Some conservatives grew so angered at their leadership that they moved from rhetoric to action. One group of church members withheld funds from the diocese and headquarters of the church for what they saw as failed liberal politics. In response to criticism from bishops on this action, writers mocked moderates and described their actions as “the withholding of funds by an oppressed majority” as a “non-violent method, of informing a seemingly disinterested Church leadership that there is vast disagreement.”[46]

Conservative laity grew increasingly angry with clergy they saw as abusing their positions of authority. Clergy made up less than 5% of church membership but held the reins of power in mainline denominations. Only in the Episcopal Church did laity have the organizational power to stop the actions of clergy. Even with this ability to hinder action, lay Episcopalians still possessed a limited organizational voice. Thus, valid laity anger found various expressions. One critic of his church’s statement on Vietnam found it invalid since ministers

[43] “Letters to the Editor.” *The Lutheran*, no. 6:9 (April 24, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[44] “Letters.” *The Episcopalian*, no. 132:10 (October 1967): 4. Archives EC.

[45] Elizabeth Osth. “Behind the War Protests.” *The Christian Challenge*, no. 6:12 (December 1967): 13. DuPont Library.

[46] “Preferable Protest?” *The Christian Challenge*, no. 9:10 (October 1970): 21. DuPont Library.

dominated the general assembly: "Though they compromise [*sic*] about one-third of one percent of all Presbyterians they have 50% of the votes in the General Assembly."[47] They also perceived the statements by clergy in opposition to the war as bypassing the requirement that only the national body could speak *for* the church.[48] They castigated ministers for "parading in his clerical garments" in protests which lent the weight of the corporate church – locally or nationally – to his protest even though a majority likely opposed it.[49] Critics called on clergy to focus on their spiritual responsibilities. They also found it "discouraging" to find church leaders "exerting so much energy to concerns other than their most important one – the spiritual condition of the people."[50] They wondered aloud if ministers "would not better put to use their time worrying about the moral fabric of this country."[51]

If laity attacked ministers and leadership, they reserved special criticism for national church committees they saw as the source of much of the political preoccupation. All the denominations studied had a standing committee that focused on the key social and political issues of the day. These committees tended to be more liberal in their political perspectives as well as the source of

[47] Herbert Kaiser. "SE Asia Policy is Challenged by a Layman." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no 3:8 (September 1970): 7. Archives PHS.

[48] "Editorial: What are our differences?" *The Presbyterian Layman*, no 3:3 (March 1970): 8. Archives PHS.

[49] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 6:1 (January 3, 1968): 49. Archives ELCA.

[50] "Letters." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 5:6 (June 1972): 11. Archives PHS.

[51] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 23:13 (July 1, 1970): 6. Archives ELCA.

many of the statements critical of the war and attendant issues. The Board of Christian Social Concerns of the United Methodist Church served as a case in point. This board was led by the highly committed and strongly idealistic Herman Will. For decades, Will led not only the board, but served as both a leader and spokesperson for unpopular social causes within the United Methodist Church. He did not avoid unpopularity and sought to instill the groups he led with a deep commitment for social concerns. The Board of Christian Social Concerns likewise embraced the role of prophetic challenger; it fully intended its statements serve as "a prophetic voice that would stimulate public opinion."[52] If the committee was a fly in the ointment "so what?" declared committee members. "So was the ministry of Jesus Christ, not to mention the prophets before Him."[53] Openly confrontational, the committee encouraged attacks against it. Writers described it as a fringe and destructive element that encouraged foolish actions by immature youth.[54] It's committee members as "naïve," "inappropriate," "destructive," "irresponsible," and lacked "competency."[55] Furthermore, writers

[52] "Readers Respond: Viet Nam Facts and Opinions." *Christian Advocate*, no. 10:18 (September 22, 1966): 15. Archives UMC.

[53] "Open Forum: Letters to the Editor." *Christian Advocate*, no. 11:5 (March 9, 1967): 5-6. Archives UMC.

[54] Charles M. Crowe. "Communication: More Realities on Vietnam." *Christian Advocate*, no. 10:15 (July 28, 1966): 10. Archives UMC.

[55] "Readers Respond: Viet Nam Facts and Opinions." *Christian Advocate*, no. 10:18 (September 22, 1966): 15. Archives UMC;

agreed that the board served to distance laity from leadership with their statements and style.[56]

Politically, conservatives responded intensely and thoroughly. They denied the competency, methods, and character of the critics. To a certain degree, one bypassed the challenge of the message if one discounted the messenger. In one grand proposed resolution, The Forum for Scriptural Christianity, a conservative reactionary group of the Episcopal Church, summed up the political anger and argument of conservatives:

> WHEREAS our Savior Christ has said that His kingdom is not of this world…AND WHEREAS this same Lord proclaimed that His followers were to render to God the things that are God's and to Caesar the things that are Caesar's…AND WHEREAS a relatively small group of bishops…has dared to presume a competence which they lack in their endeavor to frame the foreign policy of the United States…AND WHEREAS these bishops possess no particular authority in civil affairs and their speaking in such areas possesses no more validity than does that of any other Christian man or woman…AND WEHREAS the Apostolic Commission of the bishops does not extend to the sphere of politics or sociology, nor does this commission permit them to speak for all Christian men and women in these areas" these leaders had to be silent and Christians need not heed them.[57]

Full of criticism, conservatives did offer alternative orientations for the church. Reflecting the rhetoric of conservative evangelicals, they stressed souls and salvation served as the proper focus of the church, clerics, and Christians;

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[56] William Carter. "Let's Abolish the Board and …Save Social Concerns." *Christian Advocate,* no. 11:1 (January 12, 1967): 14. Archives UMC.

[57] "A Resolution Repudiating the Stand of the House of Bishops on Vietnam." *The Christian Challenge,* no. 9:11 (November 1970): 7-8. DuPont Library.

the terrestrial was a distraction. Conservatives argued that "the Church [was] committed to the everlasting Gospel and to the Creeds that formulate it; it must never commit itself to an ephemeral program of detailed action.[58]

Conservatives who grew tired of the church speaking to social problems year after year expressed their frustration with national denominational meetings devoid of their true purpose.[59] National conventions were not "gathering of the followers of Jesus Christ, concerned with winning the hearts of man to him." Instead, they served as a "political convention."[60] Letters to the editor, in a telling use of a biblical phrase, demanded that the church "better get back to being about our Father's business instead of coming up with schemes" that focused on political issues.[61] Conservatives offered this alternative mission both to church bodies and church periodicals. Readers criticized the social and political focus of church magazines and instead saw church publications focus on "sin" or "religious-orientated editorials."[62] The emphasis upon spirituality served as the antithesis of a moderate critique of the Vietnam War. One United Methodist letter to the editor made clear this subtext: "We need to lead back to the path of

[58] "General Board of NCC Calls for Many Changes in U.S. Foreign Policy." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:4 (April 1968): 4. Archives PHS.

[59] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 23:18 (September 15, 1970): 4. Archives PHS.

[60] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:15 (August 1, 1971): 4. Archives PHS.

[61] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 8:2 (January 21, 1970): 49. Archives ELCA. The phrase "our Father's business" is a reference to the Gospel of Luke, where the parents of Jesus go looking for Jesus and surprisingly find him in the temple. When they ask Him where he was he asks them "did you not know I would be about my Father's business?"

[62] "Open Forum" *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:12 (June 11, 1970): 3. Archives UMC.

preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and quit dabbling in politics. We need an editor who believes more in the religion of Jesus Christ and is not so sympathetic with Hanoi."[63]

Conservatives offered up no greater mandate than the saving of people's souls.[64] Of course, how could a church argue with this goal? Writers called upon the church to "concentrate [their] energies on saving souls, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ…*then* [they could] consider" the social issues of the day. Leadership overlooked the "primary mission of the Church…the spreading of the Gospel."[65] Making evangelism the goal not only served to move political issues to the back burner but also put off addressing them to the end of time, for there always existed souls to convert. Thus, "the church [could not] take precious time to propagate social-action religion. There [were] too many souls to be save[d] at home and abroad who need[ed] the word of God in its truth and purity."[66] Conservatives did not deny the reality of social ills but rather saw spiritual issues as supreme. Furthermore, remedying the spiritual would remedy the physical: "Let the Church concentrate on her calling to bring knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ to men through the Gospel, and there will be social, political and economic

[63] "Open Forum." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:15 (August 16, 1970): 5-6. Archives UMC.

[64] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1964: 318. Archives PHS.

[65] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 17:15 (August 1, 1964): 5. Archives PHS.

[66] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 5:11 (May 24, 1967): 49. Archives ELCA.

effects."[67] Conservatives lifted the discussion to a higher plane that moderates found difficult not only to respond to but also to reject.

Thus far, the discussion of mainline conservative response explored the attitudes and rhetoric that permeated their anger at the declarations of their churches. Yet this anger found formal organizational expression as well. The Vietnam War era witnessed the emergence and growth of para-church conservative opposition groups connected to mainline denominations. These groups served as an organizational home for conservatives that contested the course of their denominations but did not seek to leave them. A brief survey of these groups helps the reader understand the unique role of the debate and dissent over the Vietnam War in the decline of mainline denominations. The Vietnam War was not solely responsible but perhaps provided the tipping point for organizations already beset by division. In addition, these para-church groups provide the reader with an opportunity to see the resonance between them and conservative evangelical denominations.

The Good News Society and its publication, *The Good News*, served as a meeting point for frustrated conservatives of the United Methodist Church. Church leadership reported that the members and supporters of the society viewed themselves as a "silent majority of evangelicals who felt themselves shut out from and not heard within the church's liberal hierarchy."[68] This appropriation

[67] Albert J. Lindsey. "The State's Sphere is Not the Church's." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no 3:4 (April 1970): 5. Archives PHS.

[68] John M. Lovelace. ""Minority" No Longer Silent." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:18 (September 17, 1970): 24. Archives UMC.

of Nixon's slogan revealed that conservative Methodists saw their church mimicking secular society.

These participants held "the general complaint against present United Methodist leadership" was that it had "emphasized the half truth of social action to the detriment of the evangelical witness." They sought nothing more than to "bring right balance of the two into the church."[69] Yet moderates seemed unwilling to listen. Moderates correctly recognized the conservative political bent but unwisely dismissed them as "racists and warmongers."[70] Such language only furthered the recognition of the divide that existed and fomented even more anger. These members made clear that "resentment [was] growing towards the pontifical attitudes of the general and conference boards. The image they project[ed] [was] that of men with a self-designated messianic role to be the unauthorized conscience of the denomination."[71]

Members of the Good News Society felt ignored: "Nobody listens to us! We are *all* alone. We are a silent majority."[72] They sought to garner the attention of moderate leadership. They realized they could not capture power denominationally but at least they wanted to flex their muscle and gain recognition. Hence, they encouraged members to flood the Quadrennial

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[69] John A. Lovelace. "Good News Convocation: Fusion of Revival, Rally." *Christian Advocate*, no. 15:15 (July 12 1971): 26. Archives UMC.

[70] "Open Forum." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:22 (November 26, 1970): 5. Archives UMC.

[71] James P. Rush. "The Gathering Storm." *Good News,* no. 3:4 (1970): 37. Archives UMC.

[72] Charles Keysor. "A Time to Speak." *Good News,* no. 1:3 (1967): 5. Archives UMC.

conference – the meeting of all United Methodists that occurred once every four years – with conservative petitions to get leadership's attention.[73]

Good News Society members also wanted to communicate particular conservative perspectives. They sought the correction of the "distorted emphasis upon social concern and consequent de-emphasis on other vital aspects of the Gospel." Not emphasizing salvation empowered the demonic.[74] Lon Woodrum, a colorful conservative United Methodist pastor who sang, wrote religious poetry, served as a lay evangelist and missionary, and started several para-church organizations, wrote, "If I were Satan…I would let people think I was in a booze joint when I would be in a church administration meeting." Satan would have them "neglect personal redemption while emphasizing political-social efforts."[75] However, beyond these demands of shifting emphasis, they offered little concrete directives. They did not provide a developed rationale for their perspectives nor sought to relate the mission of the church with the problems of the world. They simply vented and were mad Methodists.

If the United Methodists had the Good News Society, the Episcopal Church had The Forum for Scriptural Christianity and its publication, *The Christian Challenge*. The Forum too emphasized the hijacking of the church. They fumed at the way leadership "diverted funds from the true mission and

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[73] Charles D. White. *Journal of the 1970 Special Session of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1970: 551-571. Chambers Library.

[74] Charles Keysor. "A Time to Speak." *Good News,* no. 1:3 (1967): 5-6. Archives UMC.

[75] Lon Woodrum. "If I Were the Devil." *Good News,* no. 2:1 (1968): 21-22. Archives UMC.

vocation of the church into the support of politically oriented groups," in which too they saw the hand of Satan[76] Such political activism served as an attempt "to substitute a religion of humanity for Christ-centered religion."[77] Challenging the social activism of the church was rejecting heresy and following Christ. Church leadership needed to follow the lead of conservatives if they truly desired to solve the world's problems. Reflecting a theology of reciprocity, they connected the woes of America to the Old Testament: "When people forgot God and disregarded His laws, the nation lapsed into anarchy and moral decay." However, when they "turned to God in humility, then prosperity, political stability and moral health were immediately restored."[78]

It did appear that the supporters of *The Christian Challenge* emphasized a dualistic world view a bit more than other mainline conservatives. They connected the struggle of Vietnam with a larger struggle for the world: "One thing is clear, for a convinced Christian there is no such thing as neutrality. For this is a war not just for the minds of men, but for their very souls." Thus, "to be neutral [was] to be uncommitted."[79] Moderates failed to recognize the reality of this dualistic battle. Referencing the Apostle Paul, one writer declared, "we are fighting against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of

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[76] "Worldscene: More Critics Speak Out." *The Episcopalian*, no. 134:12 (December 1969): 39. Archives EC.

[77] Dorothy Faber. "An Open Letter to Episcopalians from Your Editor." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 1:1 (January 1962): 1. DuPont Library.

[78] Beniah H. Crewe. "Then Beware Lest Thou Forget the Lord." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 3:7 (July 1964): 5. DuPont Library.

[79] "Christian Action in Time of Danger." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 4:9 (September 1965): 1. DuPont Library.

this world, against spiritual wickedness. Sometimes this fight takes physical form, and we are called upon to physically fight Communism."[80]

Lastly, Presbyterians had *The Presbyterian Layman*. As with the other groups, moderates of Presbyterian Church described the people who supported this organization and newspaper in terms that only deepened the divide. They were "disturbingly self-righteous and judgmental."[81] Others incorrectly labeled them "an insignificant minority." Moderate leadership disparaged these conservatives and told them that they should, "like small boys, pick up [their] marbles and go home."[82] Repeatedly, regardless of the church, moderates failed to appreciate the size and depth of the discontent. While their descriptions of conservative attitudes had some validity, moderates did not lead the type of organizations that had the liberty of discounting or dealing sharply with its membership especially as these churches already faced significant instability.

These discontent Presbyterians, like the members of other churches, felt "extremists groups within the church" had hijacked their church.[83] They felt church publications lacked objectivity and "seldom present[ed] both sides of the

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[80] L. Roy Pettway. "Win the War." *The Christian Challenge*, no. 10:1 (January 1971): 17. DuPont Library.

[81] "Letters." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 19:5 (May 1, 1966): 6. Archives PHS

[82] "Editorial Comment on Gallup Poll." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:5 (May 1968): 6. Archives PHS.

[83] "Letters." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:3 (March 1968): 3. Archives PHS.

issue."[84] Combating this bias meant returning to "the fundamental teachings of the Bible." They discouraged "public pronouncements by church leaders…unless there [were] spiritual and moral issues which [could] be supported by clear-cut Biblical authority."[85] "Secular politics" were not the domain of the church and they blamed clergy.[86] They agreed, "I AM REACTIONARY" and opposed "those ministers who'd convert my house of worship into a hootenanny hall or political worship."[87]

The antithesis of political liberalism was not political conservatism but traditional evangelicalism.[88] Writers declared they were "slanted in favor of man's reconciliation with God as having priority over man's reconciliation with man" and sought the use of funds only for this mission.[89] They perceived the contemporary church to have failed in providing "moral and spiritual leadership though the teaching and preaching of the Gospel of salvation" and thus needed to return home.[90] Reclaiming this central mission would solve the world's ills:

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[84] Roger Hull. "The Voice of Dissent." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:2 (February 1968): 2. Archives PHS.

[85] "Objectives of the Presbyterian Committee." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:1 (January 1968): 1. Archives PHS.

[86] John Jenks. "A Layman's Viewpoint**."** *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:5 (May 1968): 6. Archives PHS.

[87] Patricia Young. "Patricia Young Says…" *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 2:1 (January 1969): 5. Archives PHS.

[88] "Letters." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:3 (March 1968): 3. Archives PHS.

[89] "Editorial…This is a Slanted Publication." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 2:3 (March 1969): 8. Archives PHS.; "Letters." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 4:2 (February 1971): 6. Archives PHS.

[90] "Editorials: Time for Unity - in Christ." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 3:1 (January 1970): 8. Archives PHS.

"*You cannot create a good and happy society out of unregenerated, unhappy members of society*. The genesis of the disease was isolated more than 2,000 years ago by Christ. It is the depravity of man."[91] Christ himself provided the model for the church. "If Jesus had concentrated his three years of intensive work here on crusades and marches against slavery, poverty, racial discrimination, etc., He would have long since been forgotten by history."[92]

In a style that found resonance among conservative evangelicals, supporters of the Presbyterian Layman redefined social and political involvement to mean traditional benevolence activities. For Christians, involvement in social issues meant "helping the needy," "tutoring classes," holding "summer camps for the underprivileged,"and comforting "boys without fathers."[93] At best, the church could serve in the realm of "education, medical help," and "other ministries of compassion," but not political activism.[94]

If the Presbyterians, United Methodists, and Episcopalians had an outlet, what about Lutherans? The Lutherans did not birth a conservative reactionary para-church group like the other mainline denominations. However, this did not occur due to a lack of conservative fervor in the Lutheran Church in America.

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[91] John Jenks. "A Layman's Viewpoint**."** *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:5 (May 1968): 6. Archives PHS.

[92] "Letters." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 4:2 (February 1971): 7. Archives PHS.

[93] "Editorial Comment on Gallup Poll." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 1:5 (May 1968): 6. Archives PHS.

[94] Malcolm Nygren. "The Church and Political Action." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no 2:5 (May 1969): 6. Archives PHS.

Rather, Lutherans had an organizational outlet already in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and the smaller Wisconsin and Little Norwegian Synods.[95]

Presbyterians, United Methodists, and Episcopalians did not have sister churches in the numbers nor geographic distribution necessary to support mainline conservatives looking for another home. Hence, they created these organizations. However, Lutherans had local options. The Wisconsin and Little Norwegian Synods provided two conservative options in areas of Lutheran strength. More importantly during this time period, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod went through a dramatic transformation and moved away from mainline moderate perspectives and toward more conservative evangelical ways of thought. Thus, conservative Lutherans had a place they could call home and did not need to create or support such organizations. This hypothesis is based partly on research of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod that is not a part of this work and also based on the a need to explain conservative anger in the Lutheran Church without an organizational expression. Clearly, to support such a hypothesis one would need to find evidence of a migration of conservatives from the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) or the Little Norwegian or Wisconsin Synods. Anecdotally supporting

[95] Joel Thoerson. December 13, 2007. E-mail conversation with Archivist of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

this hypothesis is the reality that the LCMS witnessed growth during this period while the LCA, along with all mainline denominations, shrunk dramatically.[96]

This chapter thus far explored the nature of conservative anger in mainline denominations that found primary expression during the second half of the war, especially after 1970. Of course, concurrently, and probably encouraging it, the nation witnessed the worsening and eventual loss of the Vietnam War.

The church did not spend much time discussing military events or the waft and weave of international diplomacy. With the exception of the Cambodian incursion, critique and affirmation remained fairly generalized. However, one event, My Lai, did warrant discussion.[97] How the church sought to resolve this horror illustrated the way preexisting theological and political commitments colored description of this and, implicitly, other horrors committed by American forces. It also demonstrated the vexing dilemma moderate critics found themselves in. Their moral positions and commitment to the prophetic called for sharp condemnation. Consistency called for this act. However, they sensed their isolation as well as demonstrated the same tinge of nationalism they chastised conservatives for and could not criticize the soldiers, even the very ones guilty of these gross sins.

[96] William M. Newman and Peter L. Halverson Atlas of American Religion: The Denominational Era, 1776-1990. (New York: Altamira Press, 2000); Bret E. Carroll. The Routledge Historical Atlas of Religion in America. (New York: Rutledge, 2000).

[97] In March of 1968, under the leadership of Lieutenant Calley, a U.S. Army unit massacred between 350 and 500 unarmed civilians, most women and children.

Conservatives initially responded to the stories of My Lai with disbelief. The earliest perspectives denied that a massacre had taken place. One letter to the editor declared, "I do not believe there was such a thing," before going on to explain that if a massacre did take place, it originated in "disgruntled men who were out for revenge."[98] However, the massacre could not be denied. More commonly, conservatives saw it as an aberration. Using, classic *reductio ad absurdum*, they painted moderate critics into a corner: "Are you saying that because of the alleged massacre at My Lai every mother's son over there is a killer of women and children?" Others shifted attention away from the massacre: "It is not part of our national policy to commit such acts, but it is an integral part of the policy of demonic governments in Hanoi, Peking and Moscow."[99] Pre-existing commitments meant conservatives could not accept My Lai at face value. Both sides shared the guilt of moral inconsistency.

Moderates expressed a greater willingness to entertain not only the reality of the massacre at My Lai, but also of others. Presbyterian Church leaders felt convinced that My Lai was not an isolated incident.[100] Lutheran moderates seeking an end to the Vietnam War and war in general called for "a national inquiry" to explore this and other "war crimes" in Vietnam. However, the majority response by moderates focused not on the horrors of this massacre but rather

[98] Open Forum: Letters to the Editors." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:5 (March 5, 1970): 5. Archives UMC.

[99] John F. Ameling. "Communication: War and Unfair Comparisons." *Christian Advocate*, no. 14:20 (October 29, 1970): 19. Archives UMC.

[100] Robert H. Heinze. "Report and Comment: Churchmen Meet Paris Peacemakers." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 23:8 (April 15, 1970): 9. Archives PHS.

used it as a means of criticizing larger structures. The system, not the soldier, bore the blame. One could not simply blame Lieutenant Calley and his soldiers:

> "We can not deny that [a soldier] has spent his entire life in a country governed by many leaders who ignore the reality of racism in our midst and insist instead that our greatest enemy is communism. When the key structures of a culture are permeated with fear, human energy recoils into its darkest areas."[101]

Everyone involved in the process bore the blame: "superior officers," "General Westmoreland," "the system," and "the occupant of the Whitehouse."[102] Rather than use the language of sin and judgment they approached the war with, critics of the war felt sympathy for the child-like soldier. Surely, "a young man…taken from civilian life, trained to kill, taught to lead others and then sent into the Vietnam battle" on orders could not be blamed.[103] In fact, My Lai served more as a lesson of "what the war [was] doing to many William Calleys growing up in America."[104] The soldiers themselves, the ones who murdered, remained notably absent from the assignment of guilt. The guilt lay "upon superior officers, the government, the society, the nation, the system that sent [the soldier] to the

[101] J.M.W. "Personal Perspective: Morality and the Calley Case." *Christian Advocate*, no. 15:9 (April 29, 1971): 2. Archives UMC.

[102] Albert P. Stauderman. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 9:8 (April 21, 1971): 50. Archives ELCA.

[103] Albert P. Stauderman. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 9:8 (April 21, 1971): 50. Archives ELCA.

[104] Cassels. "Monday Morning With Cassels: More Than Just Calley." *The Episcopalian*, no. 136:5 (May 1971): 23. Archives EC.

place where he [murdered]…each American [was] responsible in some measure – if only by reason of inaction and silence – for the tragedy."[105]

The ending of the war also brought forth a new point of debate and contrast. The debate over amnesty, as with other debates, found itself tied to larger discussions. For example, one letter to the editor supportive of amnesty asked, "Shall we grant amnesty to the Presidents, to the Congress and to a nation that permitted Vietnam, and thus sent 45,000 young Americans to an early death?"[106] Others postulated, "The question that keeps coming to my mind on the issue of amnesty is, what do we do with a nation that has acted as immorally and illegally in Southeast Asia as our country has?"[107] The issue of amnesty did not exist apart from other issues or perspectives.

Mainline moderates did support amnesty. As with conscientious objection, support, in part, arose from a respect of conscience. The Episcopal House of Bishops passed a resolution calling for amnesty out of "high respect for conscience."[108] The House of Deputies, dominated by laity and not as appreciative of the conscience of those who fled, refused to take action on the motion. Lutheran supporters compared the recipients of amnesty with Martin Luther's declaration of conscience and stated, "Here I stand, I can do no other,

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[105] Cassels. "Monday Morning With Cassels: More Than Just Calley." *The Episcopalian*, no. 136:5 (May 1971): 23. Archives EC.

[106] "Open Forum." *Christian Advocate,* no. 16:5 (March 2, 1972): 5. Archives UMC.

[107] "Open Forum." *Christian Advocate,* no. 17:11 (January 4, 1973): 4. Martin Luther was the leader of the Protestant Reformation and the founder of the Lutheran Church. Archives UMC.

[108] *Journal of the Special Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1969: 158. Archives EC.

God help me."[109] Supporters did not ask nor expect the recipients of amnesty to be liked, but one had to respect that they "refused to subjugate their conscience to the foreign policy of our country."[110] Speaking to assumed or spoken criticism, supporters of amnesty felt that one should not or could not judge the motives of those deserting the country: "God alones knows what finally determines the actions of human beings… therefore, we feel it unwise to attempt to judge the motives of those to be given amnesty."[111] To those that desired a selective amnesty, resolutions maintained that "there [was] no realistic way to sort out those who acted from deep motivation from those who refused to serve for lesser reasons."[112]

Supporters' vision for amnesty found expression in the language used. Amnesty was an "instrument of reconciliation" and not the granting of "forgiveness."[113] They rejected the language of forgiveness for it implied sin and wrongdoing.[114] This deserter was no prodigal son.[115] Listening to the voice of

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[109] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 10:6 (March 15, 1972): 49. Archives ELCA.

[110] Harold A. Bosley. "On the Question of Amnesty – Who Needs It?" *Christian Advocate*, no. 16:23 (November 23, 1972): 8. Archives UMC.

[111] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume II.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 1130. Chambers Library.

[112] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1974: 251. Archives PHS.

[113] *Journal of the Special Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church.* 1969: 158. Archives EC.

[114] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume II.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 1130; Harold A. Bosley. Chambers Library. "On the Question of Amnesty – Who Needs It?" *Christian Advocate*, no. 16:23 (November 23, 1972): 8. Archives UMC.

God in their lives could never be equated with sin. Furthermore, amnesty and its appropriateness found a model in Christ. As followers of Christ, one had an "obligation to follow Christ's example" and thus grant amnesty.[116] Amnesty was nothing more than an expression of "the heart of the gospel" and "the mission of reconciliation to which [Christ] has called this church."[117] More importantly, recognizing "God's mercy toward us an amnesty," how then could we deny the same to others?[118] The recipients of divine grace were expected to show human grace to others. Such grace did not require popular support either, for "Christ's gospel of reconciliation [was] not subject to a majority vote."[119]

Moderate support for amnesty also looked to the needs of the nation after a divisive decade of war. Church leaders felt the nation had to "extend amnesty to them not alone for their sakes" but also for the sakes of others."[120] The church had an obligation to "overcome the paralyzing divisiveness" of the Vietnam War on society and amnesty encouraged it. [121] The war resulted in masses of people

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[115] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 10:6 (March 15, 1972): 49. Archives ELCA.

[116] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 11:11 (June 6, 1973): 49. Archives ELCA.

[117] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1973: 969-970. Archives PHS.

[118] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1974: 203-204. Archives PHS.

[119] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 11:11 (June 6, 1973): 49. Archives ELCA

[120] Harold A. Bosley. "On the Question of Amnesty – Who Needs It?" *Christian Advocate*, no. 16:23 (November 23, 1972): 9. Archives UMC.

[121] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume II.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 1130-1131. Chambers Library.; "Churches' Next Assignment in War Areas: Rebuilding." *Christian Advocate*, no. 17:4 (February 15, 1973): 24. Archives UMC.

"alienated from society" and amnesty seemed a concrete thing the nation could do to reconcile these peoples.[122]

The issue of amnesty provided a rare opportunity for the emergence of a middle ground. There were those who saw the value of amnesty yet did not look as favorably upon those who fled. In fact, opposition to a general amnesty came from those who labeled the war a political and moral failure. Authors expressed disapproval for a general amnesty while at the same time affirmed that "punitive action seems to be of least value in a morally ambiguous war."[123] This middle ground found biblical support in the story of the Prodigal Son. Those that served in Vietnam played the role of the elder sons who felt betrayed by the general forgiveness of amnesty bestowed upon the foolish younger son.[124] The father had to mediate between the noble ethic of forgiveness and the anger of the older brother. An easy general amnesty seemed to deal harshly with those who served. Thus, some called for amnesty after "a period of service to their fellow man in some peaceful activity."[125] Others more vaguely called for a type of amnesty but not one where the recipient got "off scot-free."[126] This middle ground provided an opportunity to appreciate the attitudes and perspectives of

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[122] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1973: 969. Archives PHS.

[123] J.M.W. "Personal Perspective: Amnesty in a Divided Nation." *Christian Advocate,* no. 16:2 (January 20, 1972): 2. Archives UMC.

[124] Albert P. Stauderman. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 10:3 (February 2, 1972): 50. Archives ELCA.

[125] Albert P. Stauderman. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 10:21 (November 15, 1972): 50.

[126] "Open Forum." *Christian Advocate,* no. 17:11 (January 4, 1973): 4-5. Archives UMC.

both the elder son and the younger prodigal son. It seemed to weigh the emotional commitments of both sides. It also did not allow for conservatives to grow angry about being ignored as they had in other debates.

By this time though, conservatives did not feel like compromise or caution in statements. Conservative laity in the Episcopal Church successfully stopped a generous resolution on amnesty from passing the annual meeting. Opponents of amnesty used significantly different language. In place of "reconciliation," they used "forgiveness." The biblical concept of reconciliation meant the making of peace between enemies, two parties rightfully at odds with one another. The language of forgiveness, though, made clear the failure of one and the graciousness of the other. One had sinned and needed to repent in order to receive forgiveness. Opponents of amnesty recognized that "if there [was] anything the war objectors [did] not want, it [was] forgiveness."[127] If the deserters did not desire forgiveness, some asked why they should be helped at all.[128] In fact, opponents saw the pleas for reconciliation based amnesty as driven "by those who [felt] guilty about persuading young men to dodge their duty."[129] Conservatives emphasized the just consequences for sin and affirmed civil consequences for the perpetrators and surely not the church's support.

The ending of the war also witnessed the emergence of language of communal guilt and repentance. Echoing the Apostle Paul in the book of

[127] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 10:6 (March 15, 1972): 49. Archives ELCA.

[128] "Letters." *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 5:11 (October 1972): 6. Archives PHS.

[129] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 11:11 (June 6, 1973): 49. Archives ELCA.

Romans, and looking back at the war, mainline moderates declared "there [was] none righteous, no not one." The nation – not necessarily the military – stood under God's verdict of guilt for its transgressions: "We are not innocent in this war…We have a fair degree of guilt. Especially before a holy God, we are under divine judgment, as is the enemy. Our stance should be to repent, to confess, and to beg God for pardon."[130] In the profoundest use of prophetic speech, moderates declared the sin of the people, whether the people agreed or not. Humanity stood in judgment. Critics emphasized that the killing in the war violated the commandment, "Thou shall not kill," and the guilt of that killing in the Vietnam War belonged to humanity as a whole.[131]

The nation stood judged. America's conduct in "the war itself [was] a war crime," declared one. The nation that took civilians and "trained them to kill" bore the guilt.[132] One could not pawn the guilt off to political or military leaders. Instead, resolutions declared, "We [shared] responsibility for all our nation has done and is doing: We [were] involved in the killings of every man, woman and child."[133] In tones reminiscent, or perhaps influenced by, Old Testament psalms of communal lament, leaders wrung their hands and maintained that "increasing

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[130] "A Sermon: What Does God Say About the War in Vietnam." *The Lutheran*, no. 4:20 (September 28, 1966): 35. Archives ELCA.

[131] "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 9:22 (November 17, 1971): 49. Archives ELCA.

[132] Albert P. Stauderman. "Editor's Opinion." *The Lutheran*, no. 9:8 (April 21, 1971): 50. Archives ELCA.

[133] "A Message From the Protestant Church Leaders' Consultation in Vietnam in Paris." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:8 (April 15, 1971): 31; *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1971: 564. Archives PHS.

numbers of citizens [were] recognizing that we [were] all personally implicated in the war."[134] American citizens could not pawn this off as someone else's war and sin. The American citizen at home was "no different from those who operate the computer centers that carry on this warfare."[135] Not the military but "we as a people" bore the responsibility for "the destruction and devastation of a land and a people."[136]

Jeremiads of guilt also singled out the church. "Christians" were held complicit "in policies which violate[d] human life and dignity."[137] Thus, the Lutheran Church prayed for "divine forgiveness for out complicity and for the self-righteousness" of Christian support and involvement in the Vietnam War.[138] Methodists chastised "the religious community" for being "strangely quiet" as American forces encouraged the destruction of Vietnam.[139] In communal repentance, Presbyterians declared they had "sinned as a church" and asked, "Will you join with us in seeking forgiveness for our part in the destruction and suffering of the people of Indochina and the pitiful death and crippling of

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[134] "New and Noted for the Session: A Call to Repentance and Renewal." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:9 (May 1, 1971): 31. Archives PHS.

[135] "Proceedings" *Daily Christian* Advocate 3:7 (4/24/1972) pg 389. Archives UMC.

[136] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1972: 111. Archives PHS.

[137] *Minutes of the Fifth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America*. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1970: 661-663. Archives ELCA.

[138] *Ibid.*.

[139] J.M.W. "Personal Perspective: A Call for Confession." *Christian Advocate,* no. 16:4 (February 17, 1972): 2. Archives UMC.; John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume II.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 1039. Chambers Library.

thousands of Americans?"[140] "The meaning and value of confession" must then recognize "the sin and death and destruction … left in Vietnam."[141]

Moderates first acknowledged the sin, and then they called for repentance. The theological language of repentance not only required a particular view of the past but expected a different course of action in the future. The church and nation had "to turn around with our demons amongst us…they can not be exorcised by an easy repentance, and easy statements of mistakes – they can only be exorcised by genuine, deep, thorough repentance and fruits of repentance."[142] Calling out to national political leaders, church members desirous of taking the way "that [lead] to new life" expected all to repent:[143] "We are all sick at heart. Our cure must be in repentance and renewal."[144]

Critics made clear what the repentance was for. The nation and the church had supported the death and destruction in Vietnam. The American people and American church helped foster "terror" abroad.[145] The church and

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[140] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1972: 390-392. Archives PHS.

[141] J.M.W. "Personal Perspective: A Call for Confession." *Christian Advocate,* no. 16:4 (February 17, 1972): 2. Archives UMC.

[142] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume I*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 437. Chambers Library.

[143] George F. Regas. "Mr. President, The Jury is in." *The Episcopalian*, no. 136:6 (June 1971): 11. Archives EC.

[144] "New and Noted for the Session: A Call to Repentance and Renewal." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:9 (May 1, 1971): 31. Archives PHS.

[145] *Minutes of the Fourth Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America*. Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America, 1968: 55. Archives ELCA.

nation had a hand in the destruction of humanity, the suffering of the Vietnamese, the bombing of the nation.[146] America's actions, supported by American people, had dehumanized the enemy and destroyed the land.[147] However, these sins remained rather abstract. They used the personal language of repentance but never made the sin itself personal. Furthermore, soldiers remained strangely absent from these pleas of guilt, sin, and repentance. Did soldiers, the agents of destruction, not sin? Did they lack any need of forgiveness? These were Puritan Jeremiads with a healthy dose of ambiguity.

However, these resolutions did not simply seek shame, admission of guilt, and a turning away. Surveying a social landscape physically and psychically ravaged by decades of dissent, moderates sought rejuvenation of the land. As surely as the "word of God judges this nation" it would then surely "bring healing, too."[148] The repentance cure brought "renewal."[149] Convinced that a better

[146] "A Message From the Protestant Church Leaders' Consultation in Vietnam in Paris." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:8 (April 15, 1971): 31, Archives PHS; "Letters to the Editor." *The Lutheran*, no. 9:22 (November 17, 1971): 49, Archives ELCA.; J.M.W. "Personal Perspective: A Call for Confession." *Christian Advocate,* no. 16:4 (February 17, 1972): 2, Archives UMC; "Proceedings" *Daily Christian Advocate* 3:7 (4/24/1972) pg 389, Archives UMC.; *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1972: 390-392. Archives PHS.

[147] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.* Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1972: 111. Archives PHS.

[148] George F. Regas. "Mr. President, The Jury is in." *The Episcopalian*, no. 136:6 (June 1971): 11. Archives EC.

[149] "New and Noted for the Session: A Call to Repentance and Renewal." *Presbyterian Life*, no. 24:9 (May 1, 1971): 31. Archives PHS.

nation awaited the American that repented, writers called out, “Heal us Father.”[150]

Others, however, did not join in such laments. Conservatives rejected attempts to fix blame on America: “We don’t attempt to put the blame on anybody but call upon all sides to cease hostilities – to do it on honorable terms,” wrote one group opposed to a Methodist declaration of guilt and repentance. Others, while rejecting American blame at the same time attempted to fix the blame on the communists[151] The attempts to place “substantial burden of guilt on the United States by saying little about the guilt of other nations involved” angered conservatives[152] and their anger had validity; there existed guilt enough to share. At the same time, conservatives surely would not stomach the language of repentance and the implications. The two groups still talked past each other. Moderates’ decelerations of national guilt focused upon the consequences of the war. Conservatives’ rejection of guilt fixed the blame elsewhere and still focused upon the war as a just cause.

The later years of the war revealed the degree to which mainline denominations fractured. The fractures revolved around not only a wedded theological-political perspective but also around the nature of church leadership. A powerful conservative critique emerged that offered a competing vision of the

[150] “A Prayer for Healing as a Long War Ends.” *The Lutheran*, no. 11:4 (February 21, 1973): 10-11. Archives ELCA.

[151] John L. Schreiber. *Journal of the 1972 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, Volume II.* Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1972: 1047. Chambers Library.

[152] “Minority Report on U.S. Policy in Indochina.” *The Presbyterian Layman*, no. 4:7 (July 1971): 4. Archives PHS.

politics and mission of the church. Unable to gain a seat at the tables of power within their denominations, they created their own para-church groups that gave them both a clear voice and solidarity. From there, they expressed perspectives that found resonance with the rhetoric of Christians in conservative evangelical denominations.

Surveying the study of mainline denominations throughout the Vietnam War, one witnessed the presence of an implicit debate about war and the Vietnam War that loosely revolved around just war thinking. Opponents of both war in general and the Vietnam War specifically focused on means and found both immoral. Supporters of both war in general and the Vietnam War focused on the cause and found both moral. Supporters of Vietnam sidestepped the powerful issue of suffering by contrasting accidental against purposeful suffering. Furthermore, they argued for the normative, yet regrettable, nature of suffering in conflicts.

Organizationally, mainline denominations suffered terribly from a division between leadership and laity. The differing political perspectives made this tension, to a particular degree, unavoidable. However, laity chafed at the elitism of their churches and the mechanics of church polity. Laity recognized the absence of their voices in national resolutions. They could do little to stop resolutions on behalf of a church of which they made up 99% of the membership. Laity also chafed at the embrace of a prophetic style by church leaders. A condescending pointing out of others' sin encouraged division. Yes, religious leaders held moral obligations but they could have executed these obligations

more wisely. Most importantly, mainline leadership failed to embrace the nature of leadership as it related to volunteer organizations. Laity could and did go elsewhere. One never perceived an attempt to bridge the ideological and dispositional gap from above. Here, as leaders, bishops and ministers bore the brunt of the responsibility.

The moral claims of these churches also suffered from ambiguity. Official decelerations on the war reveal a slide rule of morality that found the war troublesome at first but a vile sin at the end. Resolutions that dealt with soldiers, war guilt, amnesty, or conscientious objection demonstrated a repeated pattern of ambiguity or failure to follow moral claims to their just conclusion. Conservative evangelical denominations did not suffer such faults and their people appreciated it. Although morality could be gray, one could make clear the reason for ambiguity and educate laity as to its presence.

As was made clear in the conservative critique, mainline churches suffered an identity crisis as to their mission. Some, especially leadership, affirmed a prophetic role. This role emphasized social involvement and recognized the need for alienation and confrontation. Others, especially conservative laity, emphasized traditional spirituality and evangelism as the opposite to social involvement. In a combination of both coping strategy and honest theological difference, conservative laity saw salvation and spiritual maturity as the true mission of the church. In fact, they affirmed that saving sin-sick souls would redeem society. Thus, the vision of the nature of the church differed in mainline denominations.

As the Vietnam War drew to an end, so too did the time of mainline churches at the pinnacle of American religion. Their nearly two centuries of dominance slipped away. No, Vietnam alone was not the cause. However, the very contentious debate visited organizations already destabilized by a decade of contention over civil rights and the counter culture. Now, conservative evangelicals took the torch from mainline protestants too busy with internecine fighting to recognize its absence.

Chapter 5:

A Sin Stained World:
Conservative Evangelical Concepts of War and Peace During the Vietnam War.

If mainline denominations sang “All Creatures of Our God and King,” conservative evangelicals sang “Amazing Grace;” if mainline denominations wrestled with the theology of just war, conservative evangelicals perceived Vietnam as just war; if mainline denominations saw suffering in Vietnam, conservative evangelical saw opportunity. Such disparate approaches to the war in Vietnam found origin not in the greater benevolence and sensitivity of mainline denominations nor the cold hearted militarism of conservative evangelicals. At the center of the distinction lay convictions about the nature of existence and the believer’s connection with and obligations to their fellow man. Mainline denominations saw present reality as something to be redeemed and positively influenced by the Gospel while conservatives saw a sin stained world assuredly destined for an apocalypse but laden with souls to be delivered into the glorious light of Christ. Neither was necessarily right or wrong, but both groups achieved differing perspectives and commitments to the war in Vietnam.

This study of the Vietnam War began with an exploration of mainline denominations that saw a three-fold movement. At the heart of the self-destruction resided an ambiguity in moral claims and moral responsibilities; a division in belief, responsibility, and communication between leadership and laity; and a sizeable conservative reactionary constituency which made clear the internal differences.

In many ways, the story of conservative evangelicals in Vietnam differs sharply from that of mainline denominations. Most significantly, overwhelming theological and behavioral harmony meant less division and more focused and energized denominations, which gave Americans a clear set of beliefs when they began searching for stability in the late 1950s. In addition, conservative evangelicals perceived and passed judgment on Vietnam with unambiguous morality; zeal thrives on the meat of moral clarity and not the pabulum of uncertainty. Lastly, when faced with discord, challenges, or uncertainty, conservative evangelicals did not move to the center but moved to the right and grew increasingly wary of the world's situation and their clear responsibilities in light of such dire truths. The combination of these factors – organizational stability and ideological clarity – helped encourage the meteoric rise of conservative evangelicals in the 60's and 70's.

The story of conservatives in Vietnam can be told in three uneven movements. First, one must explore the perspectives and theologies of war and peace that informed attitudes on the Vietnam War. Second, the years 1964-1968 were when the majority of discussion on the Vietnam War took place. It is during this time period that they defended American involvement. Third, from 1969 on, it became clear that victory was not a possibility and conservative evangelicals made shifts in their responsibility in and descriptions of Vietnam. Note that these temporal divisions are general and not exclusive. One will find some discussion draw from years outside these categories. However, these references exist as notable exceptions. This chapter will look at the first division, 1964-1968.

Conservative evangelicals, as with any other group, entered the war with a set of ideological commitments. They expressed and reaffirmed these commitments during the first half of the war. The nature and purpose of war served as the most pivotal concept to conservatives. Conservative evangelical theology reflected a large degree of comfort or unregretful acceptance of war for several reasons. First and foremost, they believed the world they lived in was far from ideal. Baptist writers declared to their readers that the "Scriptures show[ed] that the biblical ideal for the world [was] a world of peace. Unfortunately, [the] world [was] not an ideal world."[1] Likewise, Nazarenes affirmed peace as the "ideal world condition." However, reality taught that this was "a world where evil forces and philosophies … conflict[ed] with … Christian ideals."[2] In a "world ruled by madness," those that desired a world without war did so based upon a "shallow view of human depravity."[3] The pragmatism of evil, at the end of the day, trumped the idealism of the Scripture and Christian theology.[4] This pragmatism encouraged an embrace of war.

In place of the idealism of world peace and pacifism, conservative evangelicals, at times, offered the opposite- an embrace of war as normative.

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[1] George E. Worrell. "The Christian's Attitude Toward War and Peace." *Baptists Standard*, no. 78:21 (May 25, 1966): 7. Roberts Library, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX. Hereafter "Roberts Library SBTS".

[2] *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1968: 154. Southern Nazarene University Library, Bethany, Oklahoma. Hereafter "SNU Library."

[3] Karl A. Olsson. "A War Above Reproach?" *The Baptist Program* (July 1968): 10. Roberts Library SBTS.

[4] James D. Hamilton. "Victory at the Place of Defeat." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 58:22 (May 28, 1969): 18. International Pentecostal Holiness Church Archives and Research Center, Bethany, Oklahoma. Hereafter "Archives IPHC."

Editors, in borrowing New Testament phrases meant to point to the Apocalypse, informed readers that the "New Testament itself recognizes that wars and rumors of wars will blight human life down to the very end of time."[5] Conservative evangelicals did not base the normalcy of war on some Neanderthal blood lust but instead drew it consistently and logically from a view of man and a particular cosmology. They perceived unredeemed humanity as inherently sinful and destructive. Sin knew no limits and thus always worked toward war. Hence, the Christian could rest assured that humankind had "been at war since time immemorial. When has there ever been a time without war somewhere on the earth?"[6]

Such a rejection of useless idealism and an affirmation of the normalcy of war led to the embrace of war as a regretful necessity. Churchmen wrote of their deep regret for war but the international realities which compelled its use.[7] A greater evil than war, items "worse than death" like the "loss of freedom and human dignity" made war a palatable choice.[8] Paul Merritt Bassestt, professor of the church history at Nazarene Theological Seminary for over three decades declared, "I am not in favor of war…but there may be circumstances that could

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[5] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:27 (August 24, 1966): 19. SNU Library.

[6] Fred M. Weatherford. "Why Christ's Coming Could Be Soon." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 62:4 (February 14, 1973): 13. SNU Library.

[7] *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1968: 154. SNU Library.

[8] "Missionary Says Defend Vietnam." *Baptist Standard*, no. 81:25 (June 18, 1969): 11. Roberts Library SBTS.

justify it."[9] The soldier was "young man who hates war and fears it, but fights because he knows there are worse things."[10] Repeatedly, what began as an affirmation of peace as an untenable ideal found conclusion in the declaration of the tragic necessity of war; the lesser of two evils.[11] To be sure, the pragmatic realities, the regretful necessities, and the greater evil remained not nebulous, but found concrete expression in the dominant threat of the time: godless communism. Peace and the "consequent spread of Communism" proved the true terror in the world, not war.[12] "Would it be God's will for atheistic communism to dominate the masses of the world?" asked one writer, sarcastically and rhetorically.[13]

The demon, the antichrist that conservative evangelicals myopically focused on, was communism. Communism was part of an unholy trinity that included Catholicism and liberalism targeted "evangelical Christianity."[14] They characterized this "foe we face" as marked "by its thorough-going materialism, its class hatred, its commitment to revolution, its ruthless totalitarianism, and its

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[9] Paul Merritt Bassett. "Questions for Hawks and Doves." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:51 (February 7, 1968): 4. SNU Library.

[10] "Vietnam Forces Build Faster than Destroy, SBC Leader Says." *Baptist Standard*, no. 82:32 (June 12, 1970): 19. Roberts Library SBTS.

[11] "Letters to the Editor." *Baptist Standard*, no. 84:24 (June 14, 1972): 2. Roberts Library SBTS.

[12] Paul Merritt Bassett. "Questions for Hawks and Doves." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:51 (February 7, 1968): 4. SNU Library.

[13] George E. Worrell. "The Christian's Attitude Toward War and Peace." *Baptists Standard*, no. 78:21 (May 25, 1966): 7. Roberts Library SBTS.

[14] *Minutes of the Thirtieth General Council of the Assemblies of God*. Springfield, MO. 1963: 20. Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center, Springfield, MO. Hereafter "Archives FPHC".

determination to rule the world."[15] To that end, individual churches and denominations needed to exclusively focus on "combating Communism in the world."[16] Apparently, war served as one method to do so, regretful but acceptable.



Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Evangelical Christians viewed communism as not simply a challenge to democracy but as a direct threat to Christianity. This cartoon, which appeared in the pages of a Baptist periodical, portrayed the forces of evil as a burly Lenin-

[15] Foy Valentine. "A Matter of Communism." *Baptist Standard,* no. 75:23 (June 12, 1963): 7. Roberts Library SBTS.

[16] R.O. Corvin. *Minutes of the Fourteenth General Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church*. Richmond: 1961: 39. Archives IPHC.

esque individual undeterred in his attempts to breech the citadel of Christ.[17] Communism found itself driven by "hatred," a "denial of the Christian doctrine."[18] To be sure, Communism did not fight alone in its attacks. Previously, others had tried but failed. Yet, at the time, communism served as the dominant threat.



Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

[17] Jack Hamm. "Cornerstone Intact." *The Christian Index*, no. 142:22 (May 30, 1963): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[18] Foy Valentine. "A Matter of Communism." *Baptist Standard,* no. 75:23 (June 12, 1963): 7. Roberts Library SBTS.

As illustrated above, conservative evangelicals saw in recent history a series of attempts to destroy the faith.[19] Yet the communists' murderous attempts would ultimately fail, as the caption below the cartoon made clear. Conservative evangelicals remained convinced that "the Communist purpose was to conquer the earth and remove the last trace of God from it. It is first and foremost a *war on religion*."[20] This conviction of a religious rather than a political struggle found specific expression in the Vietnam War. As one Baptist made clear, the success of missionaries in bringing Vietnamese to Christ meant that "their lives and teachings had conflicted with that of local Viet-Cong communists and could no longer be tolerated. Elimination of the teaching and a lesson to the village was necessary."[21] Hence, conservative evangelicals viewed communism not simply as competition or contrarian in nature, but rather as innately in direct conflict with Christianity itself.

A non-political conception of communism birthed this inherent conflict. First, conservative evangelicals described communism not as a political system but a religious one. Declared the President of the Southern Baptist Convention to a national gathering of church members:"Communism is neither an economic not a political theory, it is a religion. And, Communists press their cause with a

[19] Jack Hamm. **"**Titanic Struggle." *The Christian Index*, no. 142:2 (July 11, 1963): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[20] Loren E. Schaffer. "World Evangelism or Communist Imperialism." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 53:19 (July 1, 1964): 6; Emphasis in original. SNU Library.

[21] George W. Foshee. "Agony and Ecstasy of the Military Chaplaincy." *The Baptist Program* (February 1969): 4. Roberts Library SBTS.

zeal like unto that of the first-century Christians."[22] Or, wrote one Nazarene, "Communism is a *religion*, an *irreligious religion*."[23] To be sure, this "religion" found leadership in the Antichrist as communism served as "an outpost of hell on earth."[24] Communism only succeeded when "people fail[ed] to educate themselves in the things of God," thus foolishly allowing "false ideas to pour in."[25]

Such an antipathy and embrace of conflict meant that there existed a divine mandate to challenge communism, literally. Converting Jesus' command to a modern communist context, Christians needed to "heed Christ's command…to set at liberty the world's imprisoned…to relieve the oppressed."[26] In language meant to evoke the story of righteous but small David fighting evil and gargantuan Goliath, one Nazarene implored tentative Christians that "every Communist is not 10 feet tall!" Just as for David, Christians faced assured victory if only the church acted.[27] Hence, much of the thinking and embrace of war found specific motivation in fear of communism as a religious threat.

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[22] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1963.* Nashville: 1963: 91. Roberts Library SBTS.

[23] Loren E. Schaffer. "World Evangelism or Communist Imperialism." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 53:19 (July 1, 1964): 6. Archives IPHC.

[24] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:16 (June 7, 1967): 19. SNU Library.

[25] Bradley Pope. "Communism in the Churches." *The Baptist Program* (August 1964): 12. Roberts Library SBTS.

[26] Foy Valentine. "A Matter of Communism." *Baptist Standard,* no. 75:23 (June 12, 1963): 7. Roberts Library SBTS.

[27] *ibid*.

Returning to war specifically, conservative evangelicals thought it not only normative for now, but also normative until the end of time, or the Eschaton, the biblical end of the present world. With this sense of fatalism, the Southern Baptist Convention pointed to "Biblical passages which [spoke] of wars and rumors of wars and which [prophesied] Armageddon".[28] The conviction of the presence of war until the end of time also found pictorial expression during this period.



Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

[28] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1965.* Nashville, TN.: 1965: 245. Roberts Library SBTS.

Combining both the idea of a Christian war against communism and the timeless nature of war itself, this cartoon's caption made clear that violent conflict would last until God returned and judged the nations. Until that day of judgment, Christian youth were encouraged to venerate prior generations by fighting on.[29] However, what many would view as pessimism over the human condition actually possessed a sense of hopefulness, for the presence of wars served as a joyful harbinger of the return of Christ. As one clergyman stated, "Many ominous clouds on the horizon indicate that the Second Coming of Christ is very near. His appearing will bring glorious deliverance for those who are prepared to go with Him."[30] So then, in a reversal of thought patterns, "to hope for permanent peace" proved folly and only invited "bitter disappointment."[31] The hopeful Christian could embrace "wars and rumors of wars" as signs pointing to the "time of His return."[32]

From an affirmation of the reality of war to an eschatological expectation of war to promote the return of Christ, conservative evangelicals too saw the evils of war as a tool of the righteous God. Leaders wedded the political rhetoric of contemporary issues in Vietnam to the biblical narrative of millennia past. In response to a reader who wondered why Christians did not "stand up and fight

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[29] Jack Hamm. "Until the Final Armistice." *The Christian Index,* no. 145:27 (July 7, 1966): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[30] A.M. Long. "Troubled Waters and a Troubled World." *The Advocate*, no. 50:11 (October 1, 1966): 3. Archives IPHC.

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] *Ibid.*

against wars," one editor declared that as "in the Old Testament days God's people fought to win and maintain their freedom"; so too did the people of God during the Vietnam War.[33] God used war as a tool in the hands of His people to achieve their needs and His will[34] God could also use war as a punishment for war. Essentially, "as terrible as war is, it still may be the lesser of two evils, and we may be compelled to wield the sword by which the aggressor is doomed to perish."[35] So what began as a tacit agreement that war was not a divine ideal ended as the conviction that God uses Christians to punish war via war.

To write that such a strong embrace of war existed is not to write that there was not opposition to war. Granted, this opposition was minimal. Some leaders recognized that Christians might embrace war because of their failure to actually work for peace.[36] Others rejected an affirmation of war that depended upon a reading of America as Old Testament Israel. Within the Southern Baptist Convention, the Christian Life Commission chastised fellow church members for attempting to support the concept of total war by pointing to Israel's war with its neighbors.[37] However, much more common were challenges that rejected war as a Christian ethic. Entirely, such lines of thinking arose from the bottom and not from the top. Incredulous readers asked in letters to the editor how one could

[33] "Letters to the Editor." *Baptist Standard*, no. 77:22 (June 2, 1965): 3. Roberts Library SBTS.

[34] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:38 (November 8, 1967): 13. SNU Library.

[35] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:5 (March 20, 1968): 19. SNU Library.

[36] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1967.* Nashville: 1967: 293. Roberts Library SBTS.

[37] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1965.* Nashville: 1965: 246. Roberts Library SBTS

reconcile holiness with a nation's military and prosecution of war.[38] One conservative church member who dissented from the majority opinion asked, "how can we say it is consistent with the law of love to fight in wars, take combat training, where the principle of killing is majored [*sic*] upon?"[39] Occasionally parishioners challenged their leaders to "stand up and fight against wars" as well as pray for their end.[40] These individuals felt sure that "God has always frowned upon war and its outcome."[41] At the core, war was wrong for it one could not reconcile the sixth commandment – "Thou shalt not murder" (Exodus 20:13) – with the killing done by a soldier.[42]

An insightful comparison of how conservative evangelicals and mainline denominations approached the concept of war, specifically in Vietnam, revolves around the differing perspectives on atomic warfare. Recall that mainline denominations' fear of nuclear holocaust informed their opposition to war in general and to the Vietnam War specifically. Conservative evangelicals offered a sharp contrast. Most notable is not their very limited discussion of atomic warfare, but rather the total absence of fear of it. In fact, conservative evangelicals saw the atomic age as a peaceful one. The President of the

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[38] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 54:9 (April 21, 1965): 17. SNU Library.

[39] James D. Hamilton. "Victory at the Place of Defeat." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 58:22 (May 28, 1969): 18. SNU Library.

[40] "Letters to the Editor." *Baptist Standard*, no. 77:22 (June 2, 1965): 3. Roberts Library SBTS.

[41] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:47 (January 10, 1968): 16. SNU Library.

[42] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:5 (March 20, 1968): 19. SNU Library.

Southern Baptist Convention would herald the arrival of "a new age, the Atomic Age;" one filled with opportunity and the work of God.[43] An example of this tranquility with nuclear threat, a tranquility not present among mainline believers, was expressed in an article praising military servicemen. With a backdrop of a monstrous B-52 on the runway preparing for take-off, the writer praised the servicemen "entrusted with powerful weapons" with nary a concern about the consequence of the use of those weapons.[44] Yes, discussion of nuclear weapons could be troublesome as a "precarious balance of terror…exist[ed] in this nuclear age."[45] Yet this terror did not make war obsolete or even avoidable; it simply informed the church on how to approach foreign policy issues. In fact, the only time that atomic warfare came into play was not in a fearful foreboding tone but rather as an assumed consequence for man's depraved spiritual state: "Unless there is a moral regeneration throughout the world, mankind could, on a given day, wake up in the dust of an atomic explosion."[46] On the one hand, conservative evangelical eschatology could made atomic war insignificant because true destruction would come not at the hands of man but at the hand of God. These conservative evangelicals believed, in fact, that the greater the war, the nearer the Escahton. On the other hand, such a view of atomic warfare was empowering in an age beset with fear and instability. Conservative evangelicals

[43] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1963.* Nashville: 1963: 86. Roberts Library SBTS.

[44] Milo L. Arnold. "National Defenders." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 59:45 (November 11, 1970): 3. SNU Library.

[45] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1967.* Nashville: 1967: 293-294. Roberts Library SBTS.

[46] Fred M. Weatherford. "Why Christ's Coming Could Be Soon." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 62:4 (February 14, 1973): 13. SNU Library.

at this time had no need to cower in fear of what might become. It would seem that such clarity, hopefulness, and lack of fear proved very attractive for those seeking moral and ideological guidance in a nuclear age and with the Cuban missile crisis a recent memory.

Concepts of pacifism found themselves transformed during the Vietnam War. Surprisingly, a number of conservative evangelicals entered the Vietnam War with a confessional affirmation of pacifism but moved to the right on this concept during the conflict. For example, the governing documents and confessional statements of the Assemblies of God declared that "scriptures have always been accepted by our churches as prohibiting Christians from shedding blood or taking human life…we cannot conscientiously participate in war and armed resistance which involved the actual destruction of human life."[47] The Pentecostal Holiness Church also stated disapproval of war early in the Vietnam War period. However, these pacifist strands – probably born of their Anabaptist roots – found sharp reversal in the first several years of the war. The Assemblies of God, in 1967, in embracing the afore mentioned tension between stated idealism and the pragmatic reality of evil stated that they "acknowledge[d] the principal of individual freedom of conscience as it relates to military service."[48] Taken by itself, this statement appears an enlightened affirmation of conscientious objection. However, compared to prior affirmations, this statement

[47] *Minutes of the Thirty-First General Council of the Assemblies of God*. Springfield, MO: 1965: 134. Archives FPHC.

[48] *Minutes of the Thirty-Second General Council of the Assemblies of God*. Springfield, MO. : 1967: 34-35. Archives FPHC.

sharply moved the church in favor of combat and away from pacifism as a viable or acceptable option.

More explicitly, conservative evangelicals viewed pacifism as dubious. More generous were those accounts which described pacifism as odd and peculiar. In the Herald of Holiness, the official organ for the Church of the Nazarene, one reader questioned how a person could reconcile holiness with a nation's military and prosecution of war. The editor responded sharply, did not address the question, and simply declared, "it sounds to me as if someone has sold you a 'bill of goods' with regard to pacifism…to equate it with Christianity is too far out for me."[49] More common were doubts as to the viability of pacifism. As readers questioned their leaders as to the reconciliation of military service with the sixth commandment, editors declared that neither military service nor capital punishment constituted a violation of this commandment – based on a kill / murder distinction – yet went on to add that "pacifism…does not seem … a genuine possibility in our sin-crazed and sin-cursed world."[50] As with the concept of war, much of the rejection of pacifism centered on a superseding commitment to perceived pragmatic realities. Repeatedly, editors simply declared pacifism as unviable without offering an explanation as to why.[51]

[49] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 54:9 (April 21, 1965): 17. SNU Library.

[50] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 53:36 (October 28, 1964): 17. SNU Library.

[51] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:1 (February 22, 1967): 19. SNU Library.

Most common though, conservative evangelical leaders described pacifism as unbiblical. If readers asked leadership if the New Testament ethic did not prohibit killing another, editors declared the unscriptural basis of pacifism – without exegesis – and would point to the oft repeated phrase of "wars and rumors of war" as proof of the unscriptural nature of pacifism.[52] Repeatedly, pointed questions about pacifism went unanswered or editors produced red herrings in response to direct questions.[53] As the war progressed, responses from editors grew increasingly stern. When one reader again asked about reconciling governmental violence with the sixth commandment, the editor of the Herald of Holiness insisted that the commandment had no bearing or "reference whatsoever to legal and necessary police action." Going further, the editor turned the answer back on the questioner and declared that the absence of violence itself was sinful: "It is hard to know where people get ideas like this. What they do not see is that such an attitude is itself sin".[54] In fact, this commitment to a rejection of pacifism repeatedly bore an illogical strain. When one reader asked if the scriptural declaration "they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" had relevance to the taking up of weapons in order to kill in the military, the editor sharply responded that the passage had no relevance whatsoever to the taking up of military arms and instead emphasized that "it is

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[52] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:27 (August 24, 1966): 19. SNU Library.

[53] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 53:36 (October 28, 1964): 17. SNU Library.

[54] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 60:23 (September 15, 1971): 29. SNU Library.

better to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," referring to Matthew 22:21.[55] How ironic that a church leader rejected a logical question of biblical ethics with his own eisegesis of the biblical text.[56]

Hence, conservative evangelicals entered the Vietnam War with a concept of war that rejected the idealism of Scripture and in turn embraced war not only as a normative pragmatic reality but also quite possibly a tool used by God. Their eschatology and dualistic world view led them to a warm embrace of war for what they thought it might usher in- the reign of Christ. Of course, contemporarily, it appeared that communism served as their dominant frame of reference. Communism, thus, served not as a political or economic threat but rather a religious competitor that sought the vanquishing of its religious foes. No room for idealism or pacifism existed and conservative evangelicals found themselves ideologically and theology disposed to support the Vietnam War. Politics need not enter the discussion, yet.

As conservative evangelicals entered the period with particular conceptions of war, they also held particular attitudes toward peace. Based on the discussion thus far, it should come as no surprise that conservative evangelicals viewed peace dubiously. Yet some of the significance of their opinion lay in the degree of ideological distance. For example, among Baptists,

[55] Paul F. Beachem. "Light on the Subject." *The Advocate*, no. 57:22 (March 19, 1973): 7. APH1.

[56] Isogesis is the act of reading into the Biblical text or with a commitment to finding a particular truth. It is the opposite of exegesis.

nearly 80% of parishioners opposed the funding of a center to study peace.[57] In addition, conservative evangelicals did not wrestle with peace on its own terms. Peace served not as an end but rather an adjunct to or the consequence of something else. As one parishioner recalled of World War II, "if we had sent enough missionaries to Japan, we would not have had to send troops and bombs to that country later."[58]

Conservative evangelicals perceived peace as overrated and profoundly limited. "Christians are to pray for peace. They are to seek peace and pursue it…it is incredible that anyone who knows Christ would be a warmonger. Nevertheless, there are some areas in international relationships where acquiescence is regarded to as an invitation to aggression."[59] Not only did pragmatic realities constrain peace, it seemed God did too. Writers stood convinced that God would shun peace for war if pacifism meant that "atheistic communism" would "dominate the masses of the world."[60] So dim were the perspectives on peace that church members amended resolutions favoring

[57] "The Open Meeting: Should the Southern Baptist Convention establish a center for the study of peace? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (February 1967): 23-27. Roberts Library SBTS.

[58] "The Open Meeting: Should the Southern Baptist Convention establish a center for the study of peace? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (February 1967): 23. Roberts Library SBTS.

[59] "National Council Speaks Inadvisedly." *Baptist Standard*, no. 77:13 (May 31, 1965): 5. Roberts Library SBTS.

[60] George E. Worrell. "The Christian's Attitude Toward War and Peace." *Baptists Standard*, no. 78:21 (May 25, 1966): 7. Roberts Library SBTS.

peace to drop the description of peace negotiators as “people who seek peace and freedom for all men.”[61]

With such negative perspectives on traditional concepts of peace, conservative evangelicals creatively redefined peace so that one could both embrace war and peace at the same time. Traditional peace was fleeting or a myth.



Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

True peace came only to those who submitted to God. Yet, this concept of peace emphasized, as seen in the Scripture quoted in the above cartoon, was

[61] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1968.* Nashville, TN: 1968: 80-81. Roberts Library SBTS.

not the absence of physical violence but rather inner tranquility.[62] Writers declared what the cartoonist drew. One author stated that "peace" meant first and foremost "peace with God." Secondarily, it was the "peace of God." Lastly, it was "peace on earth."[63] Repeatedly, writers defined peace as a spiritual state and not a physical or relational one.[64] It did not apply to nations. General Superintendent Charles Lewis of the Pentecostal Holiness Church declared, "Peace, where is it? Without a doubt it is waiting where God said it is. It certainly can not be found where God said it is not…the wicked shall find no peace in the evil."[65] Therefore, peace and war could coexist rather nicely. As the editor of the Herald of Holiness made clear, peace was not "to be free from problems. Our Lord warned us that in the world we would have problems."[66] Even Christmas poems of the time expressed the co-existence of war and peace: "To you who are Christians, Peace on Earth means a quiet confidence even in the most hazardous of times" and "To the unsaved, Peace on Earth is an unrealistic phrase, a travesty on conditions of time, an impossible dream."[67]

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[62] Jack Hamm. "The Peace Keepers." *The Christian Index*, no. 142:33 (August 15, 1963): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[63] Raymond Pope. "Peace." *The Advocate*, no. 48:20 (September 12, 1964): 4-5. Archives IPHC.

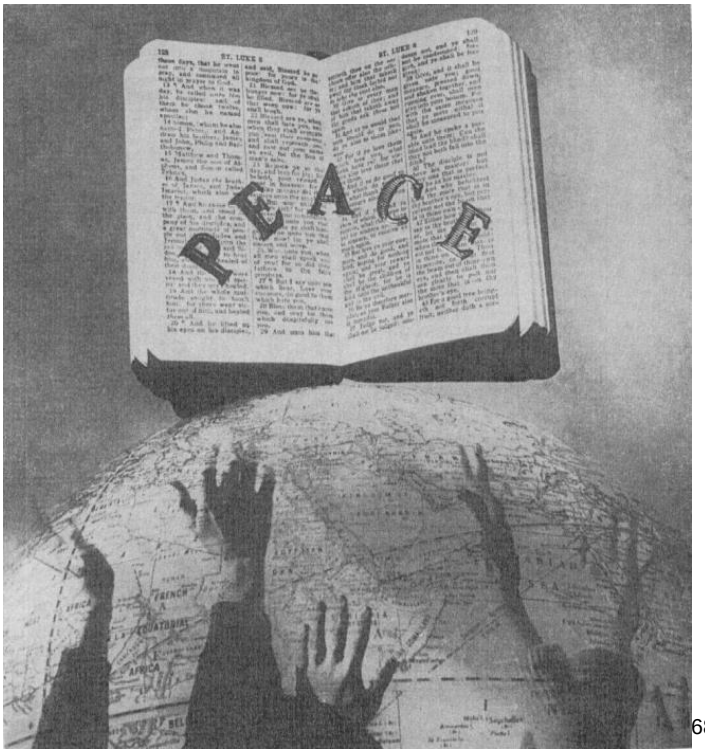
[64] Margaret Muse Oden. "People…and Peace." *The Advocate*, no. 47:33 (December 14, 1963): 2, Archives IPHC; "The Open Meeting: Should the Southern Baptist Convention establish a center for the study of peace? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (February 1967): 27. Roberts Library SBTS.

[65] General Superintendant Lewis. "Peace!" *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:40 (November 30, 1966): 2. SNU Library.

[66] W.T. Purkiser. "Editorially Speaking: The Meaning of Peace." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:31 (September 18, 1968): 11. SNU Library.

[67] T.A. Patterson and Executive Board Staff. "…And on Earth, Peace…" *Baptist Standard*, no. 82:51 (December 23, 1970): 5. Roberts Library SBTS.

Pessimism about peace drove the redefinition of peace. Peace – used or implied in the traditional sense – could not be found on earth or through man but solely through God and Scriptures.



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International Pentecostal Holiness Church Archives & Research Center, Bethany, Oklahoma.

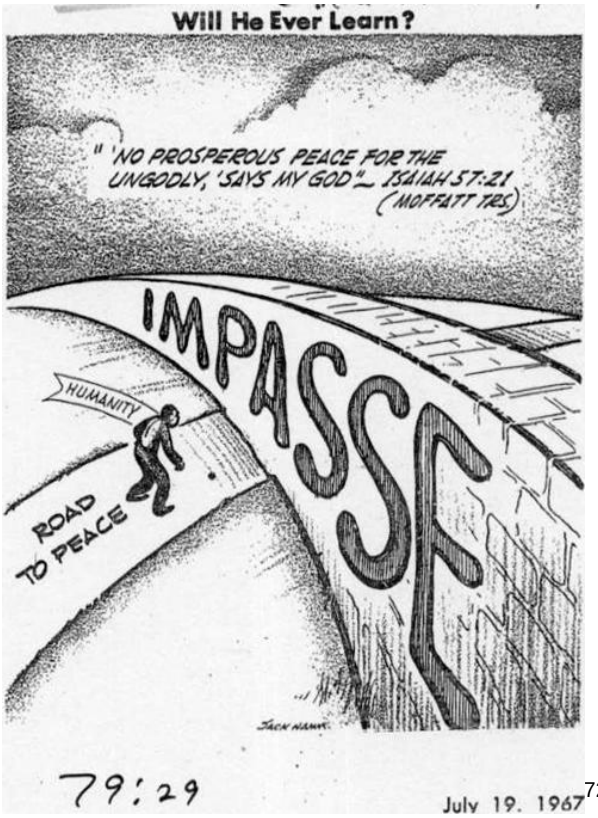
Writers described desires for diplomatic world peace as a "dream." [69] An examination of the people "endeavoring, supposedly, to bring about a greater measure of peace" lead to the conclusion that others should "question their progress."[70] Writers counseled church members not to hope in the negotiation

[68] "Peace." *The Advocate*, no. 47:35 (January 4, 1964): 1. Archives IPHC.

[69] Lewis Pringle. "From Whence Come Wars." *The Advocate*, no. 49:19 (September 11, 1965): 5. Archives IPHC.

[70] Raymond Pope. "Peace." *The Advocate*, no. 48:20 (September 12, 1964): 5. Archives IPHC.

tables.[71] They predicated this impossibility of peace on the inability to separate peace from moral purity.



[72]
Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

The road to peace could not be separated from the road to righteousness. This conviction led to the pessimistic fatalism that "human efforts to solve the troubling dilemmas of [the] age seem[ed] fruitless."[73]

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[71] Clayton Bonar. "Lord Grant Us Peace." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:46 (January 4, 1967): 6. SNU Library.

[72] Jack Hamm. "Will He Ever Learn?" *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:29 (July, 19, 1967): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[73] A.M. Long. "The Quest for Peace." *The Advocate*, no. 53:17 (December 20, 1969): 3. Archives IPHC.

Yet, if conservative evangelicals found traditional concepts of peace hopeless, they offered up an entirely achievable personal conception of peace: "Peace is not made at the council tables, nor by treaties, but in the hearts of men."[74] In fact, the immediate need of man was not "world peace but heart peace."[75] Church members resonated with this claim and took solace in knowing that although he could not hope for tranquility in the world he could "have peace in my own heart."[76] To achieve this true peace one had to "purge the heart…promote love… [and] propagate the gospel."[77] Leaders and parishioners alike saw Christ as the author of such perspectives on peace: "Jesus recognized the fact that until hearts are changed, no real lasting change will occur on the outside."[78] In light of this truth, modern attempts to encourage peace through organizations or centers were shortsighted. One Southern Baptist used Jesus' final directive in the Gospels, "The Great Commission" to oppose such peace centers. He wrote, "the only possible honest conclusion or recommendation that a center for the study of peace could bring is the one Jesus gave us 2000 years ago, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of

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[74] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:27 (August 24, 1966): 19. SNU Library.; Maxine Williams. "Peace Now?" *The Pentecostal Evangel,* (December 23, 1973): 3. Archives FPHC.

[75] Maxine Williams. "Peace Now?" *The Pentecostal Evangel,* (December 23, 1973): 3. Archives FPHC.

[76] Margaret Muse Oden. "People…and Peace." *The Advocate*, no. 47:33 (December 14, 1963): 2. SNU Library.

[77] George E. Worrell. "The Christian's Attitude Toward War and Peace." *Baptists Standard*, no. 78:21 (May 25, 1966): 7. Roberts Library SBTS.

[78] "The Open Meeting: Should the Southern Baptist Convention establish a center for the study of peace? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (February 1967): 23. Roberts Library SBTS.

the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."[79] Therefore, if one embraced this teaching of Christ, "the social, ethical, and political questions [would]fall in their places."[80]

As with war, peace ultimately operated as an eschatological category. If wars plagued humanity until the end of the age, so too did real peace require the return of Christ. Simply put, "a peaceful world without Christ is a mirage."[81] Even in the face of successful peace treaties, conservative evangelicals resigned themselves to the reality that "peace in the sense of absolute world peace is a fantasy of which we all dream. But it will never be realized until the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, establishes His rule on earth."[82]

These redefinitions of peace and war, the internalization of external peace, made the absence of the former and presence of the later less troublesome. In turn, the Vietnam War proved less an irritant because of these ideologies. Were such approaches avoidance or a sincerity of belief? Perhaps they were neither but both. A dualistic world view that emphasized individual spiritual transformation as preeminent, the inherent and unavoidable sinfulness of the present, and the necessity of the Eschaton to solve man's problems

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[79] "The Open Meeting: Should the Southern Baptist Convention establish a center for the study of peace? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (February 1967): 27. Roberts Library SBTS.

[80] "The Open Meeting: Should the Southern Baptist Convention establish a center for the study of peace? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (February 1967): 23. Roberts Library SBTS.

[81] Robert C. Cunningham. "No More Wars?" *The Advocate*, no. 55:2 (May 22, 1971): 3. Archives IPHC.

[82] Eva J. Cummings. "The Best Things in Life are Not Free." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 62:6 (March 14, 1973): 3. SNU Library

worked with pre-existing socio-political preferences. Politics did not produce theology, rather theology empowered political perspectives.

Chapter 6:

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus:
Conservative Evangelicals and the Vietnam War, 1964-1968.

Discussions of war and peace did not remain vague explorations of hypotheticals. The early Vietnam War period provided an opportunity for the testing and expression of these ideological commitments. The Vietnam War found powerful support for the war among conservative evangelicals. For example, one poll found 63% of conservative evangelical respondents supported the war on moral grounds, long after a majority of the nation had turned against the war.[1] Further evidence of this support expressed itself in a survey of ministers in Florida and Louisiana. In this survey, 75% of the ministers agreed that the United States "could not afford to lose in Vietnam" and nearly 70% favored escalation if then-current tactics did not work. Most startling, nearly 40% of respondents favored continuation of the war even if it meant triggering a nuclear apocalypse and World War III. These responses, especially the later 40%, revealed the depth of commitment to Vietnam as well as the chasm between conservative evangelicals and mainline churches. Mainline churches feared an atomic World War III triggered by Vietnam. Perhaps the embrace of the Apocalypse as a certain future reality meant a greater willingness to the embrace actions that could have potentially triggered it.

Beyond statistical support, conservative evangelicals brought several strands of thought to their support of the war. First, reflecting just war thinking,

[1] "U.S. In Vietnam favored." *Baptist Standard,* no. 81:30 (July 23, 1969): 4. Roberts Library SBTS.

conservative evangelicals denied Vietnam War as a war of aggression. In response to the query by a member of a peace church who wondered about the justification of the war in Vietnam, the editor of the Herald of Holiness declared that Vietnam did not qualify as a "war of aggression for the advancement of nationalistic ends."[2] Likewise, Baptists described the aggressor as the Vietcong, individuals who they believed "launched vicious attacks against the cities, crowded with helpless thousands who [could not] fight back."[3] Christians especially had to recognize the goodness of Vietnam's helpless citizens, for that "was the only place where free people [were] fighting the Communists" who had started this fight.[4]

Moving beyond traditional just war perspectives, conservative evangelicals emphasized their particular theological perspectives. Chief among them was the conviction that Vietnam was an apocalyptic battle. The President of the Southern Baptist Convention declared it the "battle of history within history" to the laity. Or, in language that compared America's approach to the war with Old Testament Israel, an Assemblies of God writer warned, "The crucial hour drew near. But the people of Judah were not content to rely upon weaponry alone. What are men and horses, swords and spears (or bombs and missiles) without the hand of

[2] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:1 (February 22, 1967): 19. SNU Library.

[3] James Humphries. "Our Bags Remain Unpacked." *The Baptist Program* (June 1969): 5. Roberts Library SBTS.

[4] "Chaplain John Lindvall Ministers in War-torn Vietnam" *The Pentecostal Evangel* (July 1, 1962): 26. Archives FPHC.

God?"[5] The success of Israel – vis-à-vis America – in this apocalyptic battle was based upon its fidelity and supplication to God. The writer concluded, "So…may I ask a pertinent question? Has America been praying?"[6] If not viewed through an apocalyptic lens – as with the general concept of war – conservative evangelicals viewed the Vietnam War positively for it accomplished God's will. Laity looked at the war and took comfort that God was "using the allied forces to accomplish His eternal purpose."[7] In fact, by pursuing the war, America faithfully lived out Christ's directive to play the Good Samaritan: "Who is our neighbor? Are we our brother's keeper? Do we abide by the principle of the Golden Rule?" If so, then American should remain in Vietnam.[8] If this struggle was divinely mandated, the believer should have supreme confidence for God could "toss out a government today as quickly as He did in other years."[9]

Such attitudes encouraged public support for the war. In a larger setting, the annual meeting of California Baptists went on record and committed themselves and the nation to victory. Brethren in Colorado challenged notes of caution on Vietnam and demanded that "nothing should be done…to cause the least doubt, on the part of our men in Vietnam, as to our complete support of

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[5] Frank Funderburk. "Laws of Warfare." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (June 25, 1967): 12. Archives FPHC.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:38 (November 8, 1967): 13. SNU Library.

[8] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:1 (February 21, 1968): 13. SNU Library.

[9] "Church Setting Prayer Example." *The Christian Index*, no. 145:2 (January 13, 1966): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

their every effort" to secure victory in the war.[10] Likewise, attendees to the national Baptist in convention had the opportunity to "go on record as support[ive] in every way possible [to] efforts to win the war in Vietnam."[11]

The strong commitment to victory in the Vietnam War found expression in the way conservative evangelicals spoke of a potential peace. At the national level, one found repeated calls not for peace, but for a "just peace." The Christian Life Commission, arguably the most moderate arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, issued a call declaring their hope for peace in Vietnam. Yet the Convention as a whole amended this call with a declaration that emphasized such desires for peace did "not suggest the withdrawal of United States forces from Vietnam apart from an honorable and just peace."[12] So strong did a commitment to just peace, or peace predicated upon U.S. victory, exist that one witnessed repeated attempts to delete "a mandate to be peacemakers" – in the most basic sense – in subsequent calls for peace in Vietnam.[13] The peace envisioned – here a pragmatic category and not the ideological category discussed earlier – was not simply the beating of swords into plowshares. It sought tranquility based upon "an honorable solution" and a "just and durable" peace.[14] In essence, a peace predicated upon some level of American victory.

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[10] "Editorials Differ on Social Trends in SBC." *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:25 (June 21, 1967): 4. Roberts Library SBTS

[11] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1967.* Nashville: 1967: 69-70. Roberts Library SBTS.

[12] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1967.* Nashville: 1967: 71. Roberts Library SBTS.

[13] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1968.* Nashville: 1968: 80-81. Roberts Library SBTS.

Therefore, calls for peace and calls for continuation of warfare could co-exist. The Christian Life Commission could at the same time call for "peace" in Vietnam while affirming "a war effort strong enough to convince the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese that they [could] never win."[15]

Did the majority within these groups express any concern or upset over the fighting? Yes. Editorials chastised and asked readers, "Have you really agonized in prayer over the Vietnam war, in your homes and in your church?"[16] However, the anguish expressed focused not on the existence or suffering of war but on the course of the war. To parishioners troubled by Vietnam, a reader declared – in a quote of an Old Testament passage concerning Israel – "Our Lord has not promised us a victory until we humble ourselves, pray and seek His way, and turn from our evil ways."[17] Unlike mainline denominations, conservative denominations "anguished" over the absence of victory, not the war itself.

With such a strong support for concepts of war and the Vietnam War specifically, one can overlook the expression of moderate voices within this group. While an overwhelming minority, there still existed those within conservative evangelical circles that expressed some doubt. Primary among them were members of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist

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[14] *Ibid.*

[15] "Baptist Speaker Defends Limited War in Vietnam." *Baptist Standard*, no. 80:38 (September 18, 1968): 17. Roberts Library SBTS.

[16] "Editorials: Summer Swirling With News in the World of Religion." *The Christian Index*, no. 147:27 (July 4, 1968): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[17] "Letters to the Editor." *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:17 (April 26, 1967): 2. Roberts Library SBTS.

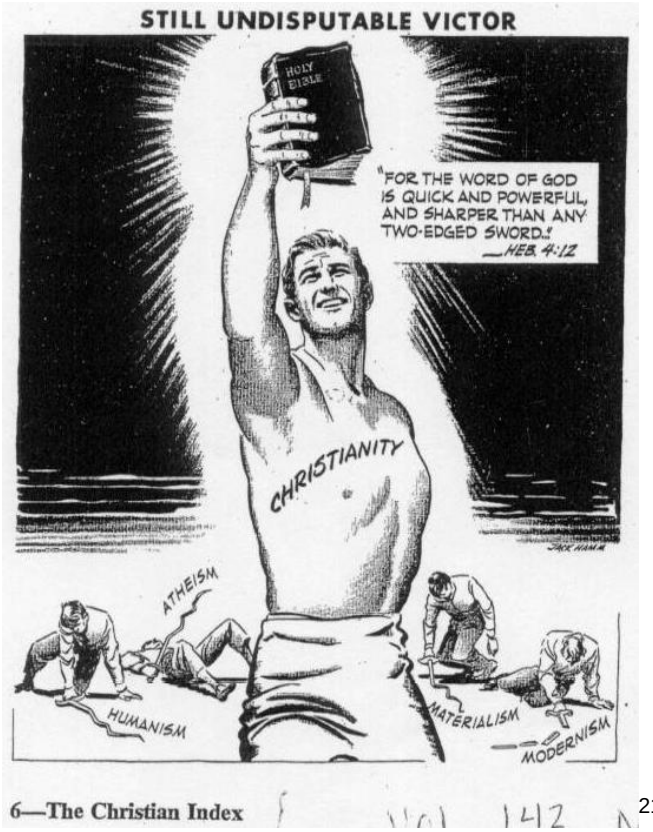
Convention. As early as the spring of 1967, the Christian Life Commission "encourage[d] the responsible leadership of [the] government to continue to pursue patiently every course that might lead to a peaceful settlement of international problems in general and of the Vietnam conflict in particular."[18] More resolutely, some Michigan Baptists called for "an early ceasefire and termination of all hostile activities."[19] However, these isolated voices of moderate critique floated in an ocean of conservative support for war. Furthermore, these minimal expressions of opposition went not themselves without critique. Editorials described critics of the war as not "qualified to say how the responsibility should be discharged. Perhaps church groups do well to leave it to those who are acquainted with the alternatives to make the decisions."[20]

However, the dominant response to Vietnam up to 1968 focused not on direct or explicit support of the war but rather a spiritualization of the war. To be sure, a spiritualization of problems and Vietnam existed not without precedent. In a general sense, conservatives tended to spiritualize many problems, not just the Vietnam War.

[18] "Statement on World Peace." *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:22 (May 31, 1967): 11. Roberts Library SBTS.

[19] "Speak on Race, Vietnam, Nixon." *The Christian Index*, no. 147:47 (November, 21, 1968): 8. Roberts Library SBTS.

[20] "National Council Speaks Inadvisedly." *Baptist Standard*, no. 77:13 (May 31, 1965): 5. Roberts Library SBTS.



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Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

In a message that affirmed the underlying conflict between Christianity / the Christian and the world at large, conservatives believed success came only by focusing on the exalted word of God. Christians alone were privy to an understanding of the nature of the world and the world's workings.

[21] Jack Hamm. "Still Undisputable Victor." *The Christian Index*, no. 142:2 (January 10, 1963): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.



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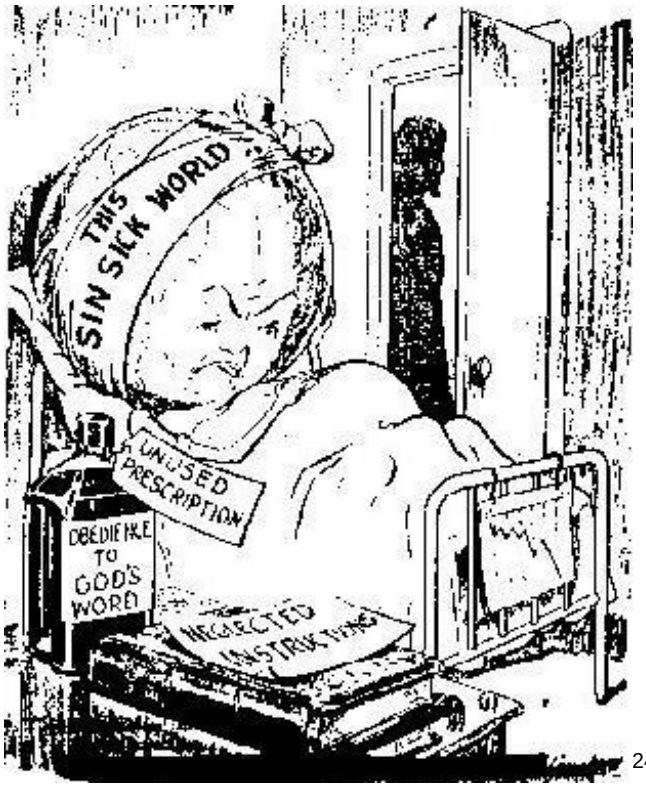
Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Conversely, they portrayed world leaders as amazingly ignorant of the ever present, spiritual solution to their problems. This spiritualization applied not only to general problems, but also to specific ones like communism.[23]

[22] Walt Crawford. "Can We Find a Man?" *The Advocate*, no. 47:32 (December 7, 1963): 3. Archives IPHC.

[23] Bradley Pope. "Communism in the Churches." *The Baptist Program* (August 1964): 12. Roberts Library SBTS.



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International Pentecostal Holiness Church Archives & Research Center, Bethany, Oklahoma.

Unfortunately, the world stood either ignorant or petulantly resistant to the truth and cure. With this spiritualization in mind, national governing bodies declared that the Church's main task was "to support and promote programs of world mission and evangelism" and thereby "effect definite solutions for all of [the] present problems."[25]

In this general spiritualization of problems, the minster played a key role, as depicted in political cartoons of the day.

[24] Walt Crawford. "Not the Doctor's Fault." *The Advocate*, no. 47:39 (February 1, 1964): 9. Archives IPHC.

[25] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1965.* Nashville, TN, 1965, 84. Roberts Library SBTS.



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Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Conservatives believed that, in a broken world, the man of God held the sole remedy and the declaration and efficacy of the Word of God served as the healing balm. In fact, "Jesus promised to cure the ills of the world" if only humanity turned to him.[27] Yes, "evil was loose in the world," but "God has the power over it."[28]

[26] Jack Hamm. "He Has the Healing Balm." *The Christian Index*, no. 144:40 (October 7, 1965): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[27] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:17 (June 12, 1968): 14. SNU Library.

[28] Lois Watts. "On the Control of Evil." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:28 (August 28, 1968): 7. SNU Library.

Any attempts to look outside the spiritual for a resolution met with disdain. To fix the world's problems required the "individuals and … nation" to "lift [their] eyes upwards, not outward."[29] Hence, the message of the church and the minister played a central role in solving the world's ills. The minister knew that "the gospel, rightly applied, [would] provoke all the social action needed to bring about the best society." Furthermore, "preaching must be to cure sin, *not its manifestations*."[30] Conservatives placed such emphasis upon spiritual solutions for physical problems that at times external solutions met with mockery. This cartoon, drawn by Doug Dillard illustrated this attitude. Dillard, who's work appears below and elsewhere worked for nearly 30 years for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. His editorial cartoons, which normally featured "Brother Blotz," primarily focused on the lighter side of church life.

[29] Lois Watts. "On the Control of Evil." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:28 (August 28, 1968): 7. SNU Library.

[30] "The Open meeting: Should a church be concerned about both evangelism and social action?" *The Baptist Program* (January 1969): 23. Roberts Library SBTS.



[31]
Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Hence, as a general rule, evangelicals surveyed the world's problems convinced that only spiritual solutions existed.

This general spiritualization of issues applied particularly to America. Repeatedly, conservative evangelicals portrayed America at a crossroads, attempting to determine which solution to take.

[31] Doug Dillard. "Easter, 1970." *Baptist Standard,* no. 82:12 (March 25, 1970): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.



WILL THIS ONE RETURN? [32]

International Pentecostal Holiness Church Archives & Research Center, Bethany, Oklahoma.

Convinced of America's uniqueness, conservative evangelicals held out hope that America would heed the lessons of others and the Scripture and yield to Christ and Christianity. At national meetings, Baptist leaders, after recounting a litany of problems facing the nation, including problems of race, social disorder, moral decay, and war, emphatically asked if Christians would "*get to the main task, the main business, of reaching people for Jesus Christ*?"[33] Likewise, Nazarenes declared that, for America, "the travail of [the] times flows deeper than poverty, racial tensions, delinquency, or the threat of war. It is part of the deep

[32] W.G.H. Crawford. "Will This One Return?" *The Advocate*, no. 46:44 (March 9, 1963): 9. Archives IPHC.

[33] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1965.* Nashville: 1965: 95. Roberts Library SBTS.

human predicament brought about by man's estrangement for God."[34] The problems faced by the nation were "only the symptoms" whose cure came only "through the personal presence of the Holy Spirit."[35]

Thus with a precedent to spiritualize the problems of life in general and American specifically, the war in Vietnam too witnessed spiritualization on multiple levels. In fact, spiritualization of the Vietnam War at times led to a mild critique of the United States itself.



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Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

[34] W.T. Purkiser. "The Travail of These Times." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 54:17 (June 16, 1965): 12. SNU Library.

[35] Leslie Parrott. "The Unhappy American." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:19 (June 26, 1968): 8. SNU Library.

[36] Jack Hamm. "The Peace Keepers." *The Christian Index*, no. 142:33 (August 15, 1963): 6. Roberts Library SBTS

As illustrated above, the struggle between Uncle Sam and his communist foe had its origins not in national interests but the failure of either side to save souls. However, and more common, one found portrayals of a spiritually aware America facing down an evil opponent. One writer described the "arrogant, Goliath like threats [that] boom[ed] across the airways from powerful Communist transmitters." As the U.S. searched for a solution, they played the role of "King Saul who searched desperately for an answer to Israel's dangerous predicaments." Yet to be sure, as always, "the battle [was] the Lords."[37] Repeatedly, church members and leaders saw in Vietnam not a geopolitical conflict but a spiritual one.



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[37] E.S. Caldwell. "The Battle is the Lord's." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (November 13, 1966): 20. Archives FHRC.

Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Such portrayals affirmed the reality of America's struggles but still seemed convinced of an ultimate victory, as soon as America had trod its Via De La Rosa[39].

Conservative evangelicals consistently refused to see the physical apart from the spiritual. Ultimately, they saw the Vietnam War as a spiritual problem with only a spiritual solution. Much of this impetus found origins in their view of Vietnam not as one war, but as two: a physical, worldly one and a superseding spiritual one. Repeatedly, authors stated, with no equivocation, that "two wars [were] being waged in Vietnam… : a material war against the communist forces and a spiritual war against satanic forces." Yet, while Americans fought the "two wars of Vietnam," they need not have been in "fear [of] the outcome of either war."[40] Such statements reveal not only a sense of assured victory, but also offered a conflation of communism with Satan. Hence, strong support of the Vietnam War need not depend upon geo-political commitments; the livelihood of religious organizations and satanic threats presented enough impetus. The two war perspective made Vietnam a new Crusade[41]. The spiritual struggle that was

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[38] Jack Hamm. **"**Unfamiliar (?) Part of an Endless (?) War." *The Christian Index*, no. 145:20 (May 19, 1966): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[39] The *Via De La Rosa* was a reference to the road of suffering Jesus endured after his arrest and which led to his eventual crucifixion; in between lay rounds of scourging and mocking.

[40] "The Two Wars of Vietnam." *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:26 (June 28, 1967): 24. Roberts Library SBTS.; Robert R. Way. "Christmas in Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (December 19, 1965): 5. Archives FPRC.

Vietnam – "Vietnam's second war" – was also "the Christian war."[42] Civilians who watched reports on the war look at the fighting and see that "a spiritual battle [was] going on even while men [were] trying to kill each other in a physical war."[43]This dualistic view of Vietnam itself, the comingling of terrestrial and celestial realms, was not simply a metaphor for evangelicals, but an actual belief.

This belief also had personal implications. For example, conservatives believed soldiers escaped death due to protective angels: "In a land of bullets, bombs, and the slinking Vietnam, God's angels are stationed also. And they cannot be touched by bullets or bombs! The incident at Di An testifie[d] to the presence of angels in Vietnam."[44] This Di An incident was a helicopter mission in which a soldier was meant to be on board but missed the flight. The helicopter subsequently crashed and two were consumed in the fiery wreck. The soldier's missing of the flight was seen as divine providence, the work of guardian angels. Although such statements may have been comforting to those who survived, they unconsciously created greater theological problems for the families of those who died.

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[41] During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church and Western civilization, reeling from the rapid gains of Muslim rulers called for the recapture holy city of Jerusalem. Those that fought did so with the church's blessing that they fought on behalf of God.

[42] Gainer E. Bryan Jr. "Missionary: Georgian Supports the Vietnam War." *The Christian Index*, no. 147:5 (February 1, 1968): 11. Roberts Library SBTS.

[43] James Humphries. "Our Bags Remain Unpacked." *The Baptist Program* (June 1969): 5. Roberts Library SBTS.

[44] Richard H. Leffel. "Angels in Vietnam." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:37 (November 2, 1966): 8. SNU Library.

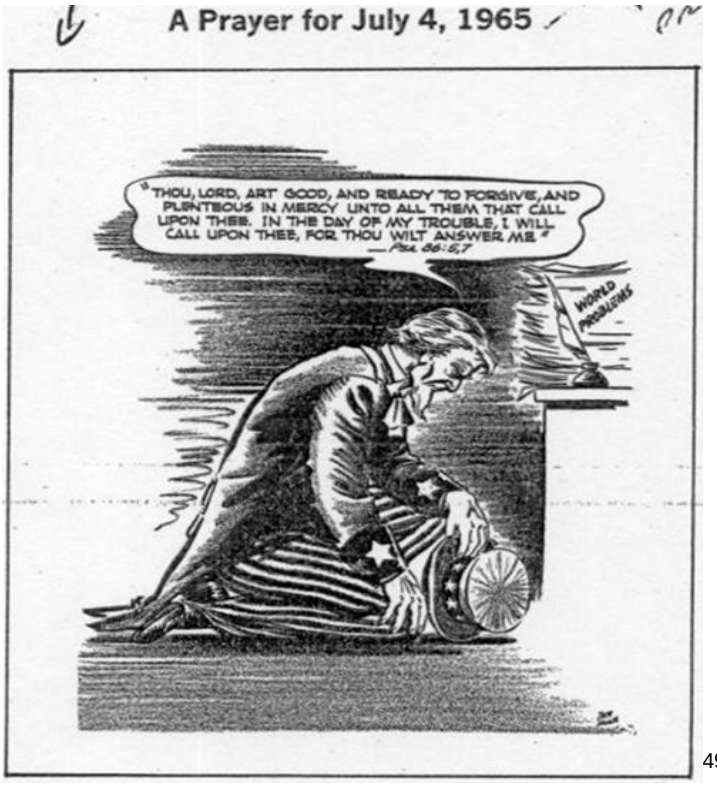
With such spiritualization came the conviction that one found success and victory *only* in prayer. When faced with a question concerning why the fighting began and asked when it would end, one writer, with one eye on Vietnam, declared that one could not point to the "law, the government's foreign policy, or anything else of that source." Obviously, these were physical solutions to the spiritual problems of hearts "poisoned with the venom of sin."[45] Letters to the editor remained convinced that it was possible to "both stop [the] armed conflict and preserve the freedom in Viet Nam" if America were able to send a "cloud of prayers ascending toward heaven."[46] Faced with the unacceptable options of either nuclear war or loss via withdrawal and surrender, one editor maintained that if "every praying man or woman in [the country] were to spend five minutes a day" in prayer, "the results would be staggering."[47] The success of prayer applied not only to military victory but also other attendant issues, like prisoners of war, which were not part of the argument over Vietnam War proper but rather, were birthed by it.[48]

[45] Lewis Pringle. "From Whence Come Wars." *The Advocate*, no. 49:19 (September 11, 1965): 4. Archives IPHC.

[46] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 54:50 (February 2, 1966): 13. SNU Library.

[47] W.T. Purkiser. "Dilemma in Vietnam." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:14 (May 25, 1966): 10. SNU Library.

[48] "Letters to the Editor." *Baptist Standard*, no. 83:4 (January 27, 1971): 2. Roberts Library SBTS.



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Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

This message found communication both verbally and pictorially. Faced with staggering issues, a plaintive and penitent America could turn only to God in prayer for resolution.

While the attention thus far has focused upon war and peace, with the Vietnam War as a specific focus, a significant amount of the discussion of the war among conservative evangelicals during this early period focused upon attendant issues as well. The use of military language outside of the areas of war guided and informed the discussion of these issues. One did not find such similar creep of military language among either mainline denominations or African American denominations. To use language in this way both heightened

[49] "Editorials: Summer Swirling With News in the World of Religion." *The Christian Index,* no. 147:27 (July 4, 1968): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

the spiritual and diminished the physical. For example, Christian education material equated "struggles with the forces of evil" with the fight against communists in Asia.[50] Writers declared that "not all the brave soldiers in the battle of the Lord are out at the front."[51] These "others" referred to those who served in paid ministry. Articles on the "Laws of Warfare" talked of Jesus as the "Supreme Command," of fighting with "the right kind of weapons" and called Christians to "take the offensive" to talk of the Christian life, while at the same time appearing to desensitize one to actual battles.[52] In fact, the more an editor read "of this horrible war," the more likely he was to "see a reflection of the spiritual war." Military language was further used to describe this spiritual war as one in which the Christian faced "action," confronted "booby traps" and "snipers," and "camouflaged emplacements."[53] Furthermore, leaders equated Christ's crucifixion with "victory at the place of defeat."[54] Even the failures of Christian discipleship found description in military terms. Wrote one author, "Military forces around the world have sharply reduced fatalities among their wounded by quicker

[50] Charles Granade. "Pressures From Without." *The Christian Index*, no. 144:34 (August 26, 1965): 22. Roberts Library SBTS.

[51] Mary E. Cove. "Unseen Warriors." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 42:17 (June 17, 1964): 8. SNU Library.

[52] Robert R. Way. "The Other War." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (June 25, 1967): 8. Archives FPRC.

[53] Clifford Chew Jr. "Where is the Front Line?" *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:32 (September 25, 1968): 6. SNU Library.

[54] James D. Hamilton. "Victory at the Place of Defeat." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 58:22 (May 28, 1969): 7. SNU Library.

medical attention. But the Church does not seem to have learned the lesson."[55] The article proceeded to provide suggestions for the care of the spiritually wounded in the parish. This transference of military terminology into more innocuous, non-military realms and its use in more familiar, easily-handled areas served to disarm the very verbiage of the Vietnam War. Familiarity breeds contempt, but in this instance, it also bred ease and complacency.

The soldier's spirituality served as a point of frequent discussion and key difference among conservative evangelicals. Baptist and Nazarene writers saw in soldiers a positive spirituality. When speaking to their laity, they described soldiers as preeminently concerned with their spiritual state: "I thank the Lord that as soon as the American soldiers helped get that hill secured they put up a chapel up there and began meeting every week to worship God."[56] Another visitor to Vietnam found that "war does not stop for God, but soldiers do."[57] Soldiers were described as so reverent of the chaplain that they seized him as soon as he stepped off the helicopter for what his presence "symbolized – the presence of God."[58] Likewise, a Nazarene missionary described a "red-haired boy…so hungry for God that he insisted on talking to the chaplain immediately,

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[55] W.T. Purkiser. "Editorially Speaking: Caring for the Wounded." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 59:15 (April 15, 1970): 10. SNU Library.

[56] L.H. "Worshipping in Viet Nam Proves no to be a 'matter of habit.'" *Baptist Standard*, no. 78:37 (September 14, 1966): 23. Roberts Library SBTS.

[57] Al Morgan. "Soldiers Pause – War Doesn't." *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:40 (October 4, 1967): 21. Roberts Library SBTS.

[58] Jack E. Coward. "A Night to Remember" *The Baptist Program* (February 1969): 10. Roberts Library SBTS

not noticing the bullets from V.C. guns stirring the dust around them."[59] This portrayal of soldier spirituality found emphatic declaration in the only cover photograph of the Vietnam War in *The Christian Index*.



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Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

So sure were church members of the noble spiritual state of soldiers that they attributed any moral failings of soldiers not to the soldier himself but to the failure

[59] Millard Reed. "Wounded GI's Are Difficult to Help." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:9 (April 19, 1967): 18. SNU Library.

[60] *The Christian Index* November 28, 1968 147:48 Pg 1. Roberts Library SBTS.

of support by churches and fellow laymen: “Any lack of concern for spiritual experience by servicemen, is traceable to their families and even to their own local churches,” not to the soldier himself.[61] Soldiers’ faith expressed itself in works too. Authors lauded the soldiers’ attendance at Sunday school.[62] Reports of missionary activities praised not only the number of soldiers openly “professing Christ as Savior,” but also the number “surrendering to full time Christian service.”[63]

The Vietnam War was also good for Baptists and Nazarenes because it provided an opportunity for the spiritual maturing of soldiers. As one chaplain reported, Vietnam gave the Gospel efficacy: “I have a respectful audience every time I’m here and early all of them come. It seems to me the Lord is better able to reach men here where He can get their attention than back in the busy world were so many other voices are calling them.”[64] Baptist soldiers echoed this maturing effect of the war. One young Baptist soldier who lost both legs and an arm in Vietnam expressed no bitterness but thankfulness. He saw in Vietnam a test of his faith. He stated, “As a Christian, I always wondered when the chips are down, will I be able to hack it? Well…I don’t need to worry anymore. I CAN

[61] John Hurt. “From Your Church?” *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:50 (December 13, 1967): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[62] Millard Reed. “Wounded GI’s Are Difficult to Help.” *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:9 (April 19, 1967): 18. SNU Library.

[63] James Humphries. “Our Bags Remain Unpacked.” *The Baptist Program* (June 1969): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[64] Frank Ellis. “A Visit to South Vietnam.” *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 59:26 (July 1, 1970): 13. SNU Library.

hack it. My faith stood the test."[65] In Vietnam, writers repeatedly described soldiers as gaining certainty of their faith: "If there was any doubt in Jack's mind before, there is none now that he belongs to God and that his life is not his own, but God's"[66] While one might be tempted to summarily dismiss such descriptions as vain imaginations, but be sure that the same horror that produced My Lai could also stir a religious deepening.[67] Where would Protestants be without Martin Luther's journey in a storm? As with the concepts of war and peace, and as with the use of military language, surveying a positive spirituality that emanated from Vietnam at least eased discomfort and at most empowered continuation.

Yet conservative evangelicals did not present a united front on soldier's spirituality. In a very sharp break, the Assemblies of God emphasized soldiers in Vietnam as in dire need of spiritual development. Repeatedly, America's youth in Vietnam found description as an agnostic and hedonistic horde. Wrote one soldier, "My spiritual status has been greatly jeopardized. It is difficult just to stay alive here. The only other Christian I know…was killed."[68] Soldier poets from this denomination wrote:

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[65] Ray Moore. "Faith Survives Vietnam Injuries." *The Christian Index*, no. 146:35 (August 29, 1968): 7. Roberts Library SBTS.

[66] "Serviceman Experiences God's Protection in Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (July 17, 1966): 17. Archives FPRC.

[67] My Lai was the most recognized, but not the only, massacre of the Vietnam War caused by American forces.

[68] Robert R. Way. "Our Mission to the Military." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (September 26, 1965): 7. Archives FPRC.

Down in the Viet swamp,
Far from our friends,
The flash of a rifle
-another life ends.
Fever and ague wrack body and soul,
Life is torture in this dismal hole….
Doing our utmost for God and the right."[69]

Repeatedly, especially from the pen of Assemblies of God soldiers, writers declared that "hardly anyone is a Christian here, and it's hard to find anyone to talk to about spiritual things."[70] In religious isolation, the Assemblies of God also described those Christian soldiers that existed as spiritually weak. George stood out in this crowd: "George was different. Some of the marines professed Christianity, but George lived it."[71] Because of the battle conditions and the life of war, these young soldiers were in "special need of divine help" so that they could keep their faith."[72] Vietnam was also a pace of sin incarnate. A life of reckless sin and drug use was seen as normal for soldiers.[73] Facing spiritual malaise, denominational officials celebrated the ability of their religious broadcasts to reach Christian soldiers who faced "long months away from home, times of loneliness, continual discouragement. In times of crisis, men's hearts look to God for assurance and strength"; they believed their radio broadcasts

[69] "In South Vietnam: 1965." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (September 26, 1965): 7. SNU Library.

[70] Ron Rowden. "Christmas Letter From Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (December 1, 1966): 20. Archives FPRC.

[71] "A Miraculous Message in Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (July 20, 1969): 3. Archives FPRC.

[72] "Chaplains Serve in Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (February 27, 1966): 23. Archives FPRC.

[73] Steve Driggers. "I Kicked Drugs in Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel,* (June 27, 1971): 11. Archives FPRC.

provided “that spiritual lift.”[74] However, in such places, glimmers of hope did exist. As one soldier wrote, “It took war…people dying in my arms while the bombs burst in the air…to bring me to Christ.”[75] Another, in spiritual isolation, also described his momentary joy: “One friend of mine got saved just before he left for home. This made me real happy.”[76] However, these accounts served as exceptions. The Assemblies of God – perhaps because of their long running tension with society at large – painted a much bleaker picture. For them, the soldier did need conversion; he neither sought the church nor faith readily.

The soldier aside, conservative evangelicals as a whole viewed the military positively because of the opportunity it afforded. The army served as an evangelistic adjunct of the church. Entering the war, as recorded by R.O. Corvin, the Pentecostal Holiness Church’s Committee on Chaplains recognized “the abundant opportunity the military afford[ed] to acquaint people from all walks of life and from all section of [the] nation, as well as foreign nations, with the Pentecostal Holiness Church.”[77] R.O. Corvin was a long time educator in the Pentecostal and Holiness movements and led those efforts within the Pentecostal-Holiness Church. He founded Southwestern Bible College and was

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[74] “Revivaltime Now Heard in Vietnam.” *The Pentexostal Evangel* (April 10, 1966): 25. Archives FPRC.

[75] Dorsey Short. “He Found Christ in Vietnam.” *The Pentecostal Evangel* (January 19, 1969): 6. Archives FPRC.

[76] “Thanks for Remembering Vietnam.” *The Pentecostal Evangel* (November 26, 1967): 14. Archives FPRC.

[77] R.O. Corvin. *Minutes of the Fourteenth General Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church*. Richmond: 1961: 69. Archives IPHC.

selected by Oral Roberts to lead the school of theology at Oral Roberts University. Baptists too lauded the evangelistic opportunity afforded by the army; "something else [was] happening in Saigon," something besides and more important than the fighting. This something, this evangelism, meant Vietnam and the army served a positive role. Because the military audience was also a captive audience, chaplains encouraged church members to "take up the work in promoting the magnificent possession, the Lord Jesus Christ, among the thousands of excellent young men who serve in the military."[78]

In this context, conservative evangelicals looked upon soldiers as evangelists to their fellow soldiers. The Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal Holiness Church emphasized this theme. The bishop of the Pentecostal Holiness Church pleaded with his church members to join chaplaincy so they could in turn train soldiers to convert fellow soldiers.[79] In fact, the Pentecostal Holiness Church would come to place such an emphasis upon the evangelist soldier that they created a special commissioning service for those entering the military so that the "witness to the indwelling of Christ [would] draw others to the Savior."[80] The Assemblies of God wrote of soldiers, who, "more than anything else…want[ed] to share Christ with their comrades."[81] In fact – in keeping with

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[78] R.O. Corvin. *Minutes of the Fifteenth General Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.* Greensboro: 1966: 39. Archives IPHC.

[79] J.A. Synan. "The Urgent Need For Chaplains." *The Advocate*, no. 49:36 (April 30, 1966): 8. Archives IPHC.

[80] Bane T. Underwood. "A Commissioning Service For Military Inductees." *The Advocate*, no. 52:1 (February 14, 1968): 10. Archives IPHC.

the Assemblies of God's theology affirming the "speaking in tongues" – the ability and responsibility of the soldier to evangelize went into the supernatural realm. One Pentecostal soldier discussed his ability to speak to an injured soldier: "George could only say a few words – 'John you need God.' *But he said them in the Navajo language*…it was the Holy Spirit who cause[d] George to speak to John in a language he had never learned."[82] Wives would write letters of thanks for their wayward husbands impacted by soldier evangelists: "Oh thank you, dear Savior! My husband in on his way to a gospel service instead of a bar."[83] In fact, a soldier could even be an evangelist in death. A parent wrote to tell how the death of a soldier in Vietnam had the ultimate reward in helping lead his father to salvation.[84] This emphasis upon soldier evangelists made victory unavoidable and the suffering and loss in Vietnam acceptable: "How long before the last American is home? No one really knows. Hopes for a clear-cut military victory are gone. But quiet victories of another kind" – salvations – "are being won week after week."[85]

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[81] "Thanks for Remembering Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (November 26, 1967): 14. Archives FPRC.

[82] "A Miraculous Message in Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (July 20, 1969): 3. Archives IPRC.

[83] E.S. Caldwell. "Another Kind of Victory in Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (January 25, 1970): 12. Archives FPRC.

[84] "Pen Points: Tragedy in Vietnam." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 59:47 (November 25, 1970): 5. SNU Library.

[85] E.S. Caldwell. "Another Kind of Victory in Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (January 25, 1970): 12. Archives FPRC.

Conversely, Baptists and Nazarenes did not echo this theme. At first review, one might expect one of the most evangelistic of denominations to emphasize this theme among its soldiers. But perhaps their positive portrayal of soldiers meant that they did not need to emphasize evangelism, or perhaps the degree of social distance among the Assemblies of God and Pentecostal Holiness denominations also encouraged such an emphasis upon evangelism; an implicitly negative critique. These denominations strongly emphasized separation from the world at large. Therefore, all not "holiness" was evil and in need of redemption. An example of this thinking found expression in religious self-identification. As one church leader visited soldiers in Vietnam, he commented that one of the things he noticed as he examined soldiers' dog tags was "that in the space usually marked 'Catholic,' or 'Protestant,' or 'Jewish,' our young men had asked to have stamped 'Assemblies of God.' They want to be identified as full-gospel believers."[86]

Outside of evangelism, conservative evangelicals – as a whole – viewed soldiers as traditional missionaries. One church took pride in knowing "this little church…had sent a missionary to what happened to be the most troubled spot in the all the world."[87] Next to an image of the Gospel of John in Vietnamese, churches would declare that "while stationed in foreign lands our servicemen

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[86] Ron Rowden. "Reaching Vietnam Battlefields." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (June 26, 1966): 27, Archives FPRC. The term "full gospel" is one that served as a line of religious demarcation and theological critique / elitism. The failure of other denominations to affirm speaking in tongues meant that they denied part of the Gospel.

[87] Lanny Curry. "Two Sergeants in Saigon." *Baptist Standard,* no. 77:12 (March 24, 1965): 5. Roberts Library SBTS.

have opportunities to evangelize."[88] The "task" of the soldier , therefore, was not to fight or defend, but rather to "[show the] citizens of Vietnam the love and care [the] Savior gives; and instilling within them the fear of … God."[89] Thus, in the spiritual realm of the Vietnam War, the soldier was considered a "layman missionary."[90] Civilians declared this role but soldiers embraced it as well. One soldier stated, "Besides fighting for my country, I know the Lord has sent me to Vietnam to witness to others. I consider this my mission field and I want to carry on the work of the Lord."[91]

Beyond the strictly religious roles soldiers filled, conservative evangelicals also described soldiers as filling public roles. To them, solders served as agents of benevolence. Denominational chaplains reported that the greatest joy of serving in Vietnam was the "real thrill to see the Marines filled with compassion for [the] people and doing all they [could] to make their lives better."[92] Soldiers repeatedly served as a paradigm of giving to those in need.[93] Southern Baptist leaders would praise soldier's action by declaring…

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[88] Robert R. Way. "Christmas in Vietnam." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (December 19, 1965): 5 Archives FPRC.

[89] James Clayton. "A Prayer From Vietnam." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:34 (October 12, 1966): 7, SNU Library. "Fear of God" is a reference to the book of Proverbs and means recognizing who God is and who we are in relationship to Him. It was the starting point of godly wisdom. Of course, one can not help but notice the unintended double meaning of this phrase in that context.

[90] "The Two Wars of Vietnam." *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:26 (June 28, 1967): 24. Roberts Library SBTS.

[91] Robert R. Way. "The Other War." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (June 25, 1967): 8. Archives FPRC.

[92] "Our Reader's Write." *The Christian Index*, no. 147:3 (January 18, 1968): 8.

> "The road our servicemen are blazing in Vietnam today is paved with new hospitals, new orphanages, new homes – all built by our American servicemen. For any house they are accused of destroying, they have built hundreds. For any innocent they are accused of taking, they have saved others a thousand times over."[94]

Note, the negative was supposed but the positive assured. Church members repeatedly gave thanks to God for soldiers and "their compassion for the suffering people whose future they [sought] to enhance."[95] These soldiers served as public servants who resisted "destructive forces of invasion" so that law and order [was] obtain[ed]" and chaos held at bay.[96] Churchmen felt good about not only what soldiers did for the souls of others, but also for their lives as well.

With such a positive estimation of both military service and the role the individual soldier played, it comes as no surprise that conservative evangelicals emphasized supporting soldiers; at stake lay not just morale but also the spiritual well being of soldiers. An article detailing the plans of two soldiers in Vietnam told of one who intended to go "out on the town and pull out all the stops." Contrastingly, the other planned to visit a local church, the library, and enjoy "a thick steak and a malted milk." The writer attributed these puerile and

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[93] "Chaplain John Lindvall Ministers in War-torn Vietnam" *The Pentecostal Evangel* (July 1, 1962): 26. Archives FPRC.

[94] "Vietnam Forces Build Faster than Destroy, SBC Leader Says." *Baptist Standard*, no. 82:32 (June 12, 1970): 19. Roberts Library SBTS.

[95] "Thanksgiving Prayer For Servicemen in Vietnam." *The Christian Index*, no. 147:48 (November 28, 1968): 1. Roberts Library SBTS.

[96] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1967.* Nashville: 1967, 3, 69-71, 293-294. Roberts Library SBTS.; Karl A. Olsson. "A War Above Reproach?" *The Baptist Program* (July 1968): 10.

wholesome responses to their churches. Both men "had attended with more or less regularity before induction" to the service. However, the difference lay in the activity of the home church in staying connected to the soldier.[97] Furthermore, in exploring the unique temptations faced by a soldier and the difficulty of maintaining their faith overseas, any lack of "concern for spiritual experience by servicemen" could be "trace[d] to their families and even to their own local churches."[98] Again, the church had failed, not the soldier.

The faithful congregation supported their soldiers in prayer and deed. Jack Hamm, prolific drawer with a substantial career drawing for comics and major publications and in the church primarily focused on illustrating theological and biblical themes, illustrated this idea well.

[97] Willis A. Brown. "Spiritually Prepared for Military Service?" *The Baptist Program* (January 1966): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[98] John Hurt. "From Your Church?" *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:50 (December 13, 1967): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.



[99]
Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

The soldier walked alone in the jungles of a foreign land. The only connection to home was letters not from family but from fellow church members. The idea of the responsibility of the congregation found poignant expression in pictorial form.

[99] Jack Hamm. "A Line that Means A Lot to Him." *Baptist Standard*, no. 78:45 (November 9, 1966): 6. Roberts Library SBTS



[100]

Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Likewise, the soldier, a child-like figure, waited patiently with hand outstretched for tangible support from their churches. In these cases, repeatedly the soldier was not a man but a boy. As these cartoons illustrated, the church again was asked if they would remember their "boy."

[100] "That's All Soldier." *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:50 (December 13, 1967): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.



[101]

Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Repeatedly, writers chastised fellow church members for failing to remember soldiers in Vietnam: "We have precious little evidence that their churches here at home are concerned. We don't see the widespread interest in the boys over there that was evident in World Wars I and II and the Korean conflict."[102] Letters to the editor castigated those who did not support America's troops in prayer and deed as a Christian "who hadn't and wasn't doing his duty and was hunting an

[101] "Does a Boy Wonder Over There?" *Baptist Standard*, no. 80:14 (March 27, 1968): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[102] "Remember Men in Vietnam War." *The Christian Index*, no. 147:42 (October 17, 1968): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

excuse."[103] Failure to support meant that the soldiers would "return bitter and disillusioned" because their home churches failed to write. Churches speculated, "It is tragic to think of what this may do to his future – and ours."[104] Thus, denominations felt it incumbent to create new organizations and structures to make their parishioners in the service "feel that the general headquarters [was] interested in them."[105] To that end, the Pentecostal Holiness Church created an office that joined the efforts of the General Youth Department with the Chaplain Commission. It hoped this effort would assist in the ministry to its members in military service and provide a platform for evangelism. Likewise, the Nazarene church approved funds and the creation of new organization to minister to military personnel at bases.[106]

While the discussion of soldiers represented the single most important adjunct issue of the war, other, lesser items did garner attention. Among them, evangelicals focused upon protests and protestors. To be sure, some conservative evangelicals expressed general opposition to the Vietnam War. However, authors declared without reservation that "burning draft cards and participating in peace marches [were] not the answers."[107] The Christian had "no

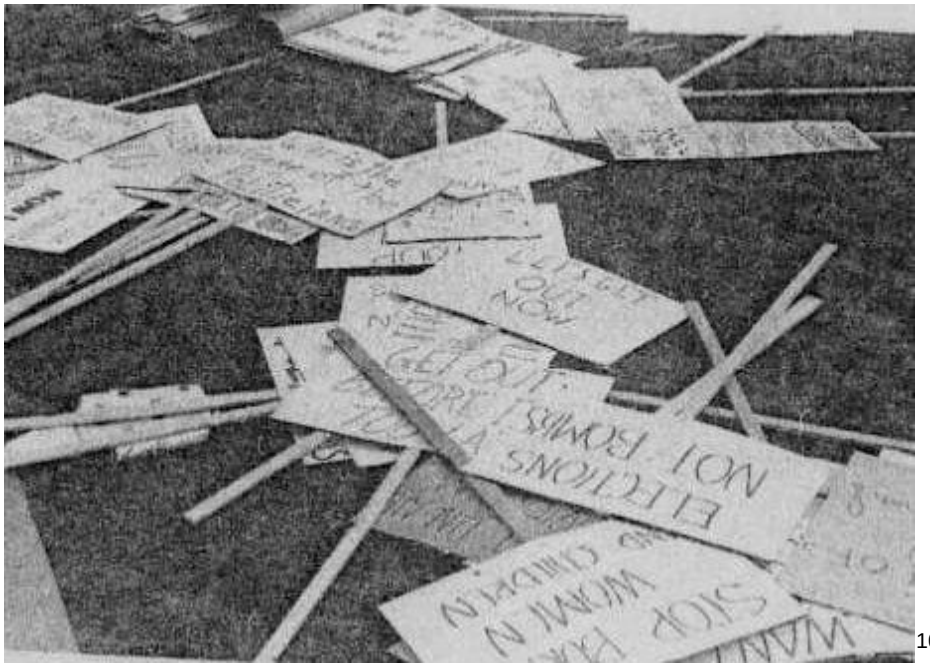
[103] "Letters to the Editor." *Baptist Standard*, no. 82:19 (May 13, 1970): 3. Roberts Library SBTS.

[104] John T. Hurt. "The Forgotten in Vietnam." *Baptist Standard*, no. 80:14 (March 27, 1968): 6. Roberts Library SBTS.

[105] R.O. Corvin. *Minutes of the Fifteenth General Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.* Greensboro: 1966: 27. Archives IPHC.

[106] *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1972: 84. SNU Library.

place demonstrating on the streets or passing resolutions to elaborate the obvious." Instead, their "place" was in prayer.[108] Writers warned that participation in group activities such as protests or demonstrations were solely destructive. The accompanying picture illustrated that protests against Vietnam served as the point of reference.

[109]

Specifically, conservative evangelicals' opposition to protests against the Vietnam War revolved around two tenets. First, participation in protests denied Christian obligations to government. For example, one reader of the Herald of Holiness asked rhetorically in light of the protests and opposition to the

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[107] George E. Worrell. "The Christian's Attitude Toward War and Peace." *Baptists Standard*, no. 78:21 (May 25, 1966): 7. Roberts Library SBTS.

[108] W.T. Purkiser. "Dilemma in Vietnam." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:14 (May 25, 1966): 10. SNU Library.

[109] Millard Reed. "Wounded GI's Are Difficult to Help." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:9 (April 19, 1967): 18. SNU Library.

government if the government deserved greater support as a Christian requirement. Editors strongly agreed and maintained that even if one disagreed internally, one could not in good Christian conscience externally protest against the government. One had an obligation to support the government and pray for it daily, not "tear it down."[110] Protests found rejection out of hand since they were predicated upon criticism of government officials. Evangelicals found support for this through the Bible: "Scriptures plainly teach respect and honor for government officials, referring to them at times as ministers of God."[111] Second, protests were not considered an acceptable Christian ethic. Baptists declared that Christians could and should participate in politics. However, after declaring that "Christians could participate in political action," the only acceptable actions listed were participation in elections. Protests were not a possibility. Likewise, in speaking specifically to ministers, the Pentecostal Holiness Church's Committee on Christian Morals passed a resolution that "ministers of [the] church [must] refrain from associating themselves with or becoming party to any kind of demonstration or public display."[112] The high point of individual restrain came when writers asked believers to consider the implications of their decision:

> Before I take the picket line, before I sign a petition, before I participate in a demonstration…I must ask whether my doing so points to Christ and His forgiveness and love. Or am I really helping people focus even more attention on material

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[110] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:3 (March 9, 1966): 19. SNU Library.

[111] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1970.* Nashville: 1970: 71. Roberts Library SBTS.

[112] R.O. Corvin. *Minutes of the Fifteenth General Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.* Greensboro: 1966: 85. Archives IPHC.

> comforts, earthly, fleshly welfare, and the good opinions of sinful men?[113]

Hence, writers implied that protestors showed more concern for the sinful, temporal world than the eternal. Such statements that painted protests as the devil's work served both as a critique of protestors and a means of dissuading them and any potential protestors.

Opposition to civil disobedience accompanied opposition to protests during the early war period. At the denominational level, leadership rejected the concept. The Pentecostal Holiness Church declared its strong rejection to the concept.[114] Stronger yet, the Southern Baptist General Convention specifically targeted social critics who encouraged civil disobedience. The Convention encouraged local community leaders – pastors – to "refrain from encouraging others to disobey laws with which they are not in agreement but to seek redress of their grievances through proper legal procedures." That is, to use the courts. Lastly, the Nazarene church condemned the "nonchalant attitudes towards authority in the home and the flagrant disregard for civil law and order that had overflowed the borders of the church."[115]

While some might reject civil disobedience solely on pragmatic grounds and the needs of the military, conservative evangelicals primarily rejected civil

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[113] Paul Merritt Bassett. "Proper Principles and Social Action: Strange Bedfellows." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:45 (January 3, 1968): 3. SNU Library.

[114] "NAE Executive Committee Adopts Resolution Relative to Viet Nam." *The Advocate*, no. 49:31 (February 19, 1966): 2. Archives IPHC.

[115] Eva Cummings. "Sanctified Activists." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 58:11 (May 12, 1969): 5. SNU Library.

disobedience as sinful and a resistance not only of government officials but of God.[116] Writers declared it a "mutiny against the law and sovereign God…bitter fruit of a deeper rebellion."[117] Inquiries of readers who sought to reconcile the Biblical stories of Daniel – as a youth Daniel publicly challenged King Nebuchadnezzar's decree to not worship God – with the prescription of Apostle Paul in Romans to submit to governments brought a clear siding with Paul and implicit denial of Daniel.[118] Christians were obligated to obey the government on three grounds: government was a divine institution, God had ordained government to encourage good and challenge evil, our conscience required submission. The only allowance for disobedience was "should Caesar claim divine honors;" that is if the leader of a people tried to take the place of God. [119] Thus, editors constricted the field of valid disobedience nearly to the point of irrelevance. In short, leaders and parishioners, from their perspectives, saw civil disobedience and Scripture in tension. Given this tension, no one would publicly challenge the man of God.

Even the overwhelmingly small number of voices supposedly supporting the concept of civil disobedience seemed to reject it. Rather than explicitly

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[116] "The Open Meeting: Should ministers be given draft deferment? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (June 1967): 19. Roberts Library SBTS.

[117] W.T. Purkiser. "Moral Revolution or Moral Mutiny?" *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 54:9 (April 21, 1965): 12. SNU Library.

[118] Daniel and his friends, taken captive by the Babylonians after the fall of Israel, were transported back to Babylon to serve in the king's court. The first seven chapters of Daniel is filled with stories of disobedience to the kings decrees based upon a higher commitment to the calls of God.

[119] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:45 (December 28, 1966): 19. SNU Library.

support it, writers like T.B. Maston declared that "we cannot deny the right of nonviolent civil disobedience."[120] Maston was no dogmatic conservative. A long time professor of ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, he helped establish the SBC Christian Life Commission and attempted to lead the denomination in the areas of desegregation and civil rights. Furthermore, "supporters" of the general idea of civil disobedience – principally not pragmatically – declared that one "must conclude that much contemporary civil disobedience" was "based primarily on the motive and spirit of disobedience."[121]

In this research, much of the commentary on civil disobedience and protest operated in two contexts. Attitudes on civil rights in the recent past and protest of Vietnam in the present and immediate future both informed the discussion. As other works have made clear, there appear to be some corollary between attitudes on civil rights and attitudes on Vietnam; this work will severely challenge that assumption as it applies to African-American denominations. However, for conservative evangelicals speaking about civil disobedience and protests, it appears that dual contexts informed the attitudes of denominational meetings, writers, and parishioners

Draft deferment for ministers appeared as another attendant issue. The exploration of conscientious objection – strongly related to the issue of draft deferment for ministers – primarily took place after 1968 for conservative

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[120] T. B. Maston. "Problems of the Christian Life: Bible and Civil Disobedience." *Baptist Standard*, no. 81:45 (November 5, 1969): 19. Roberts Library SBTS.

[121] *Ibid*.

evangelicals and is found in the succeeding chapter. However, in the early war period, conservative evangelicals did explore the issue of draft deferment as it applied to ministers. As early as 1967, Baptist periodicals inquired of its clergy and parishioners if ministers should be given draft deferments.[122] In mainline churches, opposition to such deferments focused, primarily, on forcing clergy to face the same difficult choices their parishioners faced. However, in conservative evangelical denominations, opposition largely centered around a rejection of egalitarianism. The Christian Index, a seminal Baptist publication, reported favorably on a Baptist student preparing to enter seminary who turned down his ministerial student exemption, stating, "No, it is my duty and I shall offer myself without reservation."[123] Implicit in such statements exist a critique of those ministers who accepted a deferment as shirking responsibilities. Other writers declared that "Baptists [should] have no special limbo for the pastor…rather all [should] meet Christ on the same common level in [a] democratic concept of the body of Christ."[124] Could one, therefore, accept such deferments? "If one believes in a double-standard, Yes. Otherwise, No!"[125] Repeatedly, this affirmation of egalitarianism seemed a not so subtle critique of mainline churches and their organizational structures.

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[122] "The Open Meeting: Should ministers be given draft deferment? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (June 1967): 19. Roberts Library SBTS.

[123] Louie D. Newton. "This Changing World." *The Christian Index,* no. 144:32 (August 12, 1965): 9. Roberts Library SBTS.

[124] "The Open Meeting: Should ministers be given draft deferment? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (June 1967): 19. Roberts Library SBTS.

[125] "The Open Meeting: Should ministers be given draft deferment? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (June 1967): 19. Roberts Library SBTS.

If conservative evangelicals subtly challenged mainline churches over the issue of draft deferment for ministers, they openly differed with them on the issues of social action and political involvement. Mainline denominations largely debated the *degree* and nature of social action and political involvement by churches. Even conservative reactionaries within mainline denominations did not so much reject the concepts as much as they emphasized the primacy of evangelism. Not so with conservative evangelicals. They point blank challenged the validity of social action on the part of the church.

First and foremost, they saw no model in Christ and the early church for such involvement. One writer noted,

> "Jesus refused to be drawn into [a] family fuss. In social issues Jesus never sided with one group of sinners against another. He preached the gospel to both groups. This was the longer way, but it was effective. He was content to wait patiently for the gospel to do its work in both men and society."[126]

Others surveying the life of Christ saw "nothing in the ministry of [the] Lord but an overwhelming emphasis on dealing with the individual and his relationship with God while almost ignoring social issues of the day."[127] Similarly, denominational committees charged with *leading* the church on social issues warned of "those on the left who would turn the church into an agency of political pressure for radical restructuring of society while ignoring the supernatural dimension of God's saving

[126] Herschel H. Hobbs. "Jesus and Social Actions." *Baptist Standard*, no. 80:43 (October 23, 1968): 16. Roberts Library SBTS.

[127] "The Open meeting: Should a church be concerned about both evangelism and social action?" *The Baptist Program* (January 1969): 23. Roberts Library SBTS.

grace in Jesus Christ as it changes individuals."[128] If one found a model in Christ, one found that model reaffirmed in the early church. A Nazarene church member, borrowing the declarations of the Apostles as they created the office of the deacon and applying it as Scriptural proof of the illegitimacy of social action, stated that "it is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."[129] In public forums, Baptists echoed this perspective of the early church and social action.[130]

Instead of focusing on the worldly, the mundane, conservative evangelicals, when faced with social action, instead counseled a focus on loftier items. A letter to the editor declared that the incessant "dabbling in political issues on an international scale" only served "to subvert our spiritual mission."[131] With an eye towards mainline churches, social action serves as a sign of spiritual lethargy. Those more recently joined to conservative evangelical warned others that "they do not know what it is like to be raised in a cold, formal church where God does not visit because the people have shut Him out of their hearts and all

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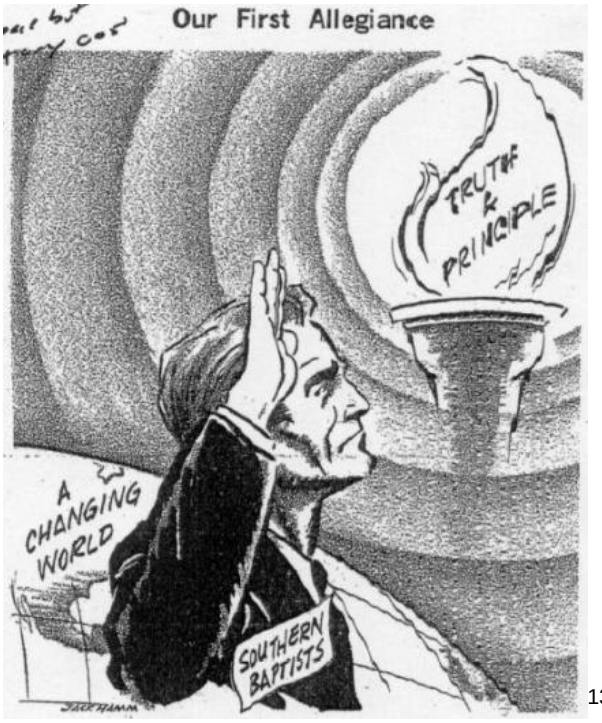
[128] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969.* Nashville, TN: 1969: 222-223. Roberts Library SBTS.

[129] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:30 (September 11, 1968): 14. SNU Library.

[130] "The Open meeting: Should a church be concerned about both evangelism and social action?" *The Baptist Program* (January 1969): 23. Roberts Library SBTS.

[131] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:43 (December 13, 1967): 14. SNU Library.

they hear is the social gospel."[132] Baptists reflected this emphasis pictorially as well.



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Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

In a play on the Psalms 119:105, the good Southern Baptist, out of necessity, turned his back on the world and its issues to the light of God's word and truth.[134]

Social action was also viewed as heretical. An editorial in the *Rocky Mountain Baptist* challenged the "present day so-called 'social action' emphasis as nothing more or less than the 'social gospel'" foisted "by religionists of a

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[132] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:17 (June 12, 1968): 14. SNU Library.

[133] Jack Hamm. "Our First Allegiance." *Baptist Standard*, no. 77:13 (May 31, 1965): 5. Roberts Library SBTS.

[134] Psalms 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." This phrase is used heavily among conservative evangelicals.

generation ago."[135] Among fundamentalist and evangelical circles, the Social Gospel was not simply an alternative emphasis but a heretical movement. The thought was that one faithful to the inherited faith could have no part in current social action programs.[136] Social action was heretical, in part, for it had satanic and sinful origins. One letter to the editor declared, "I can think of few things that would please Satan more than for Nazarene preachers to shift their emphasis from spiritual themes and dissipate their energies in" social action and political involvement.[137] An emphasis upon social issues was "the world's device." This reality made "pulpits, Sunday school lecterns, and church board meetings improper places indeed to thrash … political and social differences."[138]

In rhetoric shared by conservative reactionaries within mainline denominations, evangelism served as the antecedent of social action. Perhaps sensing the growing strength of their ideological brethren in mainline denominations, one editor joyfully reported that "many churchmen deeply committed to social activism [were] turning to renewed emphasis upon worship and prayer."[139] More precisely, "to speak of a rivalry between Christian social

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[135] "Editorials Differ on Social Trends in SBC." *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:25 (June 21, 1967): 4, Roberts Library SBTS.

[136] John Hurt. "Stick to the Record." *Baptist Standard*, no. 80:40 (October 2, 1968): 6, Roberts Library SBTS.

[137] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:30 (September 11, 1968): 14, SNU Library.

[138] Victor D. Sutch. "Politics & The Christian Man." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 61:14 (July 5, 1972): 15, SNU Library.

action and evangelism was wrong." [140] There existed no rivalry because evangelism reigned supreme and superior. This view begged the question, "Can there really be…social action without evangelism?"[141]

Conservative evangelicals did not simply chastise social action. As with the concept of peace, they redefined it to it make both palatable and innocuous. This group transformed social action – challenging unjust political and social systems – into traditional benevolence. As one conservative evangelical put it, "social action is not new for Southern Baptists. The denomination has been in the lead with its crusade for legal restrains on alcoholic beverages. It has fought (for) laws to ban obscene literature."[142] One participated in social action via "attention to the physical needs of men."[143] Thus, traditional compassion ministries and morality politics stood in for contemporary concepts of social action. With such a mindset, these conservatives would point to their activity in "child labor," "poverty," and "homeless children" as evidence of their activity in "social action."[144] With such comforting redefinitions, writers could boldly declare that "any Christian who believe[d] in good citizenship [could] not ignore

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[139] "Secular Paper Spots Welcome Trend in Theology." *The Christian Index*, no. 147:42 (October 17, 1968): 6, Roberts Library SBTS.

[140] "The Open meeting: Should a church be concerned about both evangelism and social action?" *The Baptist Program* (January 1969): 23, Roberts Library SBTS.

[141] *Ibid*, 24.

[142] John Hurt. "Stick to the Record." *Baptist Standard*, no. 80:40 (October 2, 1968): 6, Roberts Library SBTS.

[143] "The Open meeting: Should a church be concerned about both evangelism and social action?" *The Baptist Program* (January 1969): 23, Roberts Library SBTS.

[144] Clyde E. Fant Jr. "A New Look at an Old Issue: Social Action." *The Baptist Program* (January 1969): 4, Roberts Library SBTS.

injustice and evil!" such as the "fighting against drinking and gambling syndicates to fighting conditions that breed poverty, disease and crime."[145] This redefinition of social action found modeling in the life of Christ. The words of Jesus "pulsate[d] with social concern. Jesus was deeply concerned about the poor, the enslaved, the blind, the oppressed."[146] Even those statements that seemed to strongly support political involvement in reality appeared little more than attention grabbing ploys meant perhaps to tweak the nose of some. Some rhetorically asked, "Do you let your Christianity and politics mix?"[147] To answer "yes" only meant that the believer prayed before he or she voted and participated in morality politics.

To some degree then, this allowed double talk on social action. On the one hand, social action was sinful if seen as political activity or if it challenged evangelism or concepts of piety. On the other hand, social action was good if working within the context of benevolence. Either way, the commonality that existed was the insistence that social action marked by political involvement was wrong. Furthermore, social action had a clear domestic context. The redefinitions had no international reference. In one fail swoop, in redefining the concept with an anachronistic meaning, conservatives both defended themselves and made social action acceptable.

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[145] SBC, 228.

[146] Chevis F. Horne. "Can A Church Have Both?" *The Baptist Program* (June 1973): 7, Roberts Library SBTS.

[147] Ralph H. Langley. "Do You Let Your Christianity And Politics Mix?" *The Baptist Program* (June 1973): 10, Roberts Library SBTS.

Determining who spoke to and for the church served as an equally contentious issue in the area of social action. Church leaders like W.T. Purkiser, denied the legitimacy of ministerial involvement in political issues except for when "moral and spiritual issues [were] involved."[148] Purkiser's words could not easily be ignored. A very important denominational historian and educator for the Church of the Nazarene, he authored a very influential Wesleyan-Holiness systematic theology that is still widely used. The leadership of the Pentecostal Holiness Church's Committee on Christian Morals expected that ministers would "refrain from associating themselves with any kind of demonstration or public display."[149] These expectations served to prevent anyone from perceiving that the minister, in his leadership role, spoke for the denomination. Baptists made clear what many conservatives thought: "At present, too many experts on various social and political questions try to speak authoritatively for ten million southern Baptists."[150]

At the national level, evangelicals spoke even more resolutely. The Southern Baptist Convention declared in 1968 that "no one individual or organization can speak for all Baptists."[151] This stance was a step removed from that of mainline denominations. Mainline denominations did vest a particular

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[148] W.T. Purkiser. "The Political Jungle." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 53:36 (October 28, 1964): 11, SNU Library.

[149] R.O. Corvin. *Minutes of the Fifteenth General Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.* Greensboro: 1966: 85, Archives IPHC.

[150] "The Open Meeting: Should the Southern Baptist Convention establish a center for the study of peace? Why?" *The Baptist Program* (February 1967): 23, Roberts Library SBTS.

[151] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1968.* Nashville, TN: 1968: 67, Roberts Library SBTS.

body to speak for the church. Baptists did not even allow this. Committees that Baptists charged with attending to social concerns found themselves particularly challenged. Church members asked, "Why is the Christian Life Commission always speaking for Southern Baptists on controversial issues over which our people are seriously divided?"[152] In response, editors made clear that such commissions did not speak *for* the church and at best spoke *to* the church. More formally, the Southern Baptists Convention reaffirmed "that agencies and commissions of the Southern Baptist Convention do not necessarily speak for the local churches as individual believers."[153]

In place of national statements and social action committees, conservative evangelicals presented the local church and local church members as the locus of change, if needed. "It is more effective for church members to speak and act as Christian citizens than it is for them to get together and vote resolutions," declared one parishioner.[154] Local churches forced national bodies to recognize this conviction. The general gathering of Baptists in 1965 successfully amended the report of the Christian Life Commission to make clear that even the words of their own national board did not find welcome. "This convention of Baptists recognizes the authority and competency of every local church…in dealing with

[152] Leonard E. Hill. "Your Question." *The Baptist Program* (August 1971): 19, Roberts Library SBTS.

[153] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1970.* Nashville, TN: 1970: 74, Roberts Library SBTS.

[154] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald Holiness*, no. 62:5 (February 28, 1973): 31, SNU Library.

any question social or otherwise."[155] The local church and the local pastor served as the basis for leading the nation on social issues, if change was needed.



[156]
Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

Yet conservative evangelicals did not express unanimous opposition to social action and political involvement. One could find support for modified calls for social action. Members of the Pentecostal Holiness Church called upon their leadership to "make known to [their] church membership the studied scriptural position of the Pentecostal Holiness Church on current significant religious and

[155] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1965.* Nashville, TN: 1965: 84, Roberts Library SBTS.

[156] Doug Dillard. "Move Over Bub!" *Baptist Standard*, no. 80:45 (November 6, 1968): 6, Roberts Library SBTS.

social issues."[157] Likewise, Nazarene laymen would criticize Sunday school material, for it "made no attempt to relate Scriptures to any multi-sided problem." The critic would go on to plead, "Can't the religious writers…see we are crying out for help [in] applying Christianity to problems? I am only a layman. Would someone please help me?"[158] Repeatedly, congregants of some conservative evangelical denominations pleaded with their leadership to speak on key political and social issues of the day.[159] Appearing frustrated by timid leadership, congregants sought not definitive evaluative pronouncements but rather informed guidance on how their faith informed their politics. Therefore, some parishioners asked their denominations to "speak officially" on the problems of the day. For, "to pray while our boys die on foreign battlefields, without taking the corresponding responsibility to make our voice heard as to our approval or disapproval of policies being followed is to remain inept in the face of potential annihilation."[160] Beset by an age of ideological confusion, parishioners sought guidance, not necessarily definitive statements. Interestingly, perhaps leadership in both mainline and conservative evangelical denominations failed some of their parishioners in the same way. Mainline leadership alienated themselves from many of their congregants for speaking too definitively and for being too

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[157] R.O. Corvin. *Minutes of the Fifteenth General Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.* Greensboro, NC: 1966: 72, Archives IPHC.

[158] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:13 (May 17, 1967): 16, SNU Library.

[159] Charles E. Bradshaw. *Minutes of the Seventeenth General Conference of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.* Bethany, OK: 1973: 48, Archives IPHC.

[160] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:34 (October 11, 1967): 12, SNU Library.

authoritarian with their denominations. Conservative evangelicals failed to provide moral guidance on moral issues for fear of being perceived as definitive. Perhaps, in that age, neither leadership could win.

Again, as with the discussion on protests and social action, the discussion of who spoke for the church occurred against a mixed background of race and war. Pre-existing attitudes on the debate over race in church encouraged a bunker mentality on issues of war. Bearing pressure from outside their individual congregations – on first race and then war – conservative evangelicals stomached little, not only the opinions of outsiders, but also the statements of their own national organizations.

Furthermore, as with the perspective on soldiers, there appeared a distinction within conservative evangelicals. Southern Baptists most resoundingly opposed social action by the church. One finds occasional minor voices of support from Nazarenes, the Pentecostal Holiness Church, and the Assemblies of God. Conversely, one did find notes of support for social action by the church, in modified form, among these three, but support was almost entirely absent from Baptists. Perhaps the issue of race helps one understand why Baptists so strongly opposed social action at this time and other conservative evangelicals did not feel threatened. The Assemblies of God and Pentecostal Holiness Church both recognized their roots in the multi-racial Pentecostal Revival at the turn of the century. Furthermore, drawing from similar economic and social strata as well as worship styles, meant greater interaction with African Americans. On the other hand, Nazarenes largely came from areas – rural

communities in the Plains and Midwest - where African Americans were minimally present and the issues of race and segregation were not as pivotal. Conversely, Southern Baptist communities put their congregants and churches in the heart of the debate over segregation and civil rights. The civil rights movement had caused significant tension within the Southern Baptist Convention. Taken together, this aids in understanding, partially, the reasons for distinctions on social action.

Patriotism served as the final major point of discussion in the early war period. Of course, in a vein suggested by *Preachers Present Arms*, conservative evangelicals affirmed traditional concepts of patriotism. Authors, against the background of Vietnam, called upon people to not only recognize their freedoms, but also "salute old glory."[161] Corporately through the National Association of Evangelicals, these denominations declared their national fidelity and challenged "all loyal Americans to let their appreciation for the U.S.A. be known by every legitimate means."[162] National denominational meetings were infused with patriotism as well. After an intense debate in the Southern Baptist Convention over "A Statement Concerning the Crisis in the Nation," Baptists rose spontaneously to sing "America the Beautiful."[163] Likewise, amid a scene of

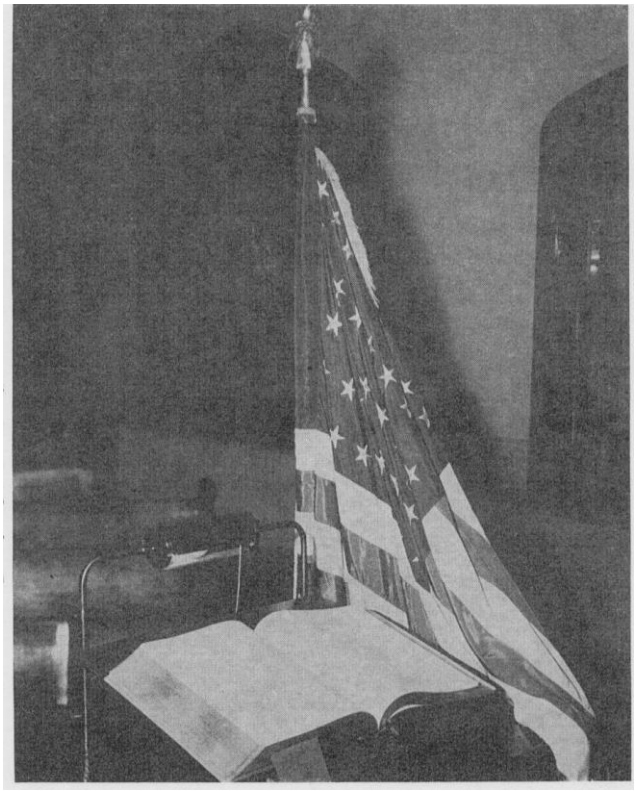
[161] Byon Jones. "Freedom is Our Heritage." *The Advocate*, no. 49:10 (July 3, 1965): 4, Archives FPRC.

[162] "I Pledge Allegiance." *The Advocate*, no. 50:4 (June 25, 1966): 2, Archives FPRC.

[163] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1968.* Nashville, TN: 1968: 73, Roberts Library SBTS.

fireworks exploding against the night sky, leadership called on members to "Celebrate Christian Citizenship!"[164]

Patriotism existed not only as a civic responsibility, but also as a Christian responsibility. Unlike mainline critics of patriotism, one could love their country without fear of idolatry, for God gave "the miracle that is America."[165] Pictorially, conservative evangelicals wed faith and nation.



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International Pentecostal Holiness Church Archives & Research Center, Bethany, Oklahoma

[164] "Celebrate Christian Citizenship" *The Baptist Program* (June 5, 1973): 1, Roberts Library SBTS.

[165] Karl A. Olsson. "Yes, I Love My Country." *The Baptist Program* (July 1965): 15, Roberts Library SBTS.

[166] Louma. Untitled Photograph. *The Advocate*, no. 47:10 (July 6, 1963): 1, Archives IPHC.

Notably, in this image, the American flag, not the Christian flag, stood next to the pulpit and draped the Holy Scriptures. Of course, the best citizens of the United States were its Christians. "No one should be a better citizen than the man or woman who is dedicated to living as Christ taught men to live."[167] In fact, "love of country" found empowerment in the "love of God," for the latter called on people to love in both word and deed. To be clear, it was not simply that faith empowered patriotism; patriotism served as the natural fruit of the Christian message and life. Writers declared that after coming to God, the first "duty involved in religious liberty [was] *loyalty to the state* (emphasis in original)." Therefore, "let a man have free access to God and hear God's voice, and he [would] become a champion" of his country.[168] Of course, the United States was the assumed country. Recognizing that other Christians might not share such convictions, writers called on church leaders to "provide an adequate biblical rationale for patriotism."[169] But perhaps it seems as though they got the cart in front of the horse.

To be sure, not everyone affirmed such strong patriotism. The Christian Life Commission would "call upon all churches not to be blinded by distorted appeals to false patriotism."[170] Likewise, editorials warned of those who

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[167] A.M. Long. "The Christian Patriot's Dilemma." *The Advocate*, no. 47:13 (July, 13, 1963): 3, Archives IPHC.

[168] E.Y. Mullins. "A Baptist Looks at Religious Liberty." *The Baptist Program* (June 1973): 5-6, Roberts Library SBTS.

[169] Albert McClellan. "General Trends in the World Affecting the Work of the Churches: Part II." *The Baptist Program* (September 1969): 13, Roberts Library SBTS.

"equated patriotism with the mistaken idea of supporting the President no matter what he does." Just because one disagreed with the Vietnam War did not make him or her a "traitor."[171] Also, challenging the connection of faith and nation, some church members found themselves appalled at the "tendency to wrap up religion in the Stars and Stripes and equate the Christian ethic with the American way of life."[172] Yet such expressions of caution or doubt about patriotism were a clear minority. Overall, conservative evangelicals during the Vietnam War affirmed not just patriotism but patriotism as a natural consequence of the Christian faith.

Such expressions of patriotism did not find similar resonance among either mainline or African-American denominations. African-American denominations expressed fidelity to President Johnson, not necessarily the war or the nation. Mainline leadership, in their discomfort over America's policies, did not express traditional concepts of patriotism either. Instead, they described their prophetic challenge to the nation as true patriotism. Some members of the mainline laity would express traditional, civic-based, patriotism. Yet one does not see the wedding of faith and nation as seen with conservative evangelicals. Especially absent is the conviction of patriotism as a natural and seminal consequence of faith in Christ. The problems of the nation did not vex these

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[170] "Statement on World Peace." *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:22 (May 31, 1967): 11, Roberts Library SBTS.

[171] "Letters to the Editor." *Baptist Standard*, no. 82:22 (June 3, 1970): 2, Roberts Library SBTS.

[172] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:9 (April 17, 1968): 16, SNU Library.

denominations as much and therefore embraced Christian patriotism more resolutely.

During the first half of the Vietnam War, conservative evangelicals brought their faith to bear on the war. First and foremost, they did not simply support Vietnam as a product of political commitments. Rather, they drew from a theological system, a world view that made support for Vietnam more natural and the war itself less problematic. The world was sinful. War was inevitable. Beyond inevitability, war was a tool of God. Peace, while desired, was not only a pragmatic reality, but was also redefined so as to be a personal rather than an international concept. Thus, pacifists proved odd and unbiblical. Communists sought not political but religious domination. Furthermore, their eschatology made conflict not just an expected reality, but a welcomed one as it signaled the imminent return of Christ.

These ideological commitments found expression in strong support for the war in Vietnam. This apocalyptic battle in part accomplished God's will. Faced with the consequences of communist success, Christians and the church had an obligation to see America through to victory. However, a more dominant response was to spiritualize the problems of the world in general and America and Vietnam specifically. Vietnam was less a military struggle and more a spiritual struggle with spiritual solutions. In this context, Baptists and Nazarenes lauded soldiers' spirituality and the Vietnam War as a spiritually maturing atmosphere. The Assemblies of God and Pentecostal Holiness Church, in greater tension with society at large, saw the soldier as in need of salvation and

spiritual development. Either way, conservative evangelicals affirmed a missions mentality that saw the American army in Vietnam as a fount of evangelistic and missionary opportunity that should not be missed. With such perspectives, conservative evangelicals emphasized churches' and congregations' responsibility to support soldiers. If soldiers stumbled spiritually, it was not their fault but that of Christians back home.

On the attendant issues of Vietnam, conservative evangelicals reflected conservative opinions informed by their faith. They rejected protests and civil disobedience as denying one's Christian obligations and the product of heresy or inappropriate religious attention. Likewise, they largely rejected the Church and its members' participation in the political and social issues of the day. However, it does seem that much of this discussion was informed by both Vietnam and the Civil Rights movement. Lastly, conservative evangelicals affirmed a model of patriotism as an expression of a proper Christian witness.

Repeatedly, conservative evangelicals did not need their politics to speak to their faith. Instead, their faith, to a large degree, made their politics consequential. To be clear, politics and religion did dialogue. But just as emphatically, religious commitments informed political perspectives just as surely as political commitments informed faith. They shared the realm of ideology. One might disagree with the stance of conservative evangelicals during the first half of the war. However, they were largely ideologically consistent. For example, convinced of a world of black and white with no gray, convinced that communism sought the destruction of Christianity, opposing communism in Vietnam was a

necessity. Yet the war and the world would not go the way they expected or desired. When faced with alternate realities after 1968, how would conservative evangelicals respond?

Chapter 7

Recasting the Vision:
Conservative Evangelicals in Vietnam, 1969-1973

By 1969, even the most stalwart defenders of Vietnam realized that traditional victory with traditional means seemed increasingly unlikely. Yet conservative evangelical churches had not committed themselves to Vietnam simply because of geopolitical national interests. Their theology and world view compelled support. In some ways, conservative evangelicals had more at stake in the war than mainline Christians. How would these conservative evangelicals respond when the forces of righteousness could not secure victory and American leadership made clear that it sought a negotiated settlement with the satanic forces of communism?

One thing that conservative evangelical churches did not do was retreat ideologically. As the majority of the nation grew war weary and increasingly supported the idea of the war as a costly mistake of the nation, these churches moved a small step to the right and embraced more conservative theologies and politics. For example, in their 1968 declaration on Vietnam, Baptists supported a "just and durable peace." However, the succeeding year, the same declaration demanded a "secure and equitable settlement" and this within the context of a strong support for American military forces.[1] While the phrases of "just and honorable peace" did not cease to exist, they found themselves increasingly set

[1] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969.* Nashville, TN: 1969: 76, Roberts Library SBTS.

in slightly more conservative contexts. Declarations on Vietnam described America's leaders in the war as "ministers of God" and pledged to "give full support to the Commander in Chief."[2] Church members deleted statements on Vietnam that referenced "the moral ambiguities of the Vietnam War." They deleted calls to "accelerate" and "continue" withdrawal from the country. Instead, they shifted their language so that there existed not an open call for *just* – only – peace, but a reminder that a Christian's "primary responsibility" was to a "just peace," one in which meant an achievement of America's goals.[3] While Baptists called for the "earliest possible end to the war," they did so expecting "the attainment of the announced objective of the United States, namely to preserve the independence and self government" of South Vietnam.[4] They even began commending the president's actions in the war, something that did not happen under the Johnson administration and that reflects a point of contrast with African-American denominations.[5]

Any explicit just war arguments remained notably absent. The justness of Vietnam remained a working assumption. In the early Vietnam War period, conservative evangelicals implicitly defended the justness of the war based upon a dualistic world view or at least made it an expected burden of a sin stained humanity. From 1969 on, conservative evangelicals shifted their implicit defense

[2] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1970.* Nashville, TN: 1970: 71, Roberts Library SBTS.

[3] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1971.* Nashville, TN: 1971: 75, Roberts Library SBTS.

[4] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1972.* Nashville, TN: 1972: 81, Roberts Library SBTS.

[5] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1973.* Nashville, TN: 1973: 79, Roberts Library SBTS.

of the justness of Vietnam and described Vietnam not as a cosmic struggle between good and evil but as a localized fight for religious freedom.

Conservative evangelicals increasingly defended the American presence in Vietnam as a fight for religious freedom and evangelical opportunity. If Americans listened to the siren's call of withdrawal, not only would the communists win, but more importantly, "missionaries would be forced to leave" and "the lives of evangelicals who actively promote the cause of Christ would be in jeopardy."[6] Their concern was less for a political system and more for religious opportunities for evangelicals. Church members desired a continuation of fighting because "political freedom allow[ed] for free expression of the gospel, so that the soul [could] have a choice to be spiritually free." If the Viet Cong won, no one would believe that "our sister denomination could carry on their missionary efforts for the Gospel."[7] Yes, the war was unfortunate. However, the inability to evangelize would serve as the primary loss if the Viet Cong won. Thus, one conservative evangelical wrote, "in South Vietnam they can hear. Baptists and other concerned Christians can proclaim Jesus Christ. If communism I stopped we will have a growing opportunity to share Christ as the only hope."[8]

The defense of Vietnam and the emphasis upon freedom did not apply simply to the evangelistic opportunities of outsiders but also the religious choices

[6] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:1 (February 21, 1968): 13, SNU Library.

[7] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:14 (May 22, 1968): 14, SNU Library.

[8] "Missionary Says Defend Vietnam." *Baptist Standard*, no. 81:25 (June 18, 1969): 11, Roberts Library SBTS.

of the Vietnamese themselves. Parishioners offered prayers for America's fighting men as they "preserve[d] for these people [the Vietnamese] the right of free worship."[9] Taking a political phrase and making it a religious one, Baptists saw Vietnam as good because "the 15 million people of South Vietnam need[ed] to have the right of freedom of choice." If the Americans were to leave Vietnam, it would be the equivalent of "saying to [them] that [they] do not need the gospel."[10] As public support for Vietnam lagged, conservative evangelicals called to their members to hold fast, for "there [were] signs of revival coming to Vietnam" and there were those "willing to give [their] lives for this revival, the same as many soldiers have given their lives, in order to make the revival possible under freedom of choice – a choice the people would not have under Communism."[11] After 1968, conservative evangelicals increasingly cast the fight in Vietnam as supporting not a political democracy but a religious one. They intimately wove evangelism and freedom of choice. This melding of religious and political speech allowed them to speak both to themselves and American society at large: "No matter what your political views of the Indochina situation are, these people need the full gospel message!"[12]

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[9] James Clayton. "A Prayer From Vietnam." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:34 (October 12, 1966): 7, SNU Library.

[10] Gainer E. Bryan Jr. "Hunger For Truth: Saigon missionaries cite support of Vietnam War." *Baptist Standard*, no. 80:5 (January 31, 1968): 14, Roberts Library SBTS.

[11] "Letters to the Editor." *Baptist Standard*, no. 84:24 (June 14, 1972): 2, Roberts Library SBTS.

[12] Adams, Charles V. "Who Will Care For them now?" *The Pentecostal Evangel* (April 11, 1971): 12. Archives FPRC.

Beyond the rhetoric of freedom, conservative evangelicals, although in significantly smaller amounts, still declared the Vietnam War as good. The war allowed a powerful expression of benevolence on the part of American forces that more than outweighed negative consequences. For example, one Baptist leader stated, "The road our servicemen are blazing in Vietnam today is paved with new hospitals, new orphanages, new homes – all built by our American servicemen." And, "For any house they are accused of destroying, they have built a hundred. For any innocent they are accused of taking, they have saved others a thousand times over."[13] More important that the physical good, conservative evangelicals heralded the way the war allowed for the salvation of souls. Articles celebrated the way "Terror Open[ed] Missionary Door[s]."[14] The possibility of the end of the war meant that "missionaries in Vietnam fe[lt] keenly the urgent need to press forward rapidly training national Christians as they to anticipated results of de-Americanization."[15] They expressed little remorse for "the war [had] ripened the country for revival."[16]

Did changes in the support of Vietnam take place? Yes. One found an increasing emphasis upon "freedom of choice" as a religious concept. Did

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[13] "Vietnam Forces Build Faster than Destroy, SBC Leader Says." *Baptist Standard*, no. 82:32 (June 12, 1970): 19, Roberts Library SBTS.

[14] "Terror Opens Missionary Door." *The Christian Index*, no. 149:2 (January, 15, 1970): 8, Roberts Library SBTS.

[15] "Money Limits Vietnam Expansion." *The Christian Index*, no. 149:33 (September 3, 1970): 3, Roberts Library SBTS.

[16] David Kent. "Revival Mushrooms in Chaotic Climates." *The Pentecostal Evangel* (April 11, 1971): 14-15, Archives FPRC.

conservatives continue to see the war as good? Yes. The focused shifted slightly away from a cosmic struggle against communism to the evangelistic fruit of the war. However, these adaptations aside, it is the volume of rhetoric not the nature of it that might be the most significant trend in this period. One does not see an outpouring of opposition to Vietnam as much as one sees a quieting of support. The cosmic struggles went not as planned. Yet a vibrant faith [could] not stomach a denial of central truths. Mainline denominations did this and paid heavily for it ideologically, organizationally, and numerically. When faced with inconvenient facts, conservative evangelicals quieted their speech rather than modified their truths. This proved to be a wise choice. They remained ideologically anchored while much of America remained awash in a sea of faith.[17] Those that disparage this choice forget the power and need of ideological security, especially in a score of years beset by instability.

This said, one did find the slightest of percolations of opposition to Vietnam among conservative evangelicals during this time period. However, the mild notes of opposition centered on pragmatic instead of ideological grounds. Writers irritated at a lack of direction scratched their heads and wondered just what the policy was of this most frustrating war. A frustrated Baptist wrote that "there must be some way to compromise without destroying a nation, which will happen if [America} continue[s] on our present course of action."[18] This focus on the pragmatic consequences forced a Nazarene to declare that "our nation is so

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[17] This phrase is inspired by Jon Butler's *Awash in a Sea of Faith*.

[18] "Letters to the Editor." *Baptist Standard*, no. 79:17 (April 26, 1967): 5, Roberts Library SBTS.

obsessed with the right to intervene that we consistently do this and in turn weaken our home front."[19] Some conservatives increasingly saw the war as "unrealistic, and productive of no good."[20] It reflected poor national stewardship that God did not intend.[21] In addition, some expressed opposition to the war because of the consequences forced on soldiers. These soldiers found themselves not only physically "scarred … by bullets," but also "mentally scarred" when they discovered the "futility of a political war [that was] never really won or lost," as they consider the waste of a war without consistent objectives.

These critiques did not call into question the justness of the war but rather expressed concern about the pragmatic consequences of it. Furthermore, the context of concerns remained America, not Vietnam. There existed no prophetic critique as with mainline denominations. There existed no anguish over the destruction of the lives and landscape of Vietnam. The weapons of war did not come into question. Again, to do so required a significant loss of moral mooring.

This time period also witnessed a shift in the discussion of soldiers. Before 1969, churches generally described soldiers and the military positively. After 1969, the glowing descriptions of soldier spirituality dropped out entirely. These were replaced by a discussion focused solely on soldiers' spiritual needs

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[19] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editor." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 56:47 (January 10, 1968): 16, SNU Library.

[20] Frank Stagg. "Facts About Civil Disorder." *The Baptist Program* (August 1970): 30, Roberts Library SBTS.

[21] "U.S. In Vietnam favored." *Baptist Standard,* no. 81:30 (July 23, 1969): 4, Roberts Library SBTS.

and one dominated by the Nazarene Church. Soldiers were described as possessing "little concept of religion."[22] There existed

> "untold difficulties as one tries to remain a soldier of Christ while in the service of the nation. There are the usual temptations of his flesh; the lack of privacy on the base; often untold hours of loneliness with ties cut from home, loved ones, and church. Friendships formed because of loneliness and discouragement often prove a snare, for youth, serving in the armed forces seemed to be a special prey of Satan."[23]

The serviceman found himself "always susceptible to Satan's most devious attacks."[24] He slept in barracks with fifty other men in an environment of "profanity, vulgarity, and an endless line of nudes arranged by other soldiers."[25] Whereas before the military served as an extension of church evangelism, now writers perceived soldiers as "essentially pagans" and "a harvest field, the whitened one the Lord talked about."[26] Even the presence of chaplains did not encourage church members. The soldier that did go to the base chapel heard "a Baptist chaplain bringing a message that must not offend the Methodists, Lutherans, Church of Christ, Mormons, or any denomination for that matter."[27]

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[22] George W. Hackett. "Chaplain in Vietnam." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 55:40 (November 23, 1966): 5-6, SNU Library.

[23] Eva Cummings. "Sanctified Activists." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 58:11 (May 12, 1969): 2, SNU Library.

[24] William S. Renner. "Out of Sight, Out of Mind?" *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 61:22 (October 25, 1972): 5, SNU Library.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] Frank Ellis. "A Visit to South Vietnam." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 59:26 (July 1, 1970): 13, SNU Library. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus informs his followers that he sees a sin stained humanity in need of salvation. They are a spiritual harvest waiting only for action by the harvester.

Spiritual pessimism supplanted previous spiritual optimism. Why such a quieting on soldier spirituality? Perhaps the reality of My Lai and rampant drug use made such speech untenable. Yet to not express glowing affirmations of soldier spirituality was not the same as expressing doubts.

Amid such quite pessimism, churches debated one new issue after 1968; that issue was conscientious objection. Although this issue mildly emerged prior to 1969, the majority of the discussion took place in the later war years. First and foremost, conservative evangelicals witnessed clear moves away from non-participation and default support of conscientious objection.

The Assemblies of God entered the war with an explicit support for pacifism and affirmed the inability to reconcile the Christian message with war. The faith confessions of the church declared that "scriptures have always been accepted and interpreted by our churches as prohibiting Christians from shedding blood or taking human life…we cannot consciously participate in war and armed resistance which involved the actual destruction of human life."[28] However, early in the war, "the fact that there [were] widespread questions regarding the adequacy of [that] statement on military service," as found in the constitution of the church, meant that they resolved to study the statement and report back in two years.[29] When the commission reported back, they presented

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[27] William S. Renner. "Out of Sight, Out of Mind?" *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 61:22 (October 25, 1972): 5, SNU Library.

[28] *Minutes of the Thirty-First General Council of the Assemblies of God*. Springfield, MO: 1965: 134, Archives FPRC.

[29] *Ibid,* 61.

a move to the right and called to "continue to extend fellowship and sacramental ministries" to those who did not share the church's view on non-participation. However, the General Assembly rejected this too and sent it back for further work.[30] The final statement declared peace as ideal but that "we live in a world in which there may arise international emergencies which will lead our nation to resort to armed conflict in defense of its ideals, freedom and national existence." Therefore, the church would "acknowledge the principle of individual freedom of conscience as it relates to military service."[31] This statement on its own appears as a simple affirmation of conscientious objection. However, taken in its larger historical setting, this statement reflected a sharp move away from pacifism and strong, explicit support for conscientious objection toward affirming military service.

Likewise, the Pentecostal Holiness Church went through formal changes that moved away from support of conscientious objection. They created new liturgy for soldiers entering military service, a "commissioning service" which recognized that "one of the moral obligations of citizenship is defense of country." The soldier did not simply fulfill a public role but also took on "a sacred task in service to God." Lastly, the denomination then gave the soldier a credentialing

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[30] *Minutes of the Thirty-Second General Council of the Assemblies of God*. Springfield, MO: 1967: 14-15, Archive FPRC.

[31] *Ibid,* 35.

card that "authorized" him to "do Christian work."[32] This too from a denomination that previously questioned the propriety of military service.

Southern Baptists also made formal changes in their stance on the war. In 1940, the church passed a resolution not only recognizing but affirming conscientious objection. However, by 1969, the church not only cast doubt on conscientious objection but also sought to "reconcile the Christian's pursuit of peace with the patriot's prosecution of defensive war."[33] A later attempt to present a resolution supporting the right of conscientious objection was not allowed to come to a vote.[34] To those that sought to force the issue, the Southern Baptist Convention simply pointed back to its 1940 resolution. While not as pronounced as the Assemblies of God and the Pentecostal Holiness Church, the Southern Baptist Convention too witnessed a formal move away from conscientious objection.

Beyond their formal moves to the right on the issue, conservative evangelicals displayed scant support for conscientious objection in their congregations. An article by a professor at Southwestern Seminary, touted as supporting the concept, expected that before churches could support conscientious objectors, they should make sure he "has carefully thought through

[32] Bane T. Underwood. "A Commissioning Service For Military Inductees." *The Advocate*, no. 52:1 (February 14, 1968): 10, Archive IPHC.

[33] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1967.* Nashville, TN: 1967: 69, Roberts Library SBTS.

[34] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1971.* Nashville, TN: 1971: 63, 73, Roberts Library SBTS.

and is honest in his position."[35] In the same breadth that writers called on parishioners to "help understand what it mean[t] to be a conscientious objector," they also called on leaders to develop an "adequate biblical rationale for patriotism."[36] Lack of support for conscientious objection found expression in periodicals. Baptists were reticent to even discuss the issue. The first article on the issue in the Baptist Standard did not appear until 1969 and it was drawn from the Religious News Service, not the Baptists' own wire service, the Baptist Press; twice removed anonymity.[37] The article itself consisted of an antiseptic report on the history of conscientious objection and recent court rulings on it. If conservative evangelicals considered conscientious objection, they received scant support from their denominations.

At best, conscientious objection found recognition without approval. The Church of the Nazarene did not formally recognize conscientious objection but said "it did not endeavor to bind the conscience of its members relative to participation in military service." Concurrent with the recognition of the freedom of conscience, the same declaration made clear that the "individual Christian as a citizen [was] bound to give service to his own nation."[38] Likewise, Southern Baptists, in modifying their 1940 declaration supporting conscientious objection,

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[35] T.B. Maston. "Problems of the Christian Life: Conscientious Objector." *Baptist Standard*, no. 81:4 (January 22, 1969): 19, Roberts Library SBTS.

[36] "Churches, Courts, and…Conscientious Objectors." *Baptist Standard*, no. 81:30 (July 23, 1969): 5, Roberts Library SBTS.

[37] *Ibid*.

[38] *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*. Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1968: 154, SNU Library.

made clear that they did not "imply approval or support of any citizen who refuse[d] to accept the full obligation of responsible citizenship."[39] Although not stated explicitly, the conscientious objector was implied to be an irresponsible citizen, shirking his just obligation. Yet, this was his right. However, in the final votes, even Southern Baptists could not pass such a motion that in a back-handed manner recognized the individual's rights.

Conservative evangelicals commonly questioned the morality and conscience of conscientious objectors. For example, a mother's open letter to a son entering the military service contrasted the responsibility of military service with the irresponsibility and escapist attitude of conscientious objectors:

> What I want to say to you my son is that I am proud of you and your decision to serve your country. You could have burned your draft card when you became old enough to get one – some have – or you could have skipped to Canada – some have – or you could have joined those who are trying to burn the country down.[40]

Those who emphasized obedience to conscience were in fact disobedient to God.[41]

Conservative evangelicals questioned the very conscience of the objector. They refused to grant – in these cases – that conscience served as a reliable guide. As one Baptist wrote, "many deeds have been performed under the guise

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[39] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1969.* Nashville, TN: 1969: 74-75, Roberts Library SBTS.

[40] Walter Moore Jr. "Letter to A Son Entering Military Service." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 59:45 (November 11, 1970): 12, SNU Library.

[41] "Pro & Con: Letters to the Editors." *The Herald Holiness*, no. 59:29 (July 22, 1970): 14, SNU Library.

of conscience. Some of these are manifestly ill advised. The better part of wisdom would be to consult the accepted standards of behavior and the higher forms of ethics, before reaching a verdict."[42] Thereby, they dissuaded one to conscientious objection. Skeptics of conscientious objection declared that "when they are all out of step but Johnny, it could be that it is just Johnny out of step."[43] In the end, troubled young men and their consciences needed to submit to the higher law of God expressed by national leaders.[44] Whereas mainline groups declared that "God alone is the Lord of conscience," conservative evangelicals declared that "God alone is the Lord of a *properly informed* conscience." Repeatedly, they remained convinced that youth who conscientiously objected to the war were guided by a poor conscience.

During this time period, the same skepticism of conscientious objectors began to be expressed towards protestors. With protests against Vietnam increasing in both scope and intensity, conservative evangelicals questioned the morality of protestors. Surveying the aftermath of protests, commentators described protestors as "scum of the earth," as individuals who complained of police brutality but who came trained in "mob violence, karate, and the like." While some "may behave like angels, it is difficult if not impossible to identify

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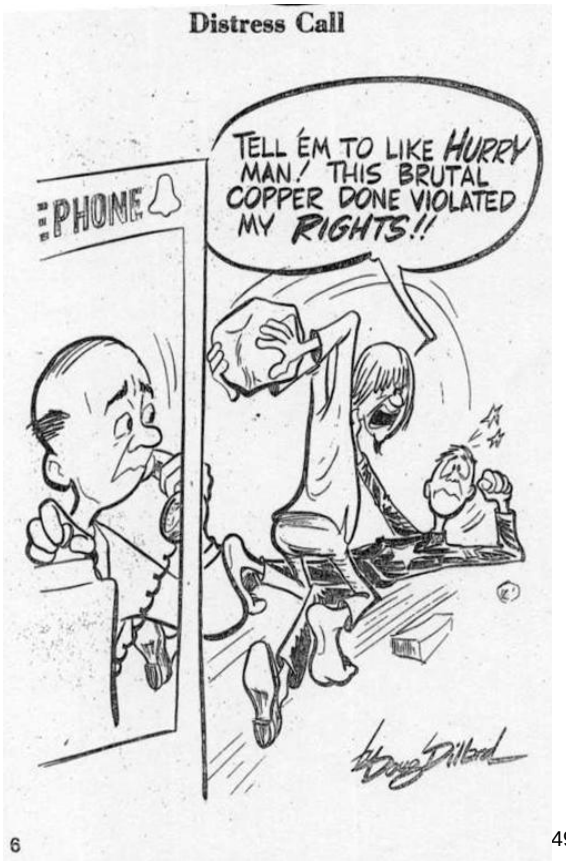
[42] H.H. Harwell. "How Reliable is Personal Conscience?" *The Christian Index*, no. 151:7 (February 24, 1972): 2, Roberts Library SBTS.

[43] W.T. Purkiser. "The Answer Corner." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 57:35 (October 16, 1968): 19, SNU Library.

[44] W.T. Purkiser. "Patriotism: Mouthwash or Heart Stimulant." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 53:19 (July 1, 1961): 11, SNU Library.

them in the company they keep."[45] These protestors were "extremists who make up by their noise what they lack in both information and reason."[46] They hurt the war effort and were at best hypocrites.[47] They sought only destruction of America's sacred institutions[48] Cartoonists too communicated the theme of protestor guilt.



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[45] John Hurt. "Specter of Anarchy." *Baptist Standard*, no. 80:37 (September 11, 1968): 6, Roberts Library SBTS.

[46] W.T. Purkiser. "Editorially Speaking: The Silent Majority." *The Herald of Holiness,* no. 59:5 (February 4, 1970): 10, SNU Library.

[47] W.T. Purkiser. "Editorially Speaking: Hypocrisies of the Present." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 59:27 (July 8, 1970): 10, SNU Library.

[48] W.T. Purkiser. "I Protest." *The Herald of Holiness*, no. 59:24 (June 17, 1970): 11, SNU Library.

[49] Doug Dillard. "Distress Call." *Baptist Standard*, no. 80:37 (September 11, 1968): 6, Roberts Library SBTS.

International Pentecostal Holiness Church Archives & Research Center, Bethany, Oklahoma

Southern Baptists seemed especially incensed by the effect of protestors on the war effort. Polls among Southern Baptists found that 75% of the respondents felt that protests would actually lengthen the war.[50] Editors asked their readers, almost rhetorically, if they felt that "such demonstrations [would] shorten or lengthen the war."[51] Convinced of this truth, editorials witnessed such protests and saw "the consequence is encouragement to Hanoi and hurt to the half-million boys fighting the battle over there."[52]

Connected to the discussion on conscientious objection, the late war period witnessed a brief exploration of the issue of amnesty. As with the discussion of conscientious objection, articles on the subject emerged late and offered an antiseptic historical discussion of the problem that simply reported the different perspective without taking a stance. Furthermore, these articles came not from Baptist publications, nor even from the Baptist Press, but were drawn from the Religious News Service.[53] As expected, opinion fell solidly behind opposition to amnesty. Letters to the editor opposing amnesty used the moral

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[50] "What Do You Think?: Poll says Protest Lengthens War." *Baptist Standard*, no. 81:45 (November 5, 1969): 4, Roberts Library SBTS.

[51] "What Do YOU Think?" *Baptist Standard*, no. 81:43 (October 22, 1969): 8, Roberts Library SBTS.

[52] E.S. James. "When Help Hurts and Hurt Helps." *Baptist Standard*, no. 81:48 (December 26, 1969): 6, Roberts Library SBTS.

[53] "Amnesty: Help or Hindrance to Reconciliation?" *Baptist Standard*, no. 85:19 (May 9, 1973): 23, Roberts Library SBTS.

language of sin to describe deserters. How could one "forget the offense against our country" committed by the deserter? "All justice demands that crime (or sin) shall be paid in full and, in fact, the Bible so states (Rom. 6:23)."[54] The passage reference finds the Apostle Paul discussing man's need for salvation and how one's sins merit death. The Southern Baptist Convention could not even bring itself to study the issue. A very tepid resolution to "study carefully and prayerfully" did not even come to a vote. Other similar attempts to simply explore the topic found themselves repeatedly tabled.[55] However, the acknowledgment that they would not study the issue was still much more than other conservative evangelicals who never even mentioned the concept. Did any conservative evangelicals support amnesty? Surely some did. However, like John the Baptist, they were a voice crying out in the wilderness.[56]

The late war period also witnessed a notable divergence with mainline churches over the religious role of the prophet. One found a very telling distinction between the religious culture of mainline and conservative evangelical churches in the presence and perception of the prophetic. Recall, mainline churches witnessed the repeated use of the office and language of the prophet to speak to the war and their congregations. However, in conservative evangelical denominations, the role of the prophet was reworked in the same way that peace

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[54] "Letters to the Editor." *Baptist Standard*, no. 85:22 (May 30, 1973): 2, Roberts Library SBTS.

[55] *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1972.* Nashville, TN: 1972: 26, Roberts Library SBTS.

[56] "Amnesty Advocated." *Baptist Standard*, no. 85:44 (October 31, 1973): 5, Roberts Library SBTS.

or social action was reworked. The prophet was essentially castrated: "Instead of simply pronouncing judgment upon a congregation," the prophet should "communicate God's redemptive message."[57] The prophet could provide guidance through "prophetic leadership." He would demonstrate good preaching in that he would "avoid partisanship." Most importantly, he would "avoid the absurdity of proclaiming an absolute ethic in a sinful world."[58] Absolutes applied only to salvation and morality politics. This advice came from Foy Valentine, the Executive Director of the Christian Life Commission during the 1960's. He pushed the SBC in the area of civil rights emphasized the separation of church and state. Later on, he fell out of favor as the SBC grew even more conservative.

In tension with the mainline emphasis upon the prophetic, conservative evangelicals, especially Southern Baptists bristled against modern uses of the office. Praising the Southern Baptist Convention's resistance to making declarations on any major social or political events of the day, one writer proudly affirmed that "our convention does not exist to tell the churches one blessed thing – be it theological, sociological, or ecclesiological."[59] Baptist guides on preaching reaffirmed a guttural aversion to the prophetic role. An article that explored "How to Preach on Political Issues" made clear the difference between "partisanship

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[57] John G. Mitchell. "Have Prophets Been Pushed Out of the Church?" *The Baptist Program* (April 1971): 7, Roberts Library SBTS.

[58] Foy Valentine. "How to Preach on Political Issues." *The Baptist Program* (March 1972): 11-12, Roberts Library SBTS.

[59] "Southern Baptists Stay In The Middle." *The Christian Index*, no. 151:25 (June 22, 1972): 2, Roberts Library SBTS.

and prophetic leadership."[60] Prophetic speech was neither confrontational nor condemnatory. Elijah became Norman Vincent Peale. They took the sense of challenge and social upset of the Old Testament prophet and subdued him and made him highly palatable. The most famous Southern Baptist, Billy Graham, reflected the tenor of the denomination in declaring, "God has called me to be a New Testament evangelist – not an Old Testament prophet." He explicitly rejected any role as "a social reformer or a political activist."[61]

This late war rejection of the prophetic served as the culmination of political distancing for conservative evangelicals. The way they reshaped concepts of war and peace in the early war period, spiritualized Vietnam, made military service a positive, and recast social action found personification or embodiment in their conception of the model prophet in the late war period. They successfully distanced themselves from the social and ideological trauma of the Vietnam War that most other Americans faced. They traded political relevancy for ideological security.

As the war came to an end, conservative evangelicals moved on rather than wring their hands or ponder lessons learned like mainline denominations. A survey of publications and proceedings during this period reveals limited discussion on this war and decade. The discussion that did emerge focused heavily upon evangelism; either born of honesty or used as a coping mechanism,

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[60] Foy Valentine. "How to Preach on Political Issues." *The Baptist Program* (March 1972): 11, Roberts Library SBTS.

[61] RNS, "Graham Explains War Stand, Relationship to Presidents." *The Christian Index*. 152:2 (January 18, 1973): 6, Roberts Library SBTS.

or both. In fact and similar to African-American denominations, conservative evangelicals turned to the domestic. Surveying the problems faced by the church and the nation, congregants offered prayers of anguish about the breakdown of decency and the advance of pornography with nary a statement about Vietnam.[62] Where mainline groups spoke of rebuilding efforts and the human and environmental toll, conservative evangelicals maintained that "the ending of military hostilities in Vietnam need[ed] to be followed up with the most massive missionary and evangelistic thrust in Southeast Asia the world has ever seen."[63] Denominational missionaries, with unrestrained optimism, declared that the ending of the war "resulted in limitless opportunities" for evangelism. One evangelist asked, "Can't we show that we can send missionaries and Bibles to their land, as surely as we can send soldiers and napalm bombs?"[64] As if faced with new salvation opportunities, these churches told their congregants that "as the American military presence [grew] smaller, the Christian witness must grow larger."[65] The destruction, never recognized or addressed, provided a waiting harvest of souls: "There can be no doubt that the people of Vietnam need[ed] the message of Jesus" as a result of the war.[66] One could imply that the war was

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[62] *Minutes of the Thirty-Third General Council of the Assemblies of God.* Springfield, MO: 1969: 85-87, Archive FPRC.

[63] "Vietnam War is Over: What Happens Now?" *The Christian Index*, no. 152:4 February 1, 1973): 2, Roberts Library SBTS.

[64] "Urgent Appeals From South Vietnam." *The Christian Index*, no. 152:17 (March 3, 1973): 2, Roberts Library SBTS.

[65] Charles V. Adams. "Who Will Care For them now?" *The Pentecostal Evangel* (April 11, 1971): 13, Archives FPRC.

good since “long years of war had created economic and spiritual vacuums in [Vietnam].”[67] The Assemblies of God sought to fill this vacuum for they believed that “throughout history, God … always met man at his point of need. When God makes appointments, He always keeps them on time.”[68] The end of the war called not for rebuilding but heightened evangelism. Hence, conservatives had a salve others did not. No need for the guilt of repentance; to them, the end of the war brought not relief but joyful opportunities.

Taken together, conservative evangelicals adjusted their perspective on the war but continued some of their methodology during the second half of the Vietnam War. Faced with a war gone awry that they saw not simply as a gepolitical neccessity but as a rightous struggle, conservative evengelicals queited theirs speech rather than renig on their ideological commitments. Perhaps seeking to broaden their base, they began to use the language of freedom, religious freedom to be sure, to speak to both insiders and outsiders. In addition, the positive descriptions of soldiers diminished and found replacement by largely negative ones which focused entirely on their spirituality. These churches challenged protestors but especially challenged cosncientious objection. On this issue, one witnessed a very dramatic move to the right. Not only did they formally reject conscientious objection, they also rejected the entire conscience of the conscietious objector. Lastly, cosnervative evangelicals,

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[66] E.C. Damiani. “Saigon Vietnam –LFTL Target City ’72.’” *The Pentecostal Evangel,* (April 30, 1972): 19, Archives FPRC.

[67] Juleen Turnage. “Appointment in Vietnam.” *The Pentecostal Evangel,* (July 2, 1972): 8, Archives FPRC.

[68] *Ibid*.

perhaps in tension with mainline denominations, redefined the role of the pophet in ways they had redefined war, peace, and social action in the first haf of the war. While never clear on what the prophet did, they did clarify what he did not do. In no sense could the prophet be the mouthpiece of God, chastizing the community of faith to yield to the will of God.

Thus the story for conservative evangelicals ends with greater – or perhaps contrived - moral clarity. Not coincidentally, they also witnessed a meteoric rise in the numbers filling their pews and collection plates gathering more tithes. Yet was their victory over mainline denominations that sure? What they gained in clear moral boundries and guides did they give up in ethical integrity?[69] In their attempt to safeguard the faith did they make it increasingly irrelevant to the lived out realities of Americans and the world? In ridding themselves of moral ambiguities, did they set patterns that allowed conservative evangelicals to adapt in style but not in content? In seeking their faith, did they lose it?

These questions doubt neither their sincerity not spiritual fervor. Conservative evangelicals brough much passion to their efforts. Furthermore, such physical, temporal, and financial sacrafice by their massive number of parishoners was not born of duplicity. Clearly they succeeded in giving the American people the clear moral guides they so desperately desired, and needed, in the most ambigous of times. However, for two generations,

[69] One wonders if they created a new model for Christian civic faith in an increasingly diverse America. They created a big tent by focusing on indisputable items of spirituality and salvation, a faith not necessarily dependent upon a socio-economic or ethnic identity.

cosnervative evangelicals remained largely irrelevant on the social issues of the day. Only recently have conservative evangelicals realized this disconnect and started to remedy it. Individuals like Tony Campolo and movements like "emergent church" and "missional" Christianity explictly seek to reconnect – from within – conservative evangelical faith with social issues of the day. So then, if we argue that mainline leadership has won the battle but lost the war, what conservative evangelicals win and lose? They won in numbers and influence but lost in ethical relevancy.

Chapter 8

A Prophet Without a People:
Martin Luther King, Jr., the Vietnam War and His Relationship with African-American Protestants.

Martin Luther King was the single most important religious figure for white denominations in the 1960s. Conversely, Lyndon Baines Johnson was the single most important political figure for black denominations in the same decade. These statements upset the apple carts of race, religion, and politics. However, they best illustrate the counterintuitive and puzzling nature of the relationship between African-American Protestant Christianity and the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War placed African-American Protestants in a troubling position, where, moral commitments conflicted with political commitments, and just political loyalties conflicted with political realities.

Mainline and conservative denominations provided us with clear – not infallible – categories. Mainline denominations and their moderate leadership wrestled with the mantle of the prophet. Dominated by moderate leadership, clergy chastised the nation and Christians for supporting the war, as well as for other attendant issues. Likewise, conservative denominations played particular roles. Conservative denominations and their conservative reactionary brethren in Exodus within Mainline denominations embraced the role and speech of the evangelist. Men's souls – not men's lives – served as the focus of the mission of the church. In a combination of both honest deflection and theological emphasis, conservatives' pessimism about a sin stained world and anticipation of the end of days encouraged them to cry "souls, souls, souls."

These chapters add the voice of African-American Protestants to the discussion of Protestants and the Vietnam War.[1] One challenge to this study might be the assumption of a monolithic "African-American" religious experience. African-American Protestantism was not a single organism united because of race. These denominations varied theologically and demographically, just as white denominations. African-American denominations chastised one another as elitist, in need of reform, as disconnected from laity and numerous other failings,

[1] Researching African-American denominations proved a maddeningly frustrating task. Part of this frustration is simple to explain: there is an absence of basic records from which to work as well as great difficulty in accessing those that do exist. No African-American denomination explored held the entirety of their most basic minutes and publications. Locating them required numerous calls, sifting through sundry cardboard boxes in offices, visiting one denomination's' archives who happened to hold a copy of another denomination's publications. Frequently, archives were either non-existent or existed in name only. Lastly, source material often remained only a phone call or visit away. Perhaps, some of the problems lay in funding. These denominations did not possess the funds to create and maintain archives.

However, frustrations moved beyond the mechanics of location and acquisition and resided more firmly in organizational culture. Denominational officials, with one exception in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), did not express organizational support for researchers and more often than not were unwilling to return phone calls. The success achieved relied upon calls to laity who would provide contacts or directions. The reticence of these denominations at examination betrayed a sense of distrust. In some cases, as in the National Baptist Convention, fear had roots in denominational scandals that garnered significant national attention. In other cases, as in the Progressive National Baptist Convention or the Church of God in Christ, there appeared a sub-text of fear of outside analysis.

The paucity of source material in existence appears to deny- at some level – a connection to the past. The pessimist would point to simmering scandal kept from public eyes. The optimist would argue that the experiences of post-war African-Americans means that they are too focused on pragmatic realities to dwell on securing the past. It was akin to the contrast between the way Americans and Vietnamese remembered the war. "Indeed, most Vietnamese were too busy trying to make a living to dwell on the past." (Herring, *America's Longest War, 321)*

The attempts to secure material from the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) illustrated these problems. Attempting to determine responsibility proved confusing and a multitude of calls went unreturned; records were non-existent. A fire in a parishioner's garage consumed the majority of the holdings of their denominational publication, *The Whole Truth.* Theoretically, church minutes existed in the General Secretary's office, but attempts to explore them met with a defeating wall of passivity. The organizational unrest that the COGIC experienced in the 1960s after the death of their founder compounded the problem. Sadly, secular courts ultimately had to determined leadership and ownership. Calls to laity throughout the nation produced a web of suggestions, names, and numbers, but no results. Having worked with nearly two dozen denominations, this author knew the organizational and *relational* obstacles present in working with religious organizations. African-American denominations as a whole proved the most challenging and those presented by the COGIC proved insurmountable.

just as white denominations did. African-American churches also varied in theology, liturgy, and polity, just as white denominations did. Specific issues and approaches of African-American Protestants existed, however, that warranted combining them in this study, while the entire time recognizing that there was no such thing as *an* African-American religious experience.

What role then would African-American Protestants play? The markers of civil rights protest and theological commitments foreshadowed a schizophrenic response; a response that did not emerge. On the one hand, African-American Protestants' socio-economic background, conservative theology, and style of worship seemed to align them better with their Nazarene, Southern Baptist, and Assemblies of God cousins. On the other hand, their Civil Rights activism – definitively, the clearest marker of potential opposition to the Vietnam War – and support among mainline moderates and Northern Democratic Liberals would seem to empower a strong criticism of Vietnam; in essence, both expectations proved false. The response of African-American denominations to the war in Vietnam was both disjointed and disappointing.

As previously mentioned, one's disposition and activities in the Civil Rights Movement strongly informed one's attitudes toward Vietnam. This alone would warrant looking at African-American denominations separately. However, other features existed which mandated looking at these churches as a group. African-Americans remained very loyal to President Johnson not only for his strong support of civil rights but also because of his Great Society legislation. The rightful fidelity of blacks to President Johnson leaves one wondering what would

happen to that relationship as the Civil Rights Movement waned and the most important African-American in United States history both opposed Vietnam and the President. How did a conservative theology and worldview connect to an affirmation of political action and reform that seemed better aligned with more moderate theological commitments? In short, African-American Protestants faced an intersection of faith and politics that was the most puzzling faced by any branch of American Christianity during this time period.

The study of African-American Christianity of this time period met an interpretive challenge that equaled the pragmatic challenges of securing source material and wrestling with concepts of what did and did not constitute African-American religion. The large and burdensome shadow of Martin Luther King, Jr. sharply influenced discussions of race and religion for the day. King's significance as an African-American leader coupled with his strong religious commitments and presence lend themselves to the assumption that he was a semi-official extension of the African-American church.

There appear to be multiple interpretations of Martin Luther King, first as the assumed leader and spokesman of the religious black community, then the King who held strong ties with white Mainline moderates, the King who openly criticized the President many blacks strongly supported, and finally, the King who sought to rally African-Americans to a cause they did not embrace. Simplistic assumptions about the fealty of race and religion connect these various incarnations. Religiously, the race and cadence of King, coupled with his Southern heritage, appeared to make him an extension of African-American

spirituality. In reality, however, he could be religiously distant from the people he led; he had an atypical religious life, an atypical theology, and atypical educational experiences For example, neither African-American nor white pastors read Gandhi to formulate a theology of non-violence as King did. However, it was King who was the best candidate to fulfill the office of the prophet in the way that Mainline church leaders desired; yet they filled that office neither as convincingly nor as effectively. King challenged society with clear moral language based upon divine, not liberal, calls to justice and righteousness. He declared the immoral and sinfulness of people, advocating that the systems they supported – civically, economically or militarily – stood condemned because they did not emanate from the nature of God. He spoke truth to power.

At the same time, King had much greater organizational ties with white mainline churches. His church was aligned with the Presbyterian Church. He delivered his speech against Vietnam at Riverside Church, the central cathedral of white liberal Protestants. Seeking to build support for his opinions on the Vietnam War, King reached out to Eugene Carlson Blake of the National Council of Churches and Bishop Pike of the Episcopal Church, both strong leaders of the white denomination, not to African-American denominational leaders.

In contrast, African-American denominations seemed to pay relatively little attention to King. In the records studied, King's name or actions appear very rarely. The minimal references to King normally occurred within the context of his leadership in Civil Rights protests; even there, though, the references were not internally produced documents but reprints of a news service. There

appeared no organizational effort to connect with his name. On paper, it appears King was more a leader of the Civil Rights Movements than of African-American Christians. Most significantly, King unintentionally distanced himself politically from African-American churches when he criticized President Johnson and explored the morality of Vietnam. In a real sense, Martin Luther King was perhaps the best example of *white liberal* opposition to Vietnam. Yet, this study of religion and Vietnam was not a personal one but an organizational one; a study focused upon broad movements and religious culture. Protestations notwithstanding, however, there was no avoiding King.

Even though King's political stance was not typical of the black church, he was the most visible African-American religious leader of his time. For this reason, people looking back assume that he spoke for a large segment of the black community, when the evidence suggests that opinion here was more ambiguous.

This analysis of Martin Luther King, Jr. varied from other studies in several ways. First, the source material relied upon were FBI files, which consumed over twelve microfilm reels and was overwhelmingly devoted to J. Edgar Hoover's determination to prove King's Communist commitments. Like DeSoto, they searched for a city of gold that did not exist and rather than admit this truth, continued their search in new areas and in new ways. Inter-office memos narrating private discussions between King and his advisors, discussions that appear the product of secret recordings, consumed a large portion of his file. While the FBI file has been used to better understand King, his decisions, and his

torments, it has not been used to explore the intersection of his religious commitments on Vietnam with the black community at large. Also of interest was not King's position on Vietnam but rather his relationship with the African-American religious community in light of the position he took. Due to the secretive nature of many of the conversations in this file – the value lay not in secretiveness but the free expression of concerns and attitudes - there existed an opportunity to not only understand King better, but also the larger African-American religious community as a whole.

The use of King's FBI file as a source in and of itself went not without concern. To what degree can a file by an organization explicitly committed to discovering King's failings be trusted? The FBI, compelled by Hoover's conviction that King meant America ill, sought to prove their director's assumptions. Hence, was there validity in the material produced? This author thought so. Under Hoover's direction, the FBI sought to prove King's Communist connections; they had no doubts as to the truth, they just lacked the evidence. In fact, the vast majority of entries in King's file were under the heading "Communist Influence." As if the ghost of Joseph McCarthy walked the halls, the F.B. I repeatedly used wiretaps, informants, and interviews to prove what Hoover *knew* was true, that King was a committed Communist. It was this fanaticism that empowered our use of this file. The FBI reported that King was not directly related to a Communist threat in an ancillary fashion. Furthermore, the thoroughness with which the FBI followed and recorded King, and the bureaucratic commitment to the task, meant that many of the reports contain

discussions not only on King's perspective on Vietnam but also his relationship with blacks and his stance on Vietnam. Hence, while valid concerns exist about the use of King's FBI file, the focus of the file and the information drawn from it help alleviate some of those concerns.

King appeared to be one of the earlier voices of opposition to Vietnam. As early as the spring of 1965, King explicitly questioned the Vietnam War in public speeches.[2] He also recognized that his perspectives on Vietnam would cause a chasm between himself and President Johnson. The President himself would warn King that he had "gone too far" in his criticism and to be wary of pressuring him.[3] It was this tension and division that helped undermined King's authority and opinion of Vietnam within in the black community. African-Americans had champion – President Johnson – for both their civic and economic concerns at the highest levels of power. Fear of losing this benefactor led to a lack of support for King as he struggled with the President and the nation over Vietnam. Furthermore, the black church was generally not a pedestal for black activism. King's use of the pulpit had caused earlier dissent among African-American Protestants. Thus a heritage of conservative African-American religious perspectives on political activism provided a base for the alienation of King upon which his stance on Vietnam, and its domestic political implications, could build.

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[2] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King at Queens College,* Section 33, Reel 7, 00062, (New York, May 17, 1965). Bizzell Library, The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma. Hereafter "Bizzell Library OU." Furthermore, most of the memos in the F.B.I. file lacked distinct titles. The titles provided are my own brief description to help further distinguish the memos from one another.

[3] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Callahan Congressional Record,* Section 33, Reel 7, 00077, Bizzell Library OU.

Attempts to wed the Civil Rights Movement to the protests over Vietnam caused part of the tension between blacks and King. It was not just King who sought to wed the two. Others beyond King sought this joining: groups like the Citizens Committee to End Violence in Vietnam and Alabama made explicit their perspective in their titles.[4] Such groups, part of a larger liberal protest movement, attempted to bridge the gap between the two protests from the perspective of a liberal protest rather than a civil rights mentality. This approach was seen in the membership and location of this group – white females from the West Coast – and its genesis in opposition to the House Un-Americans Activity Committee and not civil rights. In fact, groups themselves recognized this reality by continually seeking to reach across the racial divide and attempted to include King, the NAACP, and CORE.[5] SANE too sought to empower its protests through a "wedding of the civil rights and peace movements."[6]

Yet King did not need to rely on outside pressure to take a leadership role in both the Civil Rights and peace movements. As early as 1965, King, in speaking against the Vietnam War, declared he was "much more than a civil rights leader," that he had to "constantly speak to the moral issues of our day beyond civil rights."[7] Notably, this declaration revealed a willingness to put civil

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[4] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Demonstrations Protesting U.S. Intervention in Vietnam*, Section 26, Reel 5, 00908, (Los Angeles, March 12, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[5] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Demonstrations Protesting U.S. Intervention in Vietnam,* Section 26, Reel 5, 00921, (Los Angeles, March 10, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[6] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and SANE,* Section 34, Reel 7, 00149, (New York, May 21, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[7] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King on KNXT,* Section 37, Reel 7, 00687 (Los Angeles, July 19,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

rights and Vietnam on the same moral plane, something the black church, and perhaps a majority of blacks, did not do. The moral equivalency of civil rights and peace lay at the heart of King's thinking. "As devotees of civil rights, we must be as concerned about world peace, because in the final analysis, this is the most pressing issue."[8] King's theology of love and sin did not distinguish racial injustice from the destruction of war on foreign battlefields. While theologically consistent, African-American denominations as a whole, and the black community at large, did not share this moral equivalency.

King increasingly sought ways, with the aid of his advisors, "to bring pressure to bear in foreign policy matters."[9] To that end, King explored how to become "a leader in the peace movement" and thus explored contacting ministers in order to lead a grassroots peace movement among blacks.[10] King sought to push other civil rights organizations to take a stand on Vietnam; only the strenuous efforts of his closest advisors dissuaded him from this potentially explosive act.[11] Yet for those advisors that counseled caution, others counseled confrontation.

Some within the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) suggested that King should continue to build his base on Vietnam and then

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[8] *Ibid*.

[9] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King on KNXT,* Section 37, Reel 7, 00600, (July 12, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[10] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Stronger Stand on Vietnam,* Section 67, Reel 11, 00387 (New York, February 21, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[11] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and SNCC,* Section 39, Reel 7, 00958 (New York, August 2,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

inform Johnson that he "would no longer be associated with the administration," and by so leading a coalition of civil rights and peace movements would be able to "force an administration capitulation." However, such an approach would have amounted to civic and political suicide in the African-American community. As it was, King's outspokenness and stance on Vietnam increasingly alienated him from the majority of blacks.

To be sure, King denied that he fused the movements. In the face of public criticism from civil rights organizations for melding the two, King sharply refuted that he attempted to do so.[12] He was "very distraught over the bad publicity and criticism" from these charges and lamented that he did not have the strength "to carry on two struggles at the same time."[13] Public and private rhetoric aside and intentions notwithstanding, others viewed King's actions as *fusing* the two movements, something they sharply opposed.

Overt or subtle attempts to connect Vietnam with Civil Rights in the African-American community met resistance on several levels. The experience of the Citizen's Committee to End Violence in Vietnam and Alabama (CCEVVA) was illustrative of general resistance. CCEVVA experienced great difficulty in recruiting supporters to join its protests.[14] More importantly, in attempts to broaden its membership, CCEVVA had to reach out to civil rights activists, not

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[12] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Response to Criticism,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00705 (New York, April 13, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[13] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Meets with Labor,* Section 43, Reel 8, 00281 (New York, September 13,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[14] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Demonstrations Protesting U.S. Intervention in Vietnam*, Section 26, Reel 5, 00908, (Los Angeles, March 12, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

the other way around. That is to say, opponents of Vietnam willingly joined actions in favor of civil rights but there existed no reciprocity in the African-American community. King and his advisors repeatedly encountered this generalized resistance to wedding the two movements. Early on, King muzzled his voice and actions on Vietnam due to concern "about hurting the voting rights bill and because it was politically unwise."[15] When he did speak, King received significant criticism and was chastised by some of President Johnson's surrogates, such as Senator Thomas Dodd, a supporter of Johnson on both civil rights and Vietnam policy.[16] In fact, King and his advisors grew increasingly concerned about the costs of King's attempt to combine the civil rights movement and Vietnam War activism in terms of both public opinion and financial contributions.[17]

Resistance to joining the two movements also resided in particular communities, as King and his advisors realized. Most importantly, resistance emerged among different African-Americans. King recognized the need to create support in black churches, where it was most notably absent. As King grew increasingly active on Vietnam, he realized his "need to feel out the people in the

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[15] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and SANE,* Section 34, Reel 7, 00149, (New York, May 21, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[16] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Meets with Labor,* Section 43, Reel 8, 00281 (New York, September 13, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[17] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and U.N. Protest,* Section 68, Reel 11, 00501 (New York, March 29, 1967); United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Fundraising,* Section 68, Reel 11, 00562 (New York, April 5, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

church" to gauge what kind of support he could count upon.[18] This need of the most important African-American religious leader to "feel out" the church revealed not a lack of *knowledge,* but a lack of support from the black community. In response to a request from SANE to participate in a march, King refused "unless other distinguished" church leaders participated.[19] King recognized that for him, religious support was imperative. Yes, the context of the discussion did not focus explicitly on African-Americans, yet there existed no absence of support among distinguished white religious leadership.

Civil Rights organizations too challenged King's actions which – intentionally or unintentionally – conflated the two movements. King experienced resistance even within his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). A number within the SCLC resisted attempts "to organize demonstrations around the Vietnam situation."[20] A meeting of civil rights organizations in Washington, D.C. in the spring of 1966 led to an agreement that these organizations "would not get involved in the Vietnam issue."[21] Stanley Levinson repeatedly reminded King that other civil rights organizations remained silent on Vietnam and did not come to King's defense when he spoke out because, in Levinson's words, "they

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[18] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and SANE,* Section 34, Reel 7, 00149, (New York, May 21, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[19] *Ibid*.

[20] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King on KNXT,* Section 37, Reel 7, 00600, (July 12, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[21] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Review of SCCC Convention,* Section 56, Reel 9, 00848 (New York, April 26,1966), Bizzell Library OU.

had snuggled up to Johnson" and were "now on the inside."[22] Civil rights organizations made clear their political commitments and refused to join King.

The NAACP, the most conservative of Civil Rights organizations, proved especially resistant. The NAACP, via surrogates like Senator Jacob Javits, strongly attacked King's speeches whenever they ventured outside of Civil Rights and into Vietnam.[23] The NAACP chastised King for repeated attempts to meld the Civil Rights and war movements.[24] King responded to such charges as "myth," that he never called for the joining of the two movements.[25] Such a response might have been semantically correct, but not pragmatically so. Others outside the Civil Rights movement recognized the role that King played and the implications within and without the black community. Pictorially, the political cartoon "Vertigo" captured the actions of King and the tensions they created within the black community.

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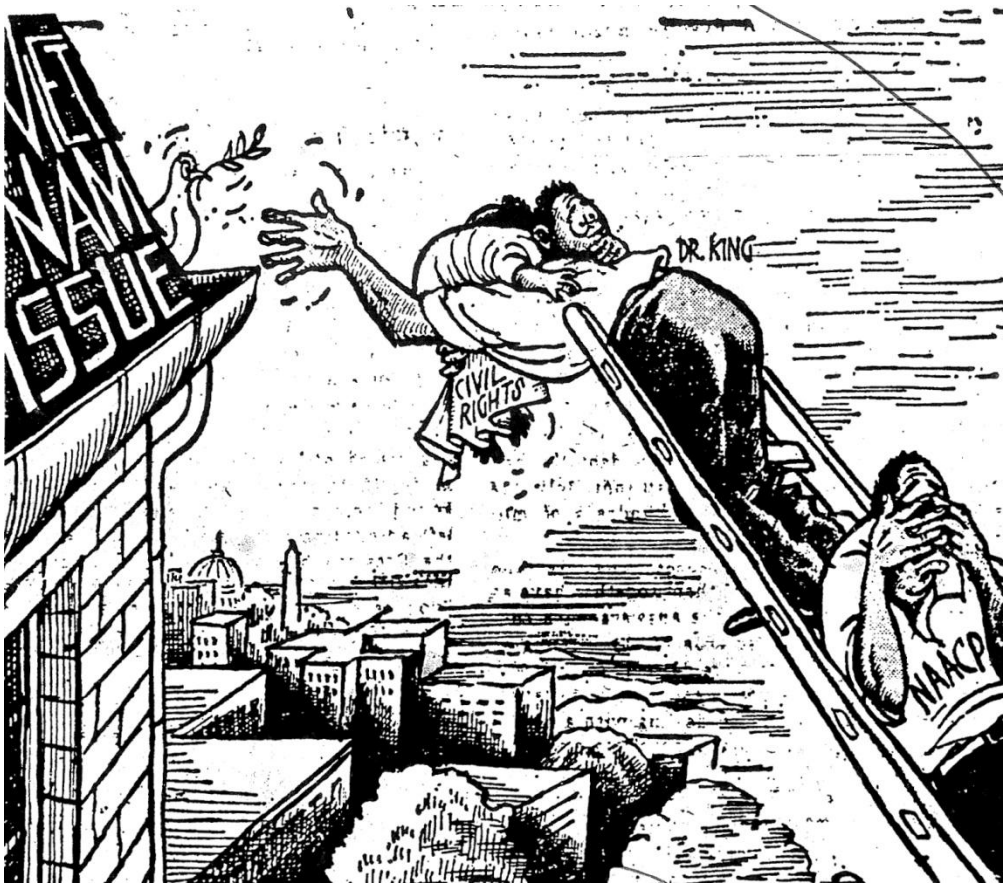
[22] *Ibid*.

[23] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: NAACP Criticism,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00651 (April 12, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[24] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Conscientious Objection Speech,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00662 (New York, April 12, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[25] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King's Response to NAACP,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00670 (Los Angeles, April 13, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.



"Vertigo"[26]

Opposition to King's desires also found expression among individual civil rights leaders. Lesser lights within the Civil Rights movement made clear their opposition both to King and others and King recognized that his actions served only to alienate him from other civil rights leaders.[27] After King began speaking against Vietnam, the United States Attorney General explored the basis for King's actions and found in discussions with Roy Wilkins and James Farmer that

[26] "Vertigo," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, (February 1967): E-13.

[27] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King on KNXT,* Section 37, Reel 7, 00646, (Los Angeles, July 12, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

they thought such a move "wrong" and caused them a great deal of "upset."[28] These two went on to declare:

> "We think we have enough of Vietnam in Alabama to occupy our attention. We'll leave foreign policy to the United States and enter our objections as citizens who know very little about it…our major drive is for the enjoyment of civil rights by Negro citizens of this country; we don't believe in dividing our energies; we don't have that many energies."[29]

Others echoed Wilkins and Farmer. Ralph Bunche, who was the only living Nobel Prize winner to do so, refused a call for peace in Vietnam authored by Linus Pauling and which followed the thinking of The United Nations Secretary General U Thant. King wanted to submit this same resolution to the SCLC for endorsement.[30] Bunche repeatedly chastised King's attempts to lead a combined movement.[31] Bayard Rustin, one of King's closest advisors, warned against moving ahead on Vietnam because "the civil rights movement [was] not ready to speak to the world on Vietnam" and to do so would only encourage further criticism by civil rights leaders.[32] When King pressed ahead and had the

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[28] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Attorney General Request,* Section 36, Reel 7, 00567, (July 6, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[29] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King on KNXT,* Section 37, Reel 7, 00687 (Los Angeles, July 19,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[30] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Planning for SCCC Conference,* Section 37, Reel 7, 00682, Bizzell Library OU.

[31] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Review of SCCC Convention,* Section 56, Reel 9, 00848 (New York, April 26,1966), Bizzell Library OU.

[32] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: SCLC Convention,* Section 39, Reel 7, 00975 (New York, August 10,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

SCLC pass a resolution on Vietnam, Rustin was "very sore."[33] In fact, all but one of the members of the Research Committee – a senior advisory group of the SCLC – opposed King's participation in Vietnam protest marches for fear of the consequences.[34] Interviews with King repeatedly drove home the point that he had angered fellow civil rights leaders with his words and deeds, which only resulted in "weakening, dividing, and even negating the strengths of the Civil Rights Movement in this country."[35]

The resistance that King encountered from churches, organizations and leaders reveal a profound lack of support once King ventured outside of Civil Rights. Therefore, King sought to remedy this lack of support. Recognizing the cost of his statements on Vietnam, members of the SCLC solicited "people to forward letters to King in support of King's recent comments regarding Vietnam."[36] Aside from the general public, advisors focused on "the possibility of obtaining statements from persons of influence backing King's right to speak out on the Vietnam situation as he did and counter-acting the criticism he has received for doing so."[37] King and his advisors even sought out leading senators

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[33] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Review of SCCC Convention,* Section 56, Reel 9, 00848 (New York, April 26,1966), Bizzell Library OU.

[34] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Participation in March,* Section 67, Reel 11, 00433 (New York, March 9, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[35] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King on Face the Nation,* Section 40, Reel 8, 00151 (Washington, D.C., August 30,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[36] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Seeking Support,* Section 43, Reel 8, 00318 (Miami, September 20,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[37] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and Vietnam Letters,* Section 43, Reel 8, 00325 (September 16,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

to issue declarations of support on behalf of King.[38] If letters of support did not work, King's advisors suggested he change the message and "come out with some dramatic domestic issue in order to off set the bad publicity" he received on Vietnam. Lastly, and perhaps in a way that most dramatically revealed the disconnect, to counteract the expected criticism for his participation in a large anti-Vietnam protest march to take place in New York in mid-April 1967, King decided to speak at a local church to explain his stance on Vietnam and soothe critics. The date chosen was April 4, 1967. The place was Riverside Church.[39] Either King's self-awareness was wrong or the intentions of the speech radically changed for his speech at Riverside Church served as one of the seminal critiques of the Vietnam War.

Of course, building support among blacks uniquely concerned King. He emphasized that he must continue "to amass Negro support against the war."[40] As a result of the criticisms he received, King and his advisors sought to build support by arguing that his experience in black communities and his listening to their opposition to Vietnam served as the basis for his declarations on the issue, not simply his own misgivings.[41] King convinced himself of the reality of black support to the degree that he and his advisors explored the possibility of getting

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[38] *Ibid*.

[39] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and Riverside Church,* Section 68, Reel 11, 00495 (New York, March 29, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[40] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Sweden Trip,* Section 71, Reel 11, 00945 (New York, May 16, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[41] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Response to Criticism,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00705 (New York, April 13, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

"a private poll project under way to prove that a majority of Negroes want an end to the war."[42]

When the criticism from without and within the black community reached a crescendo, when the support he felt sure existed did not materialize, King retreated. The firestorm caused by the Riverside Church speech encouraged King to shift his emphasis away from peace issues and back to civil rights as a way of quieting anger.[43] Aware of the way "former supporters" were now "publicly critical of his involvement in the peace movement," King embraced a "softening on the peace issue."[44]

In evaluating King and Vietnam, the task is ultimately not theological but relational. King's actions and speech were, perhaps, the most theologically and ethically consistent of any major figure studied. His theology of sin, justice, and love, cared not for political boundaries or political obligations. Yet, ideological consistency had its cost in the form of alienation from the black community

King's alienation from that community found expression from the earliest days of his opposition to Vietnam. Before becoming a reality, King foolishly declared that "he did not think his position on Vietnam would alienate any large number of civil rights supporters."[45] He also maintained that in his speeches

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[42] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King U.N. Vietnam Speech,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00722 (New York, April 14, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[43] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Review of Kings Speech,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00656 (New York, April 10, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[44] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Softening on Vietnam,* Section 72, Reel 12, 00044 (May 26, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[45] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King on KNXT,* Section 37, Reel 7, 00646, (Los Angeles, July 12, 1965), Bizzell Library OU.

against Vietnam, all he did was "articulate the concern and frustration" of blacks. In actuality, his position on Vietnam both cost him dearly and did not articulate the *public* speech of African-Americans. Partly, he alienated fellow blacks not necessarily because of Vietnam but rather the implications of both his position and his outspokenness. In addition, King did not help himself with his provocative approach, either. The black church was not known for leading in the area of political activism. His advisors maintained that his speeches against Vietnam were "too advanced for many Negros and that it did not constitute the widest appeal."[46] King heard warnings that his "peace position [was] so far advanced that it has isolated him" from the average African-American.[47]

In part, King's focus on Vietnam reflected a shift in focus to foreign policy that African-Americans in general did not share. An important conference in mid-1965 – well before Vietnam had become a divisive issue – between King, his advisors, and significant leaders of the African-American community emphasized that "he could not continue to make statements on foreign policy" because members of the black community would "come down on him like a house of fire."[48] King himself increasingly recognized that his "star was waning" because

[46] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: Review of Kings Speech,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00656 (New York, April 10, 1967), Bizzell Library OU. At some point, there is need for research on the rhetoric of King's speeches in the context of his audience. In an exploration of "register" words, one wonders if King's rhetoric aligned itself with that of mainline liberals. Granted, his cadence and style resonated with blacks but did his terminology do so as well?

[47] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Dispute with Bunche,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00714 (New York, April 14, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[48] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and Labor Conference,* Section 43, Reel 8, 00347 (New York, September 15,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

of his statements on Vietnam.[49] Blacks simply did not share the same focus on foreign policy because they had more pressing issues at hand. As Rustin informed King, "Negroes were sure that China is not our problem – we have no freedom here." Rustin would mouth the concerns of blacks and declare that King "better get off the China issue and help us solve our problems."[50]

African-Americans expected King to emphasize domestic concerns. Specifically, they sought King's focus on civil rights and poverty programs. While liberals increasingly focused on Vietnam – and here we should realize that King should best be understood by the historical community as a liberal protest leader and not simply as an African-American Civil Rights leader – "the Negro community" emphasized "anti-poverty programs."[51] Likewise, King grew increasingly concerned that he "get the reputation that he had left the civil rights movement and become a peace spokesman."[52] For King, this was a reputation and not a reality. African-Americans did not seem as convinced.

King's alienation from the black community found its most profound expression as he explored his future activities. As King and his advisors explored his "political aspirations," King mused with a potential presidential candidacy. He confidently declared his candidacy "would take Negro votes from

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[49] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and Vietnam Letters,* Section 43, Reel 8, 00325 (September 16,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[50] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and Labor Conference,* Section 43, Reel 8, 00347 (New York, September 15,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[51] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Magazine Article,* Section 60, Reel 10, 00308 (New York, July 1,1966), Bizzell Library OU.

[52] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and The Nation,* Section 66, Reel 11, 00265 (New York, January 3, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

President Johnson."[53] This research and the work of others seem to make clear that this would not have been the case. Rather than make a public decision, King and his advisors sought to make Johnson "sweat over King's political aspirations."[54] At no point did King reflect on the possibility that such an action would cost him more black support than President Johnson. If forced to choose between King and President Johnson, African-Americans would – and did – choose President Johnson. At times, King's alienation encouraged him to make foolish decisions. Thus, King and his advisors explored the possibility of building his base on the Vietnam issue and then inform President Johnson that King "would no longer be associated with the administration" and in leading a coalition of civil rights, labor, and peace movements, would be able to "force an administration capitulation."[55]

King only came to realize the full extent of his alienation late in life. The spring of 1967 and the aftermath of his Riverside Church speech seemed to awaken him to the chasm that had emerged between him and the rest of the African-American community. In this period, King grew increasingly concerned

[53] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Presidential Run,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00784 (Washington, D.C., April 24, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[54] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Presidential Run,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00784 (Washington, D.C., April 24, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[55] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Stronger Stand on Vietnam,* Section 67, Reel 11, 00387 (New York, February 21, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

that his appeal to blacks was "waning." King pointed to the failure of voter registration drives in Chicago as evidence of this truth.[56]

King and his advisors attributed King's waning support in the African-American community to scheming by competitors. While King's advisors recognized his stand on Vietnam would "undermine his leadership in Negro communities," they attributed this loss of status to subversive campaigns by competing civil rights organizations and leaders.[57] On more than one occasion, King seemed convinced that the opposition he encountered within the black community was due not to his stance on Vietnam but rather a strong "belief that the criticism of him" emerged from "an effort to get at him and to undermine him."[58]

Recognizing that the protest marches King led and participated in had a very small black presence at best, Stanley Levinson urged that King and his advisors "must ensure Negro community support" for King. King himself sought "ways to bring about harmony among Negroes" on this issue, in part, by having A. Phillip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, as well as "other Negro leaders to explain his position." Or, as mentioned earlier, he thought of commissioning polls to demonstrate support that in reality did not

[56] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and Appeal to Blacks,* Section 68, Reel 11, 00538 (March 8, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[57] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King Dispute with Bunche,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00714 (New York, April 14, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

[58] *Ibid*.

exist.[59] Again, King failed to recognize a distinction between private thought and public opinion among African-Americans as it related to Vietnam specifically.

Ralph Bunche, however, clearly recognized the differences. He appreciated the intersection of private opinion and public speech in the African-American community and would make explicit what others only hinted at – that African-American commitments to President Johnson meant that African-Americans would *not* speak against Vietnam and they increasingly marginalized those who did. Bunche would publically chastise King for his stance on Vietnam, but in a private meeting would declare: "Martin, I want you to know I agree with everything you are saying on Vietnam. I am absolutely opposed to our policy." Bunche simply refused to publically oppose Vietnam and the President due to the personal and political consequences. He would only do so privately. King "expressed disappointment with Bunch because he would not muster sufficient moral courage to come out openly and make a statement concurring with his position."[60]

The disconnect, cause of alienation, and the waning of King's star due to his stance on Vietnam had its origins not in politics but in religion and theology. King's ideology and his natural conflation of the Civil Rights movement with the Vietnam protest movement found origins in his theology; more specifically, within the religious role he played: the prophet. King not only recognized this religious role and understood its Biblical foundations, he also embraced the office. He

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[59] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King U.N. Vietnam Speech,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00722 (New York, April 14, 1967).

[60] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King U.N. Vietnam Speech,* Section 69, Reel 11, 00722 (New York, April 14, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

recognized that as pastor, he had "a priestly function as well as a prophetic function, and in the prophetic role [he] must constantly speak to the moral issues of [the] day;" that is, he believed his priestly role called him to speak out not only about civil rights, but other moral dilemmas of the era, such as the Vietnam War.[61] In challenging sin, this prophet, as those before him, did not equivocate nor did he waver if the recipients be Philistines or Israelites, North Vietnamese or Americans. King remained consistent in this thinking and declared the same on the eve of his Riverside Church speech in the spring of 1967. King recognized that speaking against Vietnam would result in receiving "a lot of criticism," yet he felt that America's stance on Vietnam was "so wrong that a prophecy is needed" and that he "should be the prophet to inform the country of this fact."[62] In this, King would have been more at home and better received among the leadership of white mainline denominations.

Therefore, in retrospect, we see that King, the foremost African-American leader of his age, stood, unintentionally, apart from many African-Americans and, specifically, African-American protestants. He sought to lead where many blacks refused to follow because of either historical precedent or political commitments.

[61] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King on KNXT,* Section 37, Reel 7, 00687 (Los Angeles, July 19,1965), Bizzell Library OU.

[62] United States Department of Justice. *Memo: King and U.N. Protest,* Section 68, Reel 11, 00501 (New York, March 29, 1967), Bizzell Library OU.

Chapter 9

No Man Can Serve Two Masters:
African-American Protestants and the Vietnam War

In many ways, it is easier to understand and categorize King's thought and role than it is to do the same with African-American denominations. While morality and ethics may not be definitive, in the context of this study, African-American denominations can often times be a gray area. One finds them echoing the concerns and rhetoric of both mainline and conservative denominations.

Like conservative evangelical denominations, African-American denominations modified language regarding the war to fit their situation. Conservatives would take the language of war and apply it to salvation. African-American denominations would take that same language and apply it to the issues of race. For example, a report from the North Carolina conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ) would declare that the Christian must "join in the freedom fight," invoking a common wartime idiom. Through this, the AMEZ encouraged others to "help save the unsaved, alcoholics and race haters."[1] A discussion of the war on poverty described it as "a skirmish, but not yet a full war."[2] Likewise, just as war found redefinition, so too did peace. A Christian education article piece, in asking the definition of peace, declared that peace was "a black American free to live in a white suburb unmolested,

[1] Susie E. Moore, "North Carolina Conf. Holds 100th Session." *The Star of Zion,* 80, no. 43 (May 15, 1964): 4. Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Hereafter "Archives LOC"

[2] "A Skirmish But Not Yet A Full-Scale War." *The Star of Zion,* 88, no. 50 (December 2, 1965): 7, Archives LOC.

unintimidated, and uninhibited by racial barriers."[3] In this way, the conservative's commitment to salvation – both theologically and as a diversion – and African-American commitments to the Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty encouraged a shift in language.

African-American denominations also echoed conservative denominations in their focus on the spiritual. Although not nearly to the degree of conservatives, African-American denominations emphasized the mission of salvation. The "sobering fact remains that the winning of souls to the Christian life is the objective of the church," wrote one editor in the Star of Zion, the official organ of the AMEZ.[4] Like their conservative evangelical brethren, African-American denominations looked upon the violence of their world and concluded that peace in general could only be achieved spiritually.[5] "The peace for which the world yearns will never come until men are willing to recognize God as the Supreme ruler of the universe and hallow His mandates." Peace would be achieved "not by military might, nor through political diplomats around a peace table but through Christian teachers in all lands teaching citizens the sacredness of human life."[6]

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[3] Editorial. "Safely Through Another Week." *The Star of Zion,* 92, no. 51 (December 18, 1969): 1, 6, Archives LOC.

[4] "The Primary Objective of the Church." *The Star of Zion,* 86, no. 49 (June 18, 1964): 4, Archives LOC.

[5] Richard Lenzi, "Letter To Editor." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 42 (October 24, 1968): 6, Archives LOC.

[6] "Report of the State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 88, no. 6 (January 14, 1965): 3, Archives LOC.

If anything, the pursuit of peace only revealed the failure of man, saint and sinner alike. In a general sense, war was "the result of sin, of widespread violation and rejection of the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule, and [was] punishment by God intended to bring back His obedient and rebellious children."[7] Specifically, Alexander Barnes, Director of Public Relations for the AMEZ declared that Vietnam resulted from "the failure of Christians to exert action" and the failure of the church to "live up to the purposes for which it was designed."[8]

In fact, if peace were to be achieved in Vietnam, African-American denominations were poised to question its value: "If we win the war in Vietnam, will this be the answer to our problems? We think not, for there are wars most everywhere, not only in America. The world needs to seek God."[9] A final resolution for war could only be found in the expectant Eschaton. The "Eschaton" was the time of Christ's return, final judgment of man, and concrete resolution of the problem of sin. The Board of Bishops of the AMEZ jointly declared in 1968 that when "Christ comes again he will usher in the universal reign of peace. Until that time, the church must live in the interim."[10] Therefore, in the ways of language, of salvation, of sin, and of peace, African-American

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[7] Lenzi, Richard, "Letter To Editor." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 42 (October 24, 1968): 6, Archives LOC.

[8] Alexander Barnes, "A.M.E Zion Church Faces Crucial Issues." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 6 (February 8, 1968): 1, Archives LOC.

[9] "State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 7 (February 17, 1967): 1, 3, Archives LOC.

[10] "Board Of Bishops Addresses The Church." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 29 (July 18, 1968): 2, Archives LOC.

denominations echoed the language of conservative Evangelicals. As previously discussed, such a dualistic worldview for conservatives encouraged a disconnect from the political turmoil of Vietnam. African-Americans possessed a conservative evangelical theological heritage but also the unique influence of a historical resistance to political outspokenness, the burden of the Civil Rights Movement and fidelity to President Johnson to further encourage silence on the Vietnam issue.

Yet while African-Americans appeared similar to conservatives in the area of religious rhetoric and an emphasis upon salvation, they were dissimilar in the area of political action. Whereas conservative evangelicals sharply criticized political involvement by the church or changed the concept to make it irrelevant, African-American denominations, like moderates in Mainline denominations, could embrace political action not just by individuals but by Christians as part of their faith and organizational obligations. "Surely there is a 2,000 year old precedent for a preacher's going beyond words to good deeds to even a direct challenge… in order to alter man's ways," declared one editorial.[11] The church had a fundamental responsibility to secular society and found itself legitimately "criticized for not taking part in many of the controversial statements or actions" of the day.[12] Hence, Bishop Sherman of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) presented a resolution to his church, stating that it was "the obligation and opportunity of our denomination to give guidance and support to our…churches

[11] Theodore C. Sorenson, "Tomorrows Ministers." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 40:11 (November, 1966): 4. Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, TN. Hereafter "Archives SBHLA"

[12] Editorial. "Involvement." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 6 (February 10, 1967): 4, Archives LOC.

and communities" in the areas of the "urban crisis, the Vietnam War, birth control, and abortion," among other areas.[13] Using the Biblical language of Proverbs 29:18 – "where there is no vision the people perish" – the Petersburg district of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion (AMEZ) called on church members to have vision that we can grapple with the great problems of our times."[14]

African-American denominations warned of the consequences for the nation if their parishioners did not participate politically. "A frank facing of the facts suggests that if people of religious commitment do not influence creatively the process of government, the forces of corruption and self interest will capture the reigns," wrote one church member in a response to those who wanted to make the church's role simply a spiritual one.[15] Edward Odom, former Secretary of the Church Department for the N.A.A.C.P and member of the AMEZ wrote that if one desired to positively moderate the "impact of government on the climate of community life," then the church needed to be involved.[16]

African-American denominations encouraged not only corporate involvement in politics but also defended those involved from their critics. Wrote one leader,

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[13] *Official Minutes of the Thirty-eighth Session of the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church 1968.* Nashville, TN, May, 1968: 140. African Methodist Episcopal Church: Department of Research and Scholarship, Nashville, TN. Hereafter "Archives: AMEDRS Furthermore, proceedings and articles were stored in basic cardboard boxes without a system of reference. The material in the boxes was neither organized nor separated.

[14] Senora Lawson, "Petersburg Dist. Church School Convention." *The Star of Zion,* 92, no. 51 (December 18, 1969): 6, Archives LOC.

[15] Edward J. Odom Jr., "Surveying Social Action." *The Star of Zion,* 88, no. 52 (December 16, 1965): 1, Archives LOC.

[16] *Ibid,* 1, 3.

> "We are hoping that the time will come, and may God hasten the day, when strong men and women will not be tagged gadflies, rebels, etc., simply because they stood up for what they felt was a good cause. Can we preach to the world democracy and freedom of speech and in our own local church we are sometimes forbidden to disagree?"[17]

At times during the Vietnam War, it appeared that African-American churchmen wrote in direct response to the approach and criticisms of conservative evangelicals and conservative reactionaries within Mainline denominations. The Board of Bishops of the AMEZ declared that the Church "must change its concept that its sole purpose for existing is to save the souls of men. It is not enough for Christians to seek to save souls and improve individual's character, on the assumption that good people will produce good government."[18] Other churchmen chastised the "hang-ups of the conservative element" in the area of politics and declared "the clergy moves forward in politics."[19] In fact, ministers at times rebuked their superiors for lack of leadership in the political arena.[20] Recall, conservative evangelicals opposed to the growing political involvement of the church repeated the mantra that "good people led to good government." Hence, the church should focus on redeeming the souls of man. African-

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[17] Editorial. "Democracy And Freedom Of Speech." *The Star of Zion,* 89, no. 35 (September 15, 1966): 4, Archives LOC.

[18] Editorial. "Democracy And Freedom Of Speech." *The Star of Zion,* 89, no. 35 (September 15, 1966): 4, Archives LOC.

[19] "Editorial Page: Clergy Enter National Political Scene." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 121:40 (June 23, 1970): 8, Archives: AMEDRS.

[20] *The 153rd Session of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.* 1969: 329, Archives: AMEDRS.

American denominations shared the emphasis upon spiritual obligations while at the same time affirmed corporate political action as a divine obligation.

In this way, African-Americans reflected conservatives in some areas and mainline moderates in others; also at times, they reflected both conservative and moderate perspectives. For example, the attitudes of the African-American church were split on the issue of protests. On the one hand, some African-American denominations strongly supported protests and protestors. The AME passed a resolution extending the church's "sincere and prayerful endorsement and also its active support" to protests and protestors.[21] Writers of the AME also defended protests and protestors from criticism.[22] In fact, some writer declared that the protests that turned raucous or violent easily explained and excused due to the unwillingness of civil authorities and local leaders to allow and embrace them.[23]

On the other hand, some African-American denominations voiced opposition to protests and some within the African-American community only targeted extreme expressions of protest. Therefore, church members would maintain, "we do not, of course, condone violence or taking the law into our own

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[21] *Official Minutes of the Thirty-eighth Session of the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church 1968.* Nashville, TN, May, 1968: 98-99, Archives: AMEDRS.

[22] H.H. Kenner, "From This Point of View." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 119:9 (August 27, 1968): 8, Archives: AMEDRS.

[23] "Letter to New York Times." *The Star of Zion,* 88, no. 42 (October 7, 1965): 1, Archives LOC.

hands."[24] Or, "With peaceful demonstrations, we are in accord, but we denounce mob violence."[25] However, some – mainly the National Baptist Convention (NBC) – expressed resolute opposition to any protest.

The NBC was, in many ways, the most conservative African-American denomination. It castigated civil rights groups as "radical organizations" whose disruptive protests reflected "clear planning and direction" by "radicals" and "world communism."[26] When not attacking the protestors themselves, the NBC challenged their methods. Under the leadership of Bishop Jamison, one African-American denomination told protestors – in the areas of both Civil Rights and Vietnam – that disagreements with society at large should be addressed "through the courts of the land" rather than protests of any kind.[27] They challenged any attitudes that "substitute[d] demonstrations as the only method of correcting the evils of society and the errors in government."[28] Instead, church members desirous of change should participate in "evolutionary changes through amendments when time, experience, and change demand[ed] it."[29] Further, the

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[24] "Pres. Johnson Points Up Need to Finish Job Lincoln Began." *The Star of Zion,* 88, no. 45 (May 21, 1964): 1, Archives LOC.

[25] "Report of the State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 88, no. 6 (January 14, 1965): 1, Archives LOC.

[26] George Benson. "Planned Agitation: The Radicals and Riots." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 41:12 (December 1967): 4, Archives SBHLA.

[27] *The Record of the 85th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1965: 55, Archives SBHLA.

[28] *Ibid*.

[29] *The Record of the 85th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN: 1965, 219, Archives SBHLA.

Christian "must work within the framework of the law and order to accomplish the aims and ideals of the people of the nation."[30]

Expressing a conservative African-American mentality, the NBC called its parishioners to focus their frustrations and desires for uplift internally rather than externally. A report on Freedom Farm, a for profit farm owned by the NBC that also served as a job training site, argued that such internalization served as an "example of what can be done when we move[ed] from protest to production."[31] Concurrently, President Jackson, intentionally modeling himself as his generation's Booker T. Washington, delivered his "Second Great Atlanta Speech," which called on blacks to "harness their own gifts to withstand the pressures and problems that confront[ed] them."[32] At times, such declarations seemed overtly sycophantic as when President Jackson met with future President Nixon, who was described as supporting Jackson's emphasis on moving from "protest to production."[33] To be clear, African-American religious resistance to political activism was not unusual. In fact, there perhaps existed greater precedent of opposition to pulpit based activism – vis-à-vis King – than there did in favor it. The African-American church, while the central institution of Black Americans, was still conservative with regards its public presence.

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[30] *The Record of the 87th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1967: 69, Archives SBHLA.

[31] *The Record of the 86th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1966: 204, Archives SBHLA.

[32] *The Record of the 88th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1968: 240, Archives SBHLA.

[33] "Dr. Jackson's Call to National Unity Endorsed By President Nixon." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 43:6 (June 1969): 1, Archives SBHLA.

It appears impossible to categorize African-American denominations on the attendant issues of rhetoric, spiritualization, political action, and protest; at times, the denominations reflected patterns of conservative evangelicals, as in the case of the spiritualization of issues, language, the emphasis upon salvation, and a dualistic world view. At other times, they reflected patterns of mainline moderates, as seen in not only the strong affirmation of corporate political action by the church but also the sharp criticism of conservative opponents of such action. At still other times, they reflected patterns of both, as found in attitudes towards protests. One would expect that there existed greater support for protest in light of the Civil Rights Movement. However, such counter-intuitive results reflect the unique position of African-American denominations and the impact of Lyndon Johnson on them and their explicit opinions on Vietnam as well as historical precedents of the lack of political activism by African-American churches.

African-American denominations appeared to have a very minimalistic approach to Vietnam. The sum total of their direct and explicit comments in official proceedings or church publications paled in comparison to the smallest conservative evangelical denomination studied. Most of the earliest reports were more incidental and factual than opinionated. For example, one might find a story of a relief worker in one publication, a story of a Baptist student sent to fight in another or the fortune of a soldier whose life was saved by a Bible providentially placed in a pocket in yet another publication.[34]

[34] "Dr. Row Reports on Mission to Vietnam." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 116:22 (November 9, 1965): 13, Archives AMEDRS; "Dr. E.T. Dahlberg, Speaks At Vietnam March." *National*

More significant was an apparent minimization – be it intentional or unintentional – of Vietnam. Repeatedly, in the middle of an American society torn apart by the debate and protests over the Vietnam War, one found the war non-existent in stated concerns. For example, the Cape Fear conference, in its State of the Country report, made no mention of Vietnam as one of the issues facing the country.[35] This absence was not a temporally or geographically limited incident. In sundry times and places, religious districts reflected this pattern of failure even to mention America's most virulent issue.[36] In fact, one report on the State of the Country described the war as inconsequential. "If we win the war in Vietnam, will this be the answer to our problems? We think not, for there are wars most everywhere, not only in America."[37] Clearly, the attention of African-American churchmen lay elsewhere.

Yet to write of the preoccupation of African-American denominations is not to say that they entirely ignored Vietnam. Although not voluminous, there existed support for the war in Vietnam. Part of the support rested upon the occasional thought that foreign policy was more important than domestic concerns. Members of the AMEZ, while expressing concerns about the dark storm clouds of war on the horizon, declared that America "must be prepared to stay in it for a

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Baptist Voice, no. 39:11 (November 1964): 6, Archives SBHLA; "Vietnam Fighters Thank Baylor Student for Card." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 40:1 (January 1966): 13, Archives SBHLA; "North Carolina GI Is Saved By Bible." *The Star of Zion,* 88, no. 52 (December 16, 1965): 2, Archives LOC.

[35] "Report On The State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 3 (January 21, 1967): 2, Archives LOC.

[36] "The State Of The Church Report." *The Star of Zion,* 93, no. 1 (January 1, 1970): 3, Archives LOC; "Report, Committee On The State Of The Church." *The Star of Zion,* 93, no. 42 (October 15, 1970): 6, Archives LOC.

[37] "State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 7 (February 17, 1967): 1-2, Archives LOC.

long time."[38] Another, reflecting upon the 89th Congress, mused that "certainly some phases of the anti-poverty war are good and essential. But, especially when a hot war [was] being fought, every possible cut in domestic spending helps." This same writer would go on to prophetically write that the 89th Congress "gave us guns and butter" but "someday, someone may have to make a choice."[39] Notably, one did not find the NBC echoing this conservative thought, as one would expect. African-American religious opinions, therefore, did not follow strict patterns.

Support for the Vietnam War was partly predicated upon some implicit just war thinking, a just war being one in which the motives and means were just. One bishop in the AMEZ mandated strong support of Vietnam, for "what communion hath light with darkness? The Negro knows that the God he is serving is a God of peace and a God of war. When Satan challenged God's power, He never raised a white flag. He went to war."[40] Likewise, the NBC forthrightly stated that war in Vietnam was just because a benevolent America came to the aid of a nation under communist attack.[41] More than one writer saw the Vietnam War as a national threat in which America's "survival" was at stake.[42]

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[38] "The State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 89, no. 5 (January 27, 1966): 6, Archives LOC.

[39] "Layman's Page: Guns or Butter: Decision Delayed." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 117:23 (November 1966): 10, Archives AMEDRS.

[40] George N. Tate, "Report on 'The State Of Country' Attracts Minister." *The Star of Zion,* 89, no. 34 (September 8, 1966): 2, Archives LOC.

[41] "Baptist Editorial Says Viet Nam Policy Just." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 40:4 (April, 1966): 13, Archives SBHLA.

[42] *The Record of the 91st Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1971: 101, Archives SBHLA.

Therefore, one could find expression of a dualistic just cause theology in supporting the war. However, support and opposition to Vietnam were not predicated solely or even primarily upon just war thinking or concepts of humanity, the world, and sin. On this issue, it appears that theological commitments did not guide African-Americans.

Pragmatism appeared to drive support for Vietnam more than ideology; specifically, concern about how the Vietnam War impacted civil rights. The State of the Country report by the Louisiana Conference of the AMEZ declared that "if [African-Americans] want total integration and all the freedoms that go with it; we must be willing to share all of its responsibilities."[43] Likewise, the Virginia Conference declared "our" support to "our" fight in Vietnam, recognizing the advancement of African-American concerns if President Johnson experienced strong support.[44]

Support for Vietnam meant a distancing from King and others. Editorials chastised King, Carmichael, Young, and others who "would have us believe that the war in Vietnam [was] not our war and that the Negros' interest should be mainly for himself."[45] Other church leaders made use of very public platforms to not only soundly criticize King and Carmichael for their criticism of the Vietnam

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[43] "State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 13 (March 30, 1967): 2 Archives LOC.

[44] "State Of The Country Report Virginia Annual Conference." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 13 (April 6, 1967): 2, Archives LOC.

[45] "State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 13 (March 30, 1967): 2, Archives LOC.

War, but also for their encouragement of young men to conscientiously object.[46] They praised King "for his leadership on Civil Rights," but his stance on Vietnam led to chastisement because it drove "a wedge between the Civil Rights Group and Negro and white supporters."[47] Accordingly, due to their statements on Vietnam, anti-war civil rights leaders, especially King, had "erred."[48]

African-American denominations did express distaste for Vietnam. When described editorially, they saw Vietnam as a "thorn in the flesh."[49] The Biblical reference here is notable; the Apostle Paul, beset by some physical or spiritual infirmity, sought relief from God for this "thorn in his flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). God did not provide Paul with relief but instead told him "my grace is sufficient for you." Likewise, Vietnam proved a vexing irritant for African-Americans. They were not only vexed in the same way as other Protestants, they also had pressing issues of political commitments and civil rights concerns to make their thorn especially prickly.

One thing that is clear: vocal or significant opposition to Vietnam by African-American denominations did not take place during the Presidency of Lyndon Johnson. Initial approaches saw Vietnam as a quandary for the church

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[46] "Bishop Walls Expresses Shock And Surprise." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 24 (June 22, 1967): 1, Archives LOC.

[47] George N. Tate, "The Indiana Conference." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 25 (June 29, 1967): 6-7, Archives LOC.

[48] J. O. Romao, "Bishop Tucker In Indiana." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 26 (July 6, 1967): 2, Archives LOC.

[49] Editorial. "President Walking A Tight Rope." *The Star of Zion,* 93, no. 23 (June 4, 1970): 4, Archives LOC.

and its members. Early on, they recognized the unique position in which opposition to Vietnam place the black community.

> "Negro leaders affiliated with civil rights organizations have been divided on whether their groups should participate actively in peace movements. Those opposing such actions fear a loss in the support and effectiveness of civil rights drives as a consequence."[50]

Churches, at best, confessed this was "the most perplexing war" and lamented that their "fighting seem[ed] in vain." As some church members realized, "the only choice [Americans] will have in the long run will be to either quit the battlefield in Vietnam or use our entire arsenal of atomic and hydrogen bombs. The longer we delay in making the choice the greater the price we must pay in blood, sweat, and tears."[51] The theme of quandary found expression in guidance from Bishops which rejected "war as a method for settling differences," yet at the same time affirmed the Christian citizens' obligations to the state.[52] The youth of the church grew impatient with the puzzling lack of direction and petitioned church leaders to take a stand on key issues for the sake of guidance.[53]

These notes of caution, concern, and quandary were still conservative, nonetheless. As the Board of Bishops wrung their hands over Vietnam, they

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[50] "Southern Christian Leadership Conference Suggests U.S. Study Withdrawal." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 116:47 (May 10, 1966): 1-2, Archives AMEDRS.

[51] A. B. West, "State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 50 (December 14, 1967): 1-2, Archives LOC.

[52] "Board Of Bishops Addresses The Church." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 29 (July 18, 1968): 2, Archives LOC.

[53] *Official Minutes of the Thirty-eighth Session of the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church 1968.* Nashville, TN, May, 1968: 262-263, Archives AMEDRS.

prayed for a "just conclusion at the nearest possible moment."[54] Church leaders bemoaned "the pain of Vietnam," yet the "dire paucity of unbiased fact" restrained them from providing clear moral guidance. Therefore, they would pray that God grant the wisdom so that "the horrible conflict might come to a swift end."[55] These phrases of just conclusion, of lack of information that denied clear moral claims, the prayer for a swift end without demanding that swift end, would have found warm reception in the Southern Baptist Convention or the Pentecostal Holiness Church, for these churches too used this thinking and language. At the same time, the examples above never found an accompanying chorus of support as was found among conservative religious groups.

Only with the ascension of Nixon to the presidency did clear voices of opposition to Vietnam to emerge within African-American denominations. Nixon heard declarations from African-American churches that "now [was] the time to persuade the President to effect a cease fire."[56] The opposition to the war expressed, after Johnson's departure, did find some resonance with thoughts expressed by mainline moderates. Opposition to war in general could serve as a basis to Vietnam War opposition specifically. Declared Raymond Luther Jones, Bishop of the West Central North Carolina Conference of the AMEZ, "war for any

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[54] "Board Of Bishops Addresses The Church." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 29 (July 18, 1968): 2, Archives LOC.

[55] "Bishop Shaw's Address To The N.Y. Annual Conf." *The Star of Zion,* 92, no. 36 (September 4, 1969): 6, Archives LOC.

[56] "Editorial Page: Religious Activists Step Up Pressure To End Hostilities In Southeast Asia." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 123:18 (November 7, 1973): 4, Archives AMEDRS.

reason is clearly wrong."[57] Christian educators seeking to raise up the next generation taught that "nobody wins a fight. War is futile because it settles nothing."[58] Likewise, the State of the Country report by the 7th Episcopal District found that the church must be "opposed to wars."[59]

The destruction of Vietnam also fueled opposition to the Vietnam War at home. The Philadelphia Conference of the AME called Vietnam a "full-scale war of destruction" which made it "morally wrong." In language that seemed especially tailored to Nixon's policies, it castigated the "destruction of more than 35,000 valuable men to procure an 'honorable peace'."[60] Again, the NBC, after LBJ's departure, expressed revulsion at the "horrible results of the Vietnam War which [had] created…orphans…and…a weekly body count…[and] scientific achievements that have by far outstripped our moral quality."[61] Notably, in these messages of destruction, there existed neither any reference to suffering humanity as in moderate Mainline opposition nor expressions of shock at the specific tools of war, notably napalm or bombings.

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[57] Raymond Luther Jones. "Episcopal Message To The West Central North Carolina Conference." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 49 (December 12, 1968): 3, Archives LOC.

[58] Editorial. "Safely Through Another Week." *The Star of Zion,* 92, no. 51 (December 18, 1969): 6, Archives LOC.

[59] "Report On The State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 95, no. 36 (September 7, 1972): 2, Archives LOC.

[60] *The 153rd Session of the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.* 1969: 363-364, Archives AMEDRS.

[61] *The Record of the 89th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN: 1969, 447, Archives SBHLA.

Opposition to Vietnam also explored the way the war negatively transformed society. It led to "people hardened and unconcerned about human suffering" and encouraged "greed, selfishness and gain."[62] Aside from the negative transformation of people, there existed a negative transformation of American government. The war's corruption of national politics made it wrong.[63] The way the war made important decisions secretive, hidden from the light of truth, made it wrong.[64] The way the war encouraged a national hypocrisy in sending "its black citizens thousands of miles away from home to fight that other men have freedom, when they are not free themselves" made it wrong[65]

One notable absence was any opposition due to the number of black deaths. There occurred only one statement which expressed this anger. As part of a call to end the war, one editor declared that "as a race we are continually alarmed because statistics point up with regularity that black servicemen are being conscripted and dying in larger numbers than our population ration."[66] Popular conceptions and description of race and Vietnam emphasize black anger at the death rates of black servicemen. While this might be true for particular

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[62] Primrose Finches. "The Woman's Auxiliary Adopts Some Meaningful Resolutions." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 46:10 (October, 1972): 1, Archives SBHLA.

[63] Editorial. "The Religious Community And American Politics." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 45 (December 5, 1968): 4, Archives LOC.

[64] "Resolution On The Pentagon Papers." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 45:9 (August 1971): 6, Archives SBHLA.

[65] *Combined Minutes of the First Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.* 1969: 338, Archives AMEDRS.

[66] Editorial. "Report Of The Editor Of The Star Of Zion." *The Star of Zion,* 93, no. 9 (February 26, 1970): 4, Archives LOC.

segments of the African-American population, it did not appear to be a stated concern for African-American Protestants.

Of course, opposition to Vietnam could serve as an opportunity less for honest outrage and more as a platform for foolish attempts at self-aggrandizement. The President of the NBC – an individual whom the record shows was accused of embezzlement and seemed overtly focused on building his image – released his plan to resolve the Vietnam conflict and forthrightly sent it to Nixon and the leaders of Russia, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, the United Nations, the Paris Peace Conference, and "all the candidates running for the Presidency of the United States of America." His peace plan essentially allowed for the relocation of North Vietnamese who "embraced the ideology and philosophy of that particular government" to South Vietnam. In turn, America and Russia were to support each respective state with economic development. Finally, North and South Vietnam were to operate with "open friendship" and if they "chose to win, or try to win one another to their ways of thinking, let them do it by discussion, friendly debate, goodwill and fellowship."[67]

The foray into international peace agreements aside, the overwhelming opposition to Vietnam resided not in theology or ideology, or the suffering of the Vietnamese, but in domestic concerns and implications. To be sure, these domestic concerns found expression in mainline moderate opposition; however, they were not central in those arguments. For African-American denominations, they were nearly the *only* arguments. It was not simply a domestic lens but a

[67] Robbie Crump-McCoy, "Dr. J.H. Jackson Releases Plan For Peace." *National Baptist Voice,* no. 46:6 (June 1972): 1, Archives SBHLA.

particular set of domestic issues which guided African-American opposition to Vietnam after the ascension of President Nixon.

African-American commitment to Vietnam was partly predicated on faithfulness to a president based upon his fidelity to their central concerns. As one report noted, "despite the fact that we have myriad stiff and sticky problems here at home concerning the drive for equality and job opportunity…the realities of the situation show that our military men are fighting, and some dying, in the jungles of Vietnam."[68] As the domestic concerns of African-American church attendees grew, so too did impatience with Vietnam. "The time [had] come when America must take steps to right conditions in her own land," declared the Cape Fear Conference State of the Country report.[69] Repeatedly, reports on the nation's troubles confirmed the primacy of the domestic. Over and over, reference to Vietnam came only as an impediment to the issues of civil rights and poverty programs. Reports on the nation's ills focused on integration, the role of the NAACP, political reform and after those had been listing would reports close with a one-sentence call for disarmament. Vietnam existed only within the context of the domestic problems of poverty, drug addiction, and inflation.[70] Mentions or associations of Vietnam with sin only occurred after the primary

[68] "Whitney Young Goes to Vietnam to Study Problems of 40,000 Negro Troops." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 117:8 (August 9, 1966): 1, Archives AMEDRS.

[69] "Report On The State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 90, no. 3 (January 21, 1967): 2, Archives LOC.

[70] *The Combined Minutes of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 4th Episcopal District.* 1972: 82 Archives AMEDRS.

problems or sins of poverty and racial justice were declared, but before pollution.[71]

The impact of the Vietnam War upon civil rights and the war on poverty served as the primary motivation for criticism of the war after the Johnson administration. An expression of this domestic lens is seen in concern about the financial impact of the war. The AME detailed the cost of war and argued that "the world [was] now spending $14,000,000 an hour on arms – money which could be freed for homes, hospitals, schools, laboratories, farm equipment and a better life for all mankind."[72] The Vietnam War cost "the country more than three times the cost of the moon exploration" and encouraged "economic slavery" for poor blacks.[73] In calling for an end to the war, the male auxiliary of the AME declared "we oppose the horrible, costly, cruel, and needless war in Vietnam. We deplore the expenditure of…80% of our budget for war. We believe that the existing large scale poverty in this country, in the midst of the greatest wealth and riches of the world, is cruel, unjust and unnecessary."[74] Cost would not have been an issue if domestic programs had received ample funds. However, one could only have both guns and butter for so long. The slashing of domestic

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[71] "State Of The Country Report." *The Star of Zion,* 93, no. 37 (September 10, 1970): 7, Archives LOC.

[72] UNESCO Feature. "One Bomber." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 116:39 (March 15, 1966): 5, Archives AMEDRS.

[73] "State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 93, no. 34 (August 20, 1970): 6, Archives LOC.

[74] "The Layman's Page: Resolutions." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 119:7 (August 10, 1968): 10, Archives AMEDRS.

spending and curtailing of the war on poverty, especially under Nixon, fueled public African-American anger at both the President and the Vietnam War.

Church members and leaders did not discount the gravity of the situation overseas. The U.S. appeared on the "threshold of a third World War." However, the more pressing issue was not war but "the conditions from which war was fermented." America and the world needed a new "New Deal and Great Society programs." Domestic spending served as the fount of peace.[75] Thus, African-American Protestants looked at Vietnam and federal budgets and questioned spending priorities with disdain. "Surely if we can go to the moon, and spend useless billions in the folly of war – removing poverty and hunger from this land would be easy," wrote one member of the AME.[76] More bitterly, one report of the AME questioned the integrity of "a nation which [would] spend more to kill its 'enemies' than it [would] to educate its youth."[77] Conference officials described America as a nation that had spent and "sympathized so much over the plight of people in other lands until conditions here at home have been forgotten."[78]

The other primary domestic lens was race and civil rights. As the war progressed, African-American church members grew increasingly angry about the decreasing emphasis upon the issues of race. The centrality of race came

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[75] S. S. Seay, "Our Nation Weighed In Balances." *The Star of Zion,* 89, no. 26 (June 23, 1966): 1,3, Archives LOC.

[76] H.H. Kenner, "From This Point of View." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 119:9 (August 27, 1968): 8, Archives AMEDRS.

[77] *Combined Minutes of the First Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.* 1969: 38, Archives AMEDRS.

[78] "Report On The State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 93, no. 37 (September 10, 1970): 6, Archives LOC.

out in the messages and reports to church members that highlighted the challenges faced by the church. The Board of Bishops' address to the church focused on the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Black Power movement, the state of black communities, the problems face by rural churches, and the state of the Civil Rights movement. All these took precedence over Vietnam, in 1968.[79] The bishops very rarely spoke in unison, but when they did in 1970, they called for a "complete and immediate desegregation in American life."[80] Elders within the church repeated this pattern by mentioning the Vietnam War in passing but spent a majority of time on issues of race, the black church, and black theology.[81] Likewise, the State of the Country report by the Albermale Conference did not mention Vietnam but did explore the slow pace of integration.[82]

African-American denominations did not simply focus on the issue of race, but grew increasingly angry at a war which turned national attention away from the unfinished business of integration. The Georgia Annual Conference declared that "black boys are dying in Vietnam every day fighting for democracy and freedom" yet had to return home and "still fight for their own freedom."[83] If America did not readjust its attention away from Vietnam and to the unfinished

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[79] "Board Of Bishops Addresses The Church." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 28 (July 11, 1968): 2 Archives LOC.

[80] "Bishops Make Statement." *The Star of Zion,* 93, no. 41 (October 8, 1970): 1, Archives LOC.

[81] "Presiding Elder's Report." *The Star of Zion,* 93, no. 44 (October 29, 1970): 1-3, Archives LOC.

[82] "State of The Church Report, Albemarle Conf." *The Star of Zion,* 95, no. 36 (September 7, 1972): 2, Archives LOC.

[83] "102nd Session Of The South Georgia Annual Conference," *The Star of Zion*, 93, no. 5 (January 29, 1970): 6, Archives LOC.

business of race relations, the coming Eschaton would right wrongs and leave "the white man… trembling in his boots."[84]

Unlike white denominations, the attitude of African-American church members toward Vietnam could not be disconnected from their presidential opinions. For conservative and mainline denominations, the office of the President did not play a role – major or minor – in their public debates and rhetoric over Vietnam. However, this was not the case for African-American churches. It should come as no surprise that African-American denominations robustly supported President Johnson and were hopeful, yet eventually critical, of President Nixon.

Support for Johnson emerged early in his presidency. Editorials called Berry Goldwater's nomination for the Presidency in 1964 "unfortunate" and chastised him for opposing civil rights legislation.[85] In turn, they commended Johnson as "wise" for seeking what Goldwater "ignored" – the black vote – to his own peril.[86] "Conspiracies were formed to defeat" Johnson "but God is still on the throne."[87] This was a very telling use of a common religious phrase. The phrase affirmed the providence of God and the primacy of His will despite the evil attempts of man and Satan. Thus, opposition to President Johnson could at least be opposed to the will of God and at worst be of Satanic origin.

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[84] G. N. Tate, "State Of The Country Report, Indiana Conf." *The Star of Zion,* 95, no. 40 (October 5, 1972): 1-2, Archives LOC.

[85] "Violence Is Not A Solution." *The Star of Zion,* 86, no. 50 (June 30, 1964): 4, Archives LOC.

[86] "Election Results." *The Star of Zion,* 86, no. 60 (November 21, 1964): 4, Archives LOC.

[87] "Report of the State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 88, no. 6 (January 14, 1965): 3, Archives LOC.

Repeatedly, churches and churchgoers lauded Johnson for his character. They stated that He was a "great man."[88] National meetings African-American Baptists declared Johnson as not just "progressive" but "noble."[89] He received the praise of bishops for having "proved himself to the nation. His leadership in all areas of political interest was of such that inspired confidence and presented a challenge." Thus, Johnson met his challenges with "energy, candor, and integrity."[90] Hence, African-American denominations would, because of Johnson, "express loyalty to the nation."[91] The praise of Johnson extended to his key surrogates. The NBC gave Vice-President Hubert Humphrey a special reception.[92] Likewise, the AME conference warmly received Humphrey to the sounds of the gathering singing "America" and "My Country 'Tis of Thee."[93] It seemed apparent that Humphrey received such a greeting partly due to his prior leadership in the area of civil rights, as well as his association with President Johnson. Humphrey was one of the earliest Democrats to call for civil rights change and in 1948 strongly challenged the Democratic National Convention to "Get out of the Shadow of States Rights, and Warm in the Sunshine of Human

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[88] "The State Of The Country." *The Star of Zion,* 89, no. 5 (January 27, 1966): 6, Archives LOC.

[89] *The Record of the 84th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1964: 45, Archives SBHLA.

[90] "Board Of Bishops Addresses The Church." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 29 (July 18, 1968): 1, Archives LOC.

[91] "Portrait of a Man." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 41:7 (July 1967): 1, Archives SBHLA.

[92] *The Record of the 87th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1967: 77, Archives SBHLA.

[93] *Official Minutes of the Thirty-eighth Session of the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church 1968.* Nashville, TN, May, 1968: 99, Archives AMEDRS.

Rights." For past and present, African-Americans had great reason for loyalty to Johnson.

Of course, praise of Johnson found ultimate origins in his efforts on reforms that uniquely impacted blacks. Editors narrated Johnson's fight on their behalf for civil rights and anti-poverty programs and heard his calls for blacks to help lead the fight: "Yes, Mr. President, we understand your challenge, and we accept it."[94] They recognized that the administration had "chalked up one of the greatest records of accomplishments in all American history. They have probably done more for the citizens of these United States than has been done in any other two year period."[95] AME Bishops who traveled to the White House to meet the President lauded him as an "inimitable, dynamic, progressive, courageous, peace-loving President." The focus of this praise was "the contribution [he had] made to the poverty stricken, to civil rights, to education, Medicare, housing accommodations and transportation for all people." For this, the Bishops of the AME "pledge[d their] full moral and spiritual support as" the President "plan[ned] and promote[d] the program of the Great Society."[96]

Superlatives seemed the only fitting description for Johnson's actions. Members of the AMEZ paid tribute to Johnson by declaring, "history will perhaps

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[94] "President Johnson Issues A Challenge." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 115:33 (January 12, 1965): 8, Archives AMEDRS.

[95] "Editorial Comment: Not the Answer." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 117:14 (September 20, 1966): 8, Archives AMEDRS.

[96] "A.M.E. Bishop Visits The White House." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 117:18 (October 18, 1966): 8, Archives AMEDRS.

call him the greatest President."[97] Because of Johnson's efforts in both civil rights and economics, he was considered "one of the greatest champions of human right of minorities in this century, if not our entire history."[98] "**HE DID THE MOST**" (emphasis in original) declared one editorial.[99] These were not shallow praises but rather perceptive ones. African-American denominational praise for Johnson lauded the fact that he understood the "connection between Vietnam and the racial front at home."[100]

The appreciation and praise for Johnson found tangible expression too. For those parishioners who sought to challenge the President via protest, denominations sought to counsel caution and protection from protest. Some officials argued that those who challenged the President "should try a little harder to practice the Golden Rule in their comment on the Presidency." Ultimately, Christians were expected to offer the President "a little…kindness and charity."[101] Others passed resolutions on "Christian Civic Responsibility," which stated that church members "must help protect honest officials from false accusations, unnecessary embarrassment and annoying intimidation on the part of certain

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[97] Editorial. "Presidents Nixon And Johnson." *The Star of Zion,* 92, no. 8 (February 20, 1969): 4, Archives LOC.

[98] Editorial. "The Death Of Two Presidents." *The Star of Zion,* 96, no. 8 (February 22, 1972): 4, Archives LOC.

[99] "He Did the Most." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 122:28 (January 16, 1973): 4, Archives AMEDRS.

[100] C.L. Sulzberger, "History May Alter Impressions About President Johnson." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 119:22 (November 26, 1968): 10, Archives AMEDRS.

[101] "In Comment on Presidency Try The Golden Rule." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 119:22 (November 26, 1968): 2, Archives AMEDRS.

minority groups who force their will and way upon duly elected officials and some times do it in the name of the entire Negro community."[102]

The kindness and political fealty to President Johnson did carry over in a very limited fashion to President Nixon, but only early in his presidency, when his positions had not yet been made entirely clear. Part of the early affirmation of the President was part of American tradition to tradition to warmly receive new political leaders. Furthermore, Nixon's relationship with African-American leaders was not as bad as some would suppose. On the one hand, under Eisenhower he had cautiously supported both King and civil rights. On the other hand, Nixon's political rhetoric after his election emphasized conciliation. Some church leaders, namely President Jackson of the NBC, were sickly sycophantic and seemed to care more about positions of power than political positions. Jackson's surrogates praised his "vision" for endorsing Nixon for President and declared that this endorsement signaled to blacks the action of a leader who led the way "into a marathon of one big achievement after another."[103] This same leader proudly published a picture of Nixon and himself in which the caption described the President's affirmation of Jackson's emphasis that blacks go from "protest to production."[104] Some, like Bishop Tucker of the AMEZ, supported Nixon because of their very conservative political stance that strongly supported

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[102] *The Record of the 85th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1965: 65, Archives SBHLA.

[103] Robbie Crump-McCoy, "Dr. Jackson's 27 Years At Olivet." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 43:1 (January 1969): 1, Archives SBHLA.

[104] "Dr. Jackson's Call to National Unity Endorsed By President Nixon." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 43:6 (June 1969): 1, Archives SBHLA.

the war in Vietnam. Tucker would gladly deliver the invocation ant Nixon's inauguration.[105]

At first, it seemed African-Americans held at least some optimism for Nixon's presidency. Editorials exploring Nixon's election expected a "good term in office" and that his election would bring "four years of the finest possible leadership."[106] Church members themselves optimistically received Nixon and affirmed "what he had done to improve the condition of the Negro."[107] Yet one wonders the depth of these statements as they emerged only after a special assistant to the President met with them.

Still, taken as a whole, these endorsements were more hopeful than appreciative. Putting their best foot forward (for they effectively had no other choice), African-American parishioners greeted the new administration with positive expectations. However, reality soon turned those positive expectations into criticism.

African-American Christians eventually saw Nixon as Johnson's opposite: A man willing to manipulate public fears on race to his own advantage, resistant to social reform while he continued and even widened the Vietnam War. They also saw Nixon as turning the clock back on African-American civil rights gains. The rhetoric of his campaign struck notes of caution and criticism. Members of

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[105] J. O. Romao, "Bishop Tucker And Pres. Nixon." *The Star of Zion,* 92, no. 8 (February 20, 1969): 1, Archives LOC.

[106] "Reelection of President Nixon." *The Star of Zion,* 95, no. 49 (December 7, 1972): 4, Archives LOC.

[107] Alexander Barnes, "A First." *The Star of Zion,* 95, no. 39 (September 28, 1972): 7, Archives LOC.

the AMEZ declared: "We believe in Law and Order. From the earliest of our existence until this present day, we have often wondered why there are so many evil laws and order which apply only to the Negro. It is hoped that those who had in mind to turn back the clock of justice, decency, and the inalienable rights of ALL human beings are defeated and certainly refuted."[108] Early in Nixon's presidency, the criticism began:

> The President had a golden opportunity to make his first major decision a bold, new, statesmen like approach to world peace. Instead, he chose to take food from the mouths of the hungry, housing from the poor, adequate education from ghetto children…he bent under the pressure of the business-military combine which calls for more and more expenditure of our money, resources and treasures for armaments.[109]

Notably, foreign policy did not elicit this criticism but rather the domestic impact of Nixon's foreign policy. President Johnson had a similarly aggressive foreign policy yet remained faithful to African-American needs and they to him.

As time progressed and Nixon's policies began to roll back some of the advances of both the Civil Rights movement and the Great Society legislation, African-American denominations grew increasingly impatient and sharp with their criticism. Editorials chastised Nixon for his "inability to convince…minorities…that he just really cares about us." He disappointed church members with his "weak stand on school desegregation."[110] They

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[108] Editorial. "On Politics." *The Star of Zion,* 91, no. 47 (November 28, 1968): 4, Archives LOC.

[109] Frank A. Sharp, "A New Nixon." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 43:5 (May 1969): 4, Archives SBHLA.

[110] Editorial. "President Walking A Tight Rope." *The Star of Zion,* 93, no. 23 (June 4, 1970): 4, Archives LOC.

described his decisions as "presumptuous" and of "unrelenting vengeance."[111] Nixon's actions convinced African-Americans that he turned back the clock on civil rights.[112] So much did Nixon's actions anger African-American Christians that they sent their Bishops to Washington to "register our deep distress at the recent actions of President Richard M. Nixon as they affect Black people and poor people across this land."[113] The locus of their anger and the intersection of politics, Vietnam, race, and religion found expression in their plea: "Do not permit the vaunted **War on Poverty** to become a horrible **War on the Poor**!"(emphasis in original)[114]

Presidential politics aside, African-American denominations said little about the attendant issues of Vietnam that other denominations spoke heavily about. With sons serving in Vietnam, the churches said nearly nothing about them. A report of a visit by Whitney Young to African-American troops in Vietnam simply declared that "someone should let them know that we back home care about them, love then, and await the opportunity to serve them upon their return home."[115] Where both conservatives and mainline parishioners went out

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[111] "Amnesty…No Forgiving?" *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 122:31 (February 12, 1973): 4, Archives AMEDRS.

[112] "Speech Of Clarence Mitchell." *The Star of Zion,* 95, no. 22 (June 1, 1972): 1, Archives LOC.

[113] "A.M.E. Bishop's Protest Pres. Nixon's Action." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 122:34 (March 5, 1973): 1, Archives AMEDRS.

[114] *Ibid,* 2.

[115] "Whitney Young Goes to Vietnam to Study Problems of 40,000 Negro Troops." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 117:8 (August 9, 1966): 1, Archives AMEDRS.

of their way to affirm their servicemen and exonerate them from any guilt, African-American denominations said nothing.

Similarly, conscientious objection received little attention. The severely limited discussion described the issue as "extremely complex" yet did agree on conscientious objection "for those who decline military service for sincere reasons of conscience." The denominations wrote non-committal reports recognizing that "churches will be increasingly involved in searching for answers to questions."[116] However, this was the extent of the discussion. One found neither the divisiveness of the issue in Mainline churches nor the repeated questioning of the primacy of conscience of conservatives. There was no exploration of the necessity of conscientious objection; no examination of its validity; no discussion of the distinctions between conscientious objection and selective conscientious objection; nothing.

Lastly, amnesty suffered the same fate of near silence. A sole editorial called for support for amnesty as "forgiving." One could see the use of this term as echoing conservative thought for forgiveness takes place only where transgression and sin occur. The writer wondered if "we were rebuilding Hanoi after the war, why not rebuild American society relationally? We must rebuild and heal in this country." [117] Yes, this mildly echoed the language of moderates seeking "reconciliation"; however, there existed no other discussions with which

[116] "Vietnam Protests Raise New Questions About Conscientious Objections." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 116:25 (November 30, 1965): 65, Archives AMEDRS.

[117] "Amnesty…No Forgiving?" *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 122:31 (February 12, 1973): 4, 7, Arcives AMEDRS.

to compare. As with many of the attendant issues of Vietnam, it would appear these issues did not exist.

Why such silence? To some degree, the silence was due to a tendency on the part of African-American churches to resist political involvement. Recall that before his stance on the Vietnam War, Martin Luther King, Jr. had already caused some upset by the degree to which he used the pulpit as a platform for social and political challenge. Thus, NBC conservative perspectives can partly be viewed in this light. To some degree, the silence on Vietnam on part of the African-American denominations can partly be understood by their initial commitment to President Johnson. Also to some degree, their silence on Vietnam can be understood by the enormity of the Civil Rights movement and the closely related War on Poverty. For African-Americans, the Civil Rights Movement served as the culmination of two centuries of civic struggle. Therefore, the problems and issues surrounding the Vietnam War did not warrant mentioning when compared to the size and longevity of the problem of the color line and African-Americans' struggle for freedom and equality. Yet this alone does not sufficiently explain their relative silence on the war issue. It also appears that African-American denominations faced an organizational paralysis at the time that prevented them from focusing on issues other than their own civil rights struggle.

It seems that African-American denominations suffered from internal dissension that lay covered with only the thinnest of veneers. A cursory survey of African-American denominations shows that African-American Protestant

Christianity was very divided during this period. The Church of God in Christ, the largest African-American Pentecostal church, and perhaps the largest African-American denomination, spent the 1960s in schism that only found resolution in the courts in 1972. As a result of this schism, publications virtually ceased operation, rival meetings occurred with regularity, and the very continuance of the denomination seemed in doubt for some time. Furthermore, the National Baptist Convention lost a large segment of its parishioners to the Progressive National Baptist Convention in the early 1960s over the denomination's conservative stance on the issues of civil rights.

In that same vein, the denominations explored reflected signs of significant internal discord. This discord found expression in both the AME and NBC. Notably, of the four denominations explored, only the AMEZ showed no signs of instability. Of the four, the instability of the COGIC was so great that records themselves are non-existent. Of the AME and NBC, clearly the later witnessed more discord.

There exist a number of examples of this organizational break down. A highly unusual note in the front page of the Christian Recorder served as a commentary on the poor state of the paper and denomination. A member of the operating board informed the laity that the editor had failed in his responsibility to the paper and the church in organizing and submitting the paper. The note read "We appeal to the Editor for his cooperation in this matter each week and to you for your sympathetic understanding."[118] Or, an anonymous resolution shed light

[118] "A.M.E. Christian Recorder Subscribers: Please Take Notice." *The A.M.E. Christian Recorder,* no. 117:9 (August 16, 1966): 1, Archives AMEDRS.

on what appeared to be chaotic times at the general conferences. Attendants wrote of being "disgusted with the seemingly disregard for parliamentary procedures which have been displayed" by ministers and laymen alike. There was "disillusionment at the utter disrespect for the Episcopacy."[119] Lastly, the Committee on Recommendations viewed "with sadness" the "division in the Church." A One report sadly commented how "thousands of dollars needed for significant program was spent by one-half of the Church fighting the other."[120]

The discord in the NBC was even more pronounced. An editorial describing Jackson's and the NBC's approach to civil rights declared that the denomination "has in the past emphasized again and again the importance of the work of civil rights through law and order and has had a greater share in this struggle than many people know about or are willing to admit." The article then proceeded to give quotes of President Jackson's speeches which were meant to illustrate his call for equal Civil rights.[121] The article makes clear the internal opposition to Jackson and the denomination's conservative stance on Civil Rights.

Clearly, Jackson faced open attack. It appears that the NBC leadership encountered repeated challenges for failing to be proactive on the issue of race. In a statement addressing racial justice, the document declared "the President of

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[119] *Official Minutes of the Thirty-eighth Session of the General Conference of the A.M.E. Church 1968.* May, 1968, 262, Archives AMEDRS.

[120] *The Minutes of the General Conference of the Thirty-Ninth Quadrennium of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 1972.* July, 1972, 166, Archives AMEDRS.

[121] "President Jackson Enunciates National Baptist Convention Program of Christian Civic Responsibility." *National Baptist Voice*, no. 39:9 (August 1965): 1, Archives SBHLA.

this convention, Dr. J.H. Jackson, has given definite and positive leadership in this field as some brief quotations from past addresses will reveal." The document went on to provide quotes from speeches which showed Jackson addressing the need for civic justice.[122] At times this division became caustic. The members of the denomination sought to target pastors and churches willing to concurrently join the American Baptist Convention, a denomination much more active in civil rights issues. The Board of Directors even considered charging those pastors who joined the ABC a higher membership fee in light of the fact that the ABC charged a higher fee.[123] The resistance soon became an open revolt against President Jackson. A group of "Concerned Clergy" circulated a letter accusing Jackson of failing to provide leadership in the area of the physical suffering of blacks in the U.S. and abroad, a failure to challenge discrimination, and a failure to stand up against racist political governors of the South. Notably, the "concerned clergy" group held a memorial service for Martin Luther King, Jr., something the NBC, as a denomination, did not do and which Jackson did not participate in.[124] In response, the convention leadership passed a motion "that the Christian principles and penalties be invoked upon those making accusations."[125]

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[122] *The Record of the 85th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1965, 69, 215-219, Archives SBHLA.

[123] *The Record of the 86th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1966, 77, Archives SBHLA.

[124] *The Record of the 88th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1968, 73-74, Archives SBHLA.

[125] *The Record of the 89th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1969, 44, Archives SBHLA.

However, the chaos and discord went beyond the issue of race. There appear to be a series of lawsuits over money involving the President of the NBC and the denomination's women's auxiliary.[126] Furthermore, Freedom Farm, a cooperative vocational venture of the NBC meant to provide support for poor blacks became the focal point of an investigation for graft by President Jackson. The problems were also that of an organizational culture embracing self-aggrandizement. As a result, one finds repeated examples of the Board of Directors attaching their names to letters sent by President Jackson to Presidents Johnson and Nixon. [127]

The markings of a dictatorship or cult of personality found expressions in the workings of the national conventions. A report on a vote on changes in organizational leadership recorded that the motion was "adopted with only two opposers [*sic*] with more than 15,000 standing and waving their hands."[128] Or, the convention adopted a recommendation naming Jackson "because of his outstanding contributions in the field of religion as the Foremost Religious Statesman of the Decade."[129] Yet the declarations of glowing unanimity were a printed and procedural façade. A description of the 1972 annual meeting betrayed the contents of the whitened sepulcher of NBC polity. A writer instructed participants: "If one cannot listen to a point of view which differs from

[126] *The Record of the 86th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1966, 72-73, Archives SBHLA.

[127] *Ibid*, 72.

[128] *The Record of the 89th Annual Session of the National Baptist Convention.* Nashville, TN, 1969, 85, Archives SBHLA.

[129] *Ibid*.

one's own point of view-Then one reveals that one is not sure of one's point of view." He asked, "How many brains does it take to boo?" He would proceed to declare that "those who refuse to listen to anything except that with which they agree – thereby reveal their immaturity. We ought to have enough intelligence to listen - there is no law that says we have to agree! All who come to a public meeting have an obligation to listen-whether they agree with what is said-is a matter of personal choice!"[130]

One might challenge this writer by pointing out the discord within Mainline churches. Yes, the dissent did cripple mainline churches. Yes, the exodus of parishioners fueled the growth of conservative evangelicals and the New Christian Right. However, the dissent and animosity of mainline churches centered around theology and ideology, not personal leadership or control of the organization as a source of personal power. Perhaps the fact that the church became the central institution of African-Americans meant that it would become the focus of man's baser instincts.

Like the Biblical story of Samson one leaves a study of African-American denominations during this period with a bit of distaste and disappointment. The arguably most popular and most significant African-American leader – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – remained shunned by his race and brothers and sisters in Christ because of his stance on the Vietnam War. In essence, their greatest leader and champion had become a metaphorical thorn in the side and an enemy. Granted, King attempted to lead those he really did not know on the

[130] "Dr. Jackson Spurs Convention to Give Quarter Million Plus!" *National Baptist Voice*, no. 46:10 (October, 1972): 1, Archives SBHLA.

issue. He failed to appreciate the extent of his of alienation from fellow church members. Out of all the religious organizational leadership studied, he was morally consistent and generally not willing to yield moral truths for political expediency or appreciation.

Clearly, all was domestic at this time. The issues of Civil Rights and the War on Poverty not only informed but guided African-American denominations to support Johnson and remain silent on Vietnam. The 1960s witnessed the pinnacle of multiple centuries of struggle. This recognition does help us understand some, but not all, of the lack of attention to the Vietnam War. Likewise, their accolades of Johnson – rightfully deserved – seemed to silence any criticism of his failed and destructive policies in Vietnam. The criticism of Nixon shows that this support was highly politicized. These findings of the church correlate nicely with the work of Elisse Yvette Wright.

Wright's dissertation, a study of African-American civil rights organizations, argued that contrary to popular portrayal, African Americans were more hesitant to oppose the war in Vietnam during much of Johnson's administration because they did not want to destabilize the support for the president who had done so much for Civil Rights. She placed emphasis upon a nexus of Johnson's Vice President, Johnson's turn to civil rights as a political tool, African-American organizational anger at the civil rights policies of Republican administration, and the pragmatic benefit of a positive relationship with the administration. Among the groups studied, the recognition that the nation could not fund both guns and butter led to increasing opposition to the

war. She also downplayed the role of King and civil rights organizations like SNCC and CORE because they were more liberal than mainstream African-Americans Hence, "while polls [did] show that AA were less supportive of Vietnam, they were also less critical of it."[131]

Thus, we extend to religious organizations what Wright found in civic organizations. Yet, one must still note, how morality and theology mattered little in the discussions of African-American denominations. War – man's most dastardly venture – and its justness, or lack thereof, did not find discussion. It is implausible that an American denomination would not reflect on this most divisive of America's wars. The sons of the AME, NBC, and AMEZ lay dying, and their denominations sat quietly. At issue was not support or opposition to Vietnam but rather the inability to discuss the war and its attendant problems. These churches did not wrestle with the struggles of conscientious objection their parishioners did. They wondered not about the morality of napalm. They pondered not how to reconcile a divided nation. Instead, they focused almost entirely on the domestic.

Unfortunately, aside from the power of domestic obligations, organizational discord also silenced moral and theological discussions. Yes, white churches faced discord, but their discord revolved around the mission of the church in the world. There are other interpretive differences between white and black churches. Most saliently, the stance on Civil Rights did not serve as a fair marker of attitudes toward Vietnam as it did for white churches, clergy, and

[131] Elisse Yvette Wright, *Birds of A Feather: African-American Support for the Vietnam War in the Johnson Years, 1965-1969*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio University, 2002, pg 163.

parishioners. For African-American churches, a strong support for civil rights did not translate into *any* opposition to Vietnam. Conversely, a conservative stance on Civil Rights did not express itself in support for Vietnam. Perhaps, this should caution us about applying findings for white churches to black churches. At the same time, the assumption can serve as a corrective or challenge to African-American churches to make theological and ethical commitments when the context calls for them.

Conclusion

Religion and politics were unequally yoked during the Vietnam War. At times, theological commitments compelled a criticism of America's actions. At times, worldviews encouraged support of the Vietnam War. At other times, with an eye toward pragmatic realities, faith was silent where it should have spoken. At still other times, faith listened as national commitments dictated perspectives.

In retrospect, American Protestants responded to the Vietnam War unevenly. Mainline denominations, in a schismatic way, both supported and opposed the Vietnam War. On the one hand, clergy and denominational leadership opposed the war. However, this opposition was not constant but rather gradually increased as anguish turned to disappointment and disappointment turned to condemnation. Opposition to the war only marginally focused on the war as an unjust cause. Instead, it focused more means of the war. Most importantly, opponents focused on the human and environmental consequences of the war. On the other hand, laity generally supported the war or at least did not favor outspoken criticism of it. Support of the war emphasized the fight as a just cause. As to the suffering, supporters emphasized the normative nature of suffering of the war and contrasted accidental suffering caused by American forces against the intentional suffering caused by Communist forces. Clearly, mainline denominations suffered from a disconnect in opinion; leadership and laity did not share the same ideology on the war and the nation. Just as importantly, they differed as to the role of the church. These distinctions led to revolt and departure.

Conservative evangelicals strongly supported the war. Their support for the war began robustly and never wavered. What did change was the volume of support. Early in the war, the conviction of a sinful world doomed to destruction made the suffering of war more palatable. Furthermore, their reworking of the concept of peace made it unachievable on anything outside a personal scare. After 1968, perhaps recognizing that one could not avoid the morality of suffering and destruction, these groups emphasized an evangelistic lens even more so than they had.

African-American denominations did not necessarily support or oppose the war. The foremost African-American of the age challenged the war as unethical for the same reasons segregation was unethical. However, he miscalculated as to the support he had among African-American religious leaders and constantly sought to build his base among them. African-Americans did not explicitly support the war as much as they clearly chose not to criticize it during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson. African-Americans' rightful commitment to Lyndon Johnson and emphasis upon domestic issues served as the primary lenses through which they viewed and commented on the war. Although these churches did begin to criticize the Vietnam War after the ascendency of Nixon, the issue was not the war and suffering, but a detraction of attention and resources away from domestic concerns.

Theology played alternatingly significant and minimal role in these debates. Opponents of the war emphasized an inclusive world view, as well as stressed the role of Christian compassion and God's universal love to challenge

the war. From a just war perspective, those that spoke against Vietnam found the war wrong due to its means. They opposed the war because of the scale of destruction it brought to a nation of peasants. Supporters of the war demonstrated a more exclusivist world view that contrasted this world with the spiritual and saw only a sin stained existence. From a just war perspective, they found the war moral based upon its cause. In a combination of theological consistency and avoidance, they sidestepped the issue of means raised by opponents by pointing to the reality of suffering and the primacy of salvation. From these responses, we see that concepts of sinfulness and evil do not necessarily condone war but are less troubled by its presence. Furthermore, theologies of shared identities espoused by mainline leaders seemed to compel at least a criticism of the means of war if not war itself.

This tension over just cause and just means echoes the work of David Levy, who served as my graduate advisor before his retirement. *The Debate over Vietnam* emphasized a breakdown in just war thinking that lay at the heart of disagreements over Vietnam. Levy maintained that "to some…this particular exercise of national prowess seemed a little unclean, a little perverse, somehow unworthy of a great and principled nation."[1] The present study refines Levy's finding a bit. Levy, saw the disagreements over Vietnam as centering on two issues: two parts motives and one part means. For American Protestants, the discussion, in one form or another, revolved primarily around the means of the

[1] David Levy, *The Debate Over Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 55.

war. Yes, conservative evangelicals described Vietnam as a just cause, but spent more time deflecting criticism of the means of the war.

This dissertation also agrees with and modifies the perspectives of Levy on the debate over Vietnam as it related to churches. Levy, rightfully noted that "the civil war that erupted within American Protestantism" – almost exclusively mainline denominations – did not find its origins in Vietnam but in a longer history of struggles over society, politics and theology. Yet, if civil war did not erupt with Vietnam, this study confirms that it certainly reached its apex in the Vietnam—pushed most forcefully by the historically specific crises of civil rights and Vietnam. Also, this dissertation builds upon Levy's foundational work in a couple of ways. First, it emphasizes the need for distinctions among Protestants (mainline, mainline leadership vs. laity, mainline conservative reactionaries, conservative evangelicals, and African-American denominations) when it comes to describing attitudes towards Vietnam. Second, and more importantly, it stresses the role of theology as an active ingredient in the thinking of many Americans on the war. How one viewed humanity's relationship to itself, and to its divine creator, went a long way towards determining how, over the long haul, one understood the American nation's mission in Vietnam. [2]

The Vietnam War also had significant organizational impact. Mainline denominations were dethroned and this time period witnessed the beginning of their decline, numerically and influentially. While the debate over the Vietnam

[2] *Ibid, 91-96.*

War was not the sole cause, it perhaps was the catalyst or final straw. It was not just the presence of intense dissent but its presence in already destabilized denominations. Conversely, conservative evangelicals entered a decades-long growth spurt. They grew because they provided Americans with clear moral categories with which to frame the experiences of society; they grew because these denominations did not experience a disconnect between leadership and laity; and they grew because they offered an alternative vision for the relationship between church and society that produced less turmoil. After the Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War, and the numerous arguments, protests, and riots, the last thing the American people wanted was continued dissension. Conservative evangelicals provided a refuge of worship and theology. Yet the organizational impact was found outside of denominational structures as well. Conservative Protestants within mainline denominations created para-church protests groups that challenged both their churches and society from a religious perspective. They modeled para-church organizational activity that conservative evangelicals would use to birth and grow the New Christian Right.

Lastly, the Vietnam War demonstrated a failure in leadership at multiple levels. Within mainline churches, clergy and denominational leaders failed to appreciate the level of discontent. They sought to lead their parishioners as one leads a bull by a ring in his nose as opposed to shepherding and coaxing their flocks. They failed to recognize the unique mandates of leadership in volunteer organizations. They needed to think more creatively than simply using prophetic condemnation in their attempt to have parishioners share their perspectives. In

part, the collapse of mainline denominations can be attributed to this failure. Within African-American Protestants, Martin Luther King, Jr., also suffered a disconnect. Unfortunately, he did not fully realize the differences of opinions between himself and those he sought to lead. The failure of leadership applied to conservative evangelicals and African-American denominations as well. Under their tutelage, moral institutions did not lead on moral issues. An alternative vision, an alternative emphasis, could still nonetheless be avoidance. They helped make their churches irrelevant on perhaps the most significant moral debate in America during the twentieth-century.

The Vietnam War demonstrated how unpredictable the relationship between war and religion could and can be. Following the biblical text, American Protestants had some precedent. Just as the Old Testament prophet Isaiah foretold the beating of swords into plowshares, the prophet Joel foresaw the beating of plowshares into swords.

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