

**Crusading for Capitalism: Christian Capitalists and the Ideological Roots of the
Conservative Movement**

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Introduction: Understanding the Modern Conservative Movement from Herbert Hoover to Barry Goldwater

On July 1st, 1951, “Independence Sunday,” the Columbia Broadcasting System carried a live, nationwide radio program sponsored by The Committee to Proclaim Liberty titled “Freedom Under God.” The program, organized by a little recognized group called Spiritual Mobilization, started off with remarks by Spiritual Mobilization Executive Vice-President and Committee Chair James Ingebretsen. Ingebretsen then passed off the microphone to the Master of Ceremonies, Hollywood star Jimmy Stewart. After an invocation by Chaplain Arthur Mills, well-known entertainer Bing Crosby gave an Independence Day message followed by a dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence by actor Lionel Barrymore. The University of Southern California’s Concert Choir then performed an original work, “Heritage,” followed by movie star Gloria Swanson introducing Oksana Kasenkina, a Soviet defector who gained fame by leaping from the Russian embassy’s third floor in Washington D.C. The climax of the event was a live feed from General Matthew B. Ridgway, then commanding general of all forces in Korea. Epitomizing the spirit of the program, General Ridgway urged his listeners to commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence by “recognizing and cultivating those spiritual values by which alone our America will last!”¹

The star-studded “Freedom Under God” program was not a standalone effort. Leading up to the broadcast Spiritual Mobilization had urged governors, mayors and even the President of the United States to make proclamations designating the week starting July 1st, 1951 as “Independence Week.” In addition to President Eisenhower’s proclamation, Spiritual Mobilization successfully convinced more than 40 governors as well as the mayors of the United States 50 largest cities to

¹ Words of General Matthew B. Ridgway, Committee to Proclaim Liberty, Series I, Subseries A, Box 70, Folder 11, James Ingebretsen Papers (JCI), University of Oregon Special Collections. The list of Hollywood stars in the program is not all that surprising as many of them consistently lent their prestige to known conservative organizations. For more on Hollywood and Conservatism see Donald Critchlow, *When Hollywood was Right: How Movie Stars, Studio Moguls and Big Business Remade American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

pass such resolutions. The Committee to Proclaim Liberty that Spiritual Mobilization assembled immeasurably aided this impressive lobbying effort. In addition to other stars, such as movie producer Cecil B DeMille, studio visionary Walt Disney, African-American baseball player Jackie Robinson and Screen Actor's Guild President Ronald Reagan, the Committee boasted names such as General Douglas MacArthur, General Mark Clark, *Times* editor Henry Luce and former President Herbert Hoover.²

While the purpose of the Committee and its attendant efforts was to urge Americans to recognize and celebrate the 175th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, its organizers saw the event in more grandiose terms. As Spiritual Mobilization President, the Reverend James W. Fifield Jr, wrote to Latter-Day Saint (Mormon) leader Richard L. Evans, "The purpose of the Committee to Proclaim Liberty is to perpetuate this basic concept...that man has inalienable rights as a child of God and that government's sole purpose ought to be to secure those rights and not invade them."³ Even more to the political point Fifield wrote Kraft foods Assistant Director of Public Relations H. L. Shanks that the Committee's purpose helped Spiritual Mobilization accomplish its primary objective of "counteracting the prevailing socialist and collectivist trends of government," especially in the economic realm.⁴ While incorporated as a tax-exempt religious organization, Fifield and his supporters saw Spiritual Mobilization as key to influencing America's social, economic and political life.

This dissertation is the story of how Spiritual Mobilization, a little-known group on the fringes of American society, successfully influenced America's political and economic direction by focusing on American religious life and spreading its religiously based laissez-faire ideology to the heart of the growing conservative movement through the organizations and networks it inspired.

² Members of the Committee, Series I, Subseries A, Box 70, Folder 11, JCI.

³ November 9, 1951 James W. Fifield Jr. to Richard L. Evans, Series I, Subseries A, Box 54, Folder 4, JCI.

⁴ September 4, 1951, James W. Fifield Jr. to H. L. Shanks, Ibid.

Starting in 1935 Congregationalist minister James W. Fifiield began actively targeting his fellow ministers with concepts inspired by his theological liberalism such as “pagan stateism” and, as the 1951 broadcast demonstrates “Freedom Under God.” Fifiield’s fusion of Christianity with anti-statism and laissez-faire economics under the ideological umbrella of Christian individualism spread first among some of his fellow protestant ministers, such as Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, and then among a key group of influential business laymen such as Leonard Read, Sun Oil President J. Howard Pew and DuPont Executive Jasper Crane. The networks these men and the organizations they created formed disseminated Fifiield’s ideological principles among economic conservatives. Further they connected with the budding evangelical movement, bringing together economic and religious conservatives in a common, religiously based anti-statist ideology. Even more significantly the Spiritual Mobilization network linked economic and religious conservatives to the growing conservative movement through organizations like Leonard Read’s Foundation for Economic Education and Howard Kershner’s Christian Freedom Foundation. In this way these Spiritual Mobilization-inspired networks, organizations and individuals became the ideological midwives of the modern conservative movement well before William Buckley and his *National Review* built on and magnified their efforts.

Examining the history of Spiritual Mobilization and the groups that flowed from it helps fill out a growing literature uncovering the formation of the modern conservative movement. Other scholars have effectively highlighted some of the ideological and organizational roots of modern Conservatism, whether George Nash’s look at conservative intellectuals, Matthew Lassiter and Kevin Kruse’s race-based silent majority, Lisa McGirr’s Suburban Warriors or Kim Phillips-Fein’s anti-New Deal businessmen.⁵ While race, suburban space, Buckley and big business are essential

⁵ George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in American Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1976) ; Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*

in understanding modern Conservatism, these analyses often overlook or understate the fundamental and unifying role played by religiously motivated ministers, businessmen and other conservative actors who brought religion and economics together at the center of the movement.⁶

Understanding the deep-rooted link these actors and institutions forged between two of the key, and on the surface contradictory, constituencies of the modern conservative movement helps explain not only its successful rise, but also its enduring nature. This dissertation complements Lassiter and Kruse's studies by showing how the religiously motivated ideology of the Spiritual Mobilization network seamlessly interfaced with the race-based ideology prevalent among some Western and most Southern conservatives. While the primary concern over growing black political power and encroachment drove many Southerners to embrace laissez-faire economics, particularly its emphasis on freedom of association, this work shows how the ideological roots of libertarian economics run much deeper and spring from different concerns for many in the conservative movement. While men such as Pew and Crane ideologically supported "color-blind" meritocratic rhetoric and policies that disproportionately benefited whites, their embrace stemmed from their Christian individualism, not from any immediate sense of urgency to fight integration or black intrusion into their lives. The ideological resonance of laissez-faire principles spoke to conservatives in different physical, vocational and racial spaces for different reasons. Coupled with

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009).

⁶ Other important works that look at the origins and coalescing of Conservatism include Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets Since the Depression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Brian Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling history of the Modern American Libertarian Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007); Gregory Eow, "Fighting a New Deal: Intellectual Origins of the Reagan Revolution, 1932-1952 (Ph.D., Dissertation, Rice University, 2007); Alan J. Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2008); Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); Jonathon Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (Oxford University Press, 2001). Notably, most of these works trace the origins of modern Conservatism to the 1930s and even then often distance that decade from Conservatism's modern iteration. Lichtman's *White Protestant Nation* is the only work to argue that modern Conservatism took its present form well before the postwar period in the decade following World War I when, white, protestant, anti-pluralists first starting making common political cause.

the racial concerns and ideology Lassiter and Kruse highlight, understanding religious concerns and how they link to economic ideology provides greater explanatory power for Conservatism's broad, cross-sectional appeal and enduring nature.

Further, Kruse and Lassiter, as well as Joseph Crespino⁷, focus on the prominence of Southern actors and race-based ideologies in understanding the rise of modern Conservatism. This work, however, includes almost no Southerner's and in fact only a handful of Westerners. The prominence of Northern and Midwestern actors and institutions gives new insight into the role geography and its intersection with ideology played in the origins of the modern conservative movement. While in no way minimizing the role of the South and West, this work points to how the differing geographical origins of Conservatism interfaced ideologically and allied politically. The North and the Midwest played important, and often even more time-honored roles in producing the modern conservative movement.

Similarly, this dissertation complements the work of scholars like Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Kim Phillips-Fein who argue that businessmen's deeply entrenched anti-New Deal attitudes are imperative in understanding the limits of Liberalism and the success of the modern conservative movement. The financial power of big business along with its anti-labor ideology is inseparable from the history of Conservatism. Men like the DuPont brothers, Lemuel Boulware, head of General Electric, billionaire H.L. Hunt and textile magnate Alfred Kohlberg proved vital in building the conservative movement, both financially and ideologically. While agreeing with Fones-Wolf and Phillips-Fein analysis, this work fleshes out the motivations and actions of some of the key businessmen in their story, such as J. Howard Pew, Jasper Crane and Leonard Read. In other words, this dissertation takes the sometimes flat analysis of such men as simply business magnates and places their actions and ideology within a broader context that helps explain their burning

⁷ Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counter-Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2007).

opposition to the New Deal. More importantly, contextualizing their ideology and motivations reveals the key part such men played in not only the economic, but also the religious and ultimately the political life of the country. Bringing religion into this history helps flesh out the analytic skeleton that Fones-Wolf and Phillips-Fein effectively piece together.⁸

Perhaps no work looms as large in the historiography of Conservatism as George Nash's *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*. Nash's groundbreaking monograph mapped out many of the key ideological actors in the modern conservative movement and highlighted the crucial role that William Buckley and his *National Review* played in bringing disparate ideological strands together in a common movement. Nash's focus on intellectuals, however, leads him to overlook many of the key actors and organizations in the rise of modern Conservatism. In Nash's analysis, there is almost no ideological unity, and certainly no real movement before Buckley and *National Review* arrive on the scene. This dissertation revises Nash's characterization of the conservative movement and his periodization by showing the key ideological networks that began "fusing" the disparate strands of Conservatism together in a more pragmatic and politically meaningful way long before Buckley achieved national prominence. Buckley's unquestioned success as ideological gatekeeper of the conservative movement rested almost entirely on the movement building that preceded him. In many senses, this dissertation explains why Buckley's efforts proved so fruitful and enduring.⁹

Following in the footsteps of more recent scholarship, this dissertation most closely complements the noteworthy scholarship in Daren Dochuk's *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*.¹⁰ Dochuk's groundbreaking analysis details the national effects of the grass-roots mobilization and politicization of Southern evangelicals in California. Dochuk clearly illustrates how local political

⁸ Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*; Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

⁹ A more recent work largely following up on Nash's argument is Jeffrey Hart, *The Making of the American Conservative Mind: National Review and its Times* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2005).

¹⁰ Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011).

battles, ideologically conservative preachers and postwar prosperity pushed California-based Southern evangelicals out of the New Deal coalition and into a position of leadership within Conservatism. Of these factors Dochuk notes the central role evangelical preachers played in this process as “the preacher enjoyed the last word on political economy” in evangelical circles.¹¹ While Dochuk effectively explores the grass roots in his analysis, he often takes for granted the ideological and movement building work done around his evangelical actors. This dissertation shows how Dochuk’s grass roots actors, particularly evangelical preachers like J Vernon McGee, connected to the broader conservative movement through organizations that explicitly targeted McGee and his fellow pastors like Spiritual Mobilization and the Christian Freedom Foundation. While Dochuk focuses on the social experiences of evangelicals and how those experiences led them to accept free market economics, this dissertation explains the origin and dissemination of the ideology their experiences led them to embrace. In other words, while Dochuk helps explain the sociological process that brought evangelicals together with economic conservatives, this work explains the formation and dissemination of the specific ideological principles that helped pull evangelicals into the conservative movement.

In many ways this dissertation deepens Dochuk’s analysis by looking at evangelicals’ relationship to economic Conservatism from a different angle. True to the grass-roots nature of the story he is telling, Dochuk largely focuses on how economic Conservatism distilled among evangelicals and consequently how evangelical politicians and pastors like Billy Graham shaped the conservative movement and gave it electoral strength. This project takes a deeper look at the two-way street between economic and religious Conservatism, examining how evangelicals interfaced with and influenced big business, laissez-faire intellectuals like Freidrich Hayek and Ludwig Von Mises as well as other institutions of economic Conservatism like FEE and the American Enterprise Association. While not strictly a “top-down” view, this work looks at the other side of Dochuk’s

¹¹ Dochuk, *Bible belt*, 188.

story by showing how groups like Spiritual Mobilization, the Foundation for Economic Education and the Christian Freedom Foundation effectively took advantage of evangelical post-war social and political turbulence to deeply penetrate evangelicalism with their religiously based economic ideology. Although in many ways the Spiritual Mobilization network took advantage of fortuitous timing to effectively “sell” their ideological package, as with any marketing who is doing the selling matters as much as what is being sold. Consequently this is a story that stresses relationships, both formal and informal, between individuals, organizations and ultimately movements.

This dissertation also touches on the complex relationship between theology, ideology and politics. Spiritual Mobilization, a quintessentially theologically liberal project started by a pastor dedicated to “Modernistic Liberalism,” became the ideological seedbed for a brand of “Christian Economics” that penetrated to the heart of modern evangelicalism. Examining the related thought, theology and activities from actors spanning the theological “left” to the theologically conservative “right” gives insight into the role theology and belief plays in shaping political action. It also gives insight into the interrelationship between modern theological Liberalism and those who embraced a more traditional theological orthodoxy. My work shows that theologically inspired concepts and principles when shorn of their historical context passed from one theological pole to the other. That the story starts with a theologically liberal Congregationalist minister and ends with some of the key actors in modern American evangelicalism speaks to the complexity of the relationship between theology, ideology and politics while challenging dichotomous views of modern theology.

More generally speaking, this dissertation adds to the voluminous literature emphasizing the contested, rather than consensual, nature of early postwar American life.¹² Its unique contribution to this growing historiography is in how it shows that the conflict went deeper than

¹² Some notable examples of this literature include Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Thomas Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Wendy Wall, *Inventing the “American Way”: The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

labor unions and the regulatory welfare state, but was actually a contest over religious beliefs and ideals. While the state, the neighborhood and the workplace became the sites of postwar struggle and disagreement, the underlying conflict was in the churches where debates over Americans' fundamental disagreement concerning how Christianity applied to the country's political economy took place. This contest over the political economy of Christianity demonstrates that cultural issues did not obscure or push-aside economic issues for people of faith. Rather, as the following pages show, economic issues are central in understanding why various groups of Christians took the political path they did. While cultural issues have occasionally trumped economic issues among churchgoers, the consistent, ideological power of laissez-faire economics has played a more enduring role in shaping religious Conservatism since World War II. Looking at contests over political economy within the churches helps explain why the "backlash" took the political, economic and religious shape it did during the polarization of the 1960s and 1970s.

Though this dissertation pays little attention to political parties, elections and campaigns, it is decidedly a political history. In many ways this is the story of Conservatism's journey from Great Depression exile to its national re-emergence in the 1960s. Focusing strictly on political actors and parties during this period obscures the real organizational, ideological and eventually political strength, of the modern conservative movement as well as its connections to its prewar progenitor. It is the relationship of groups like Spiritual Mobilization and the Christian Freedom Foundation with many of the better-known politicians and actors of both pre and postwar Conservatism that gives a more complete version of this story. The Committee to Proclaim Liberty highlights this connection, with the scion of pre-Depression Conservatism, Herbert Hoover, serving on the same Spiritual Mobilization committee as modern conservative stars like Felix Morley, Clarence Manion, General A.C. Wedemeyer and the young Ronald Reagan. Hoover, in particular, looms large in the history that follows, never a central character but always in the background. His almost godfather like relationship with Spiritual Mobilization president James Fifield and many of Fifield's key

supporters, such as Jasper Crane and businessman William C. Mullendore, inspired many of their efforts and helped guide and influence the ideology they so successfully propagated. With Fifield and his followers playing key roles in building the conservative movement that rallied around Barry Goldwater's failed presidential campaign, this story is largely about the ideological connection between the conservative unraveling in 1932 at the hands of Herbert Hoover, and its re-emergence as a national ideological force in 1964 behind Goldwater's banner.

Chapter One: Mobilizing for Spiritual Ideals

By 1934 James W. Fifield Jr. had, by most any measure, risen to the heights of his chosen vocation. In the ten years he had served as pastor of the First Congregationalist Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan he had attracted so many new congregants that he found it necessary to raise funds to construct a new, larger church. The growth of his congregation and the successful fundraising drive for a new church were proof of Fifield's organizational ability and leadership, doubly so considering they occurred in the Great Depression when many churches were losing membership and resources.¹³ Fifield's material accomplishments did not stand-alone. He also achieved such prominence within his denomination that the Chicago Theological Seminary conferred an Honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree on their prestigious alumni in that same year. Despite such notable achievements, Fifield did not reach the pinnacle of his prominence in 1934. The accomplishments of that year proved to be but a prelude to an amazing ministerial career that made him one of the most influential ministers in America by the beginning of the 1960s. The single most important step on that path to prominence occurred the next year when he, along with fellow Congregationalists Donald Cowling and William Hocking met together and founded the Mobilization for Spiritual Ideals at a meeting in Chicago.

Spiritual Mobilization, as it became known, was the primary vehicle through which Fifield's teachings, influence and especially ideology grew and spread. Fifield created it to reach his fellow pastors and instill in them the principles and ideology he embraced. At its founding Fifield announced that Spiritual Mobilization's purpose was to "check the trend toward pagan stateism" in the United States, an oblique reference to FDR's New Deal.¹⁴ Though the organization of Spiritual Mobilization was in part a response to the New Deal, Fifield did not explicitly focus his efforts on

¹³ Robert Moats Miller, *American Protestantism and Social Issues: 1919-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1958), 63.

¹⁴ As quoted in Eckvard Toy, "Spiritual Mobilization: The Failure of an Ultraconservative Ideal in the 1950s" (*The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Apr., 1970), pp. 77-86), 78.

the New Deal or other political programs. Instead, Fifield based Spiritual Mobilization and his larger ministry around the religious concept of “pagan stateism” and its corollary Freedom Under God. These two concepts, firmly rooted in Fifield’s theological Liberalism and propagated by Spiritual Mobilization, became part of the DNA of the modern conservative movement in various and sometimes surprising ways.

James Fifield’s Pagan Stateism and the Founding of Spiritual Mobilization

At its most basic James Fifield’s “pagan stateism” stressed an inverse relationship between state power and faith in God, pitting the state v. God. In this zero-sum spiritual view there were only two choices, rely on and worship God or rely on and worship “mammon” as epitomized by the false idol of the state. For Fifield and his supporters this dichotomous relationship manifested itself most clearly in areas where the church had traditionally taken the lead, such as welfare (Charity) and education. Though Fifield and his ideological supporters developed and applied “pagan stateism” in different ways over the years, the view of a natural conflict between expanding government power and faith in God always remained at its heart. Indeed what made the state “pagan,” or anti-Christian, in their eyes was this perceived “natural” conflict. “Pagan” simply denoted what Fifield saw as a naturally adversarial relationship between the state and God’s purposes. Together “pagan stateism” and Freedom Under God were an assertion that the spiritual and material lives of the country were inextricably bound. In effect one’s spiritual beliefs underlay political, economic and social actions; spiritual beliefs had material consequences and vice versa.

Fifield’s concept of “pagan stateism” was an outgrowth of his theological Liberalism. By the late 19th century theological Liberalism, or Modernism had touched much of American Protestantism, particularly Congregationalism. By and large it was a reaction to two major intellectual projects, Darwinian theory and historical criticisms of the Bible. As historian William Hutchison points out, this reaction generally came to encompass three things; “first and most

visibly, it meant the conscious intended adaptation of religious ideas to modern culture.... [Next] was the idea that God is immanent in human cultural development and revealed through it. The [last] was a belief that human society is moving toward realization ...of the Kingdom of God.”¹⁵ In other words theological Liberalism, broadly speaking, was an attempt to place Christianity within a scientific and historical context.

As an adherent to theological Liberalism, Fifield stressed the immanence of God rather than his transcendence. For theological liberals like Fifield, the goal was to close the gap between the divine and this world. Consequently it is unsurprising that a minister of Fifield’s theological inclinations would propagate a concept that argued for the interrelated nature of “secular” spheres such as economics and politics and the “sacred” sphere of spirituality and religious belief.¹⁶ Fifield’s concern with “pagan stateism” grew out of his theological Liberalism.

Fifield’s belief that material actions sprang from spiritual principles and beliefs led him to focus on promoting faith, or Freedom Under God. He felt that building men’s faith in God would naturally lead to proper political, economic and social action. After all, if, as Fifield believed, there was an inverse relationship between faith in God and state power, the best way to shrink the power of the state was to cultivate Americans’ faith in God. By concurrently pointing out what he perceived to be the anti-Christian, or pagan, nature of growing state power, Fifield hoped to combat what he saw as the spiritual misconceptions driving “pagan stateism.” For Fifield, pointing out what men should do, have faith in God, went hand-in-hand with outlining what they should not do, rely on the state.

True to his belief in the interconnected nature of the spiritual and the material, Fifield founded Spiritual Mobilization in reaction to events in both the political and religious life of the

¹⁵ William Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse*, pg. 2.

¹⁶ For more on theological Liberalism’s views on the immanence of God and the connections between the sacred and the secular, please see Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) Chapter 46 “The Golden Age of Liberal Theology,” 763-785.

country. In addition to the New Deal, Fifield, Cowling and Hocking met in 1934 because their denomination had just passed the Oberlin Anti-Profit Resolution. This resolution attacked the profit motive, one of the ideological pillars of capitalism, and according to Fifield's worldview, part of Freedom Under God. For Fifield and his associates it was obvious that if the pastors and ministers were supporting such resolutions, they did not understand the spiritual principles undergirding the country's economic life. Consequently, pastors and ministers needed instruction and guidance to help them correctly apply Christian principles to America's political economy.

The events and worldview that led to the founding of Spiritual Mobilization firmly planted it in the important, widespread and controversial debate about the relationship between the church and the country's political economy. With the Great Depression in full force, this debate unsurprisingly consumed much of American Protestantism. The continuing nature of this debate and its religious, economic, political and social implications powerfully shaped American life. While the Great Depression intensified it, the debate over what religious leaders had to say or should say about political economy had been consistently smoldering since the mid to late 19th century when pastors and other religious leaders first began to consistently speak out on a range of social, political and economic issues.¹⁷ This trend of mixing the "sacred" and the "secular" from the pulpit eventually formed into a capitalist-critiquing movement at the turn of the century called the Social Gospel.¹⁸ Because the anti-capitalist tenets of the Social Gospel had long driven the debate over Christianity and political economy, Spiritual Mobilization's entrance into this debate initially appeared of little consequence. The ripple effect of Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization, however, arguably outlasted even that of the Social Gospel.

¹⁷ While many religious leaders had spoken out loudly and consistently about America's first major issue of political economy, slavery, the intense and obvious moral ramifications of that issue made it the exception rather than the rule. Until the emergence of the Social Gospel, the American church was seldom at the forefront of debates about political economy.

¹⁸ Ahlstrom, *A Religious History*, Chapter 47, "The Social Gospel," 785-805.

Contextualizing Spiritual Mobilization: Protestantism and the Great Depression

Though the passing of the Oberlin Anti-Profit Resolution was the immediate catalyst that convinced Fifield, Cowling and Hocking to establish Spiritual Mobilization, its founding and longevity resulted from more profound and longer-lasting trends in American life. The Anti-Profit Resolution was, for Fifield and his supporters, simply a symptom of deeper issues, issues highlighted by Americans' response to the Great Depression in both the religious and economic spheres. The leftward trend the Great Depression triggered in American religious and economic life, as evidenced by a surge in Social Gospel-inspired pronouncements and the economic measures of FDR's New Deal, were a call to action for Fifield and his compatriots.

The Great Depression's profound impact on American society was similarly felt by American Protestantism. Initially some among America's spiritual shepherds felt that the Great Depression would actually increase Americans' spiritual activities. Many felt that a good dose of economic hardship would surely bring the country to its spiritual knees and humbled parishioners would meekly seek God and turn to Him, and his church, for comfort and aid.¹⁹ Rather than a boost in membership and attendance, however, mainline Protestant churches saw a dip in numbers across the board. This along with the general economic hardships of the country led many churches to cut mission funding, church publications, church social services and even in some cases to close their doors. Obviously, the church could not hold itself aloof from the material conditions of the world in which it resided and the universal effects of the Great Depression on Americans meant that the churches could not restrict themselves to solely spiritual concerns. Accordingly Protestant ministers and ecclesiastical leaders, as well as laymen, found themselves inextricably

¹⁹ As Alison Collis Greene notes "Many religious leaders anticipated no Great Depression. Instead, they expected a Great Revival." See Alison Collis Greene, "The End of the 'Protestant Era?'" *Church History* 80:3 (September 2011, 600-610), 605.

concerned with the material conditions of the United States in the 1930s and the accompanying debate regarding what to do about those conditions.

The sudden end to the seemingly illusory prosperity of the 1920s had a sudden and definite impact on American Protestantism and its relationship to the political economy of the country, particularly as found in the Social Gospel.²⁰ Churches, which had not been nearly as concerned about the shape of the economic system and other “non-moral” social and economic issues in the 1920s, suddenly began to re-examine and embrace Social Gospel critiques of capitalism. Churches’ precarious financial condition also forced church leaders to re-evaluate their ability to maintain their traditional control over caring for the poor and needy. An increasing number of government programs, particularly at the federal level, meant that churches were losing their power to determine who received aid and under what conditions. Social Gospel theology and practice provided a ready answer to both the depression and the desirability of a government centered solution.

By the 1930s the Social Gospel had a long and distinguished history in American Christianity.²¹ Forming from a theologically liberal base, it sprung from a growing concern among Christian ministers about the social and economic conditions many of their congregants found themselves in as a result of industrialization in the late 19th century. Instead of focusing on the individual salvation of their congregants, Social Gospel ministers, such as Walter Rauschenbusch,

²⁰ My analysis focuses on mainline protestant churches and their experience with the Great Depression. Most mainline churches were urban based, and while economic hardship had been wracking the countryside since the middle of the 1920s, it was only when the cities began feeling economic distress that many mainline churches started reacting. Mainline churches were also, by and large, the focus of newspapers and journalists, many of whom were largely unaware of the growing strength of evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity. Public religious reactions to the Great Depression were not necessarily representative of American Protestantism writ large. In this analysis, however, the perception of how American Protestantism reacted to the Great Depression is what is important. For more on the growth of fundamentalist and evangelical Christianity during the 1930s please see Joel A. Carpenter, “Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929–1942,” *Church History* 49, no. 1 (March 1980): 62–75.

²¹ Ronald C. White, Charles Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976).

began to focus on what Christianity had to say about the structure of a society that produced such horrific conditions for so many of its people. While initially known simply for its attempts to apply Christian principles to society as a whole, Social Gospel thought became increasingly critical of the country's capitalistic economic system and increasingly insistent on using the power of the state to change society and bring about "The Kingdom of God." This theological shift from individual salvation to the perfection of society through, most pointedly, legislation and government programs came to define the Social Gospel. Its criticism of specific parts of the US economic system, such as the profit motive, along with the Social Gospel's disinterest in traditional Christian doctrines lead to its estrangement from conservative and evangelical Christians who saw little need to abandon capitalism or more importantly what they considered essential Christian doctrines such as the Divinity of Christ and the literal Resurrection of the body.²²

Despite evangelical Christians increasing distaste for it and its increasingly pointed attacks on the economic structure of the country, the Social Gospel and its call for government legislation to change and "perfect" society had risen to the height of prominence within Protestantism by the start of World War One. The war shattered its prominent place, along with the utopian dreams of many like-minded progressives, and the Social Gospel's influence began to wane. Though the Social Gospel, and its critiques of America's economic structure, had seemingly been shunted aside in the aftermath of WW I and during the "roaring twenties," it continued to maintain a presence in Protestantism through the Social Gospel-inspired Federal Council of Churches and through many of the more liberal religious publications including the dominant Protestant magazine at the time, *The Christian Century*. It remained one of the strongest, if not the strongest, liberal influences in

²² Ahlstrom, 794-805. While conservative and evangelical Christians did not embrace the theology of the Social Gospel, they were not indifferent to social Christianity, or a belief that the church had a responsibility to help the poor. Their social Christianity differed from the Social Gospel in that it did not focus on structural issues or try and explain poverty outside of moral deficiency. Rather, their bread and butter social programs focused on simply helping those who struggled during hard times to get back on their feet, not solving some larger societal problem. For more on the distinction between the Social Gospel and practical social Christianity see Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 198.

American Protestantism. The Great Depression magnified this influence and mainline Protestants saw a great revival in Social Gospel thought, especially its focus on society as a whole, its sharp critique of capitalist principles and its belief in government as the most important tool in restructuring society.²³

As early as 1932 many mainline protestant publications and churches began seriously questioning capitalism. The Presbyterian General Assembly accepted a report that stated, "The world's economic system stands today distraught and bewildered in the presence of a crisis precipitated by the very principles upon which it had been assumed general prosperity was based."²⁴ The flagship publication of the Episcopal Church, *Churchman*, asserted that the prevailing capitalistic economic system was "rotten to the core."²⁵ And most surprisingly the more conservative Northern Baptist Convention adopted an affirmation that stated that "all wealth and all labor power are intended by the Creator for the highest good of all people...from the cradle to the grave..." and that "Civil government is the sovereign agency for the promotion of the general welfare. To it belong all the rights of property and power necessary to accomplish the purpose of such an agency." The affirmation then went on to attack the current economic order because "it places an excessive and naïve dependence upon competitive private trading as a method of distributing goods and services."²⁶

The enduring nature of the depression continued to focus churches' attention on what Christianity had to say about the economic life of the country. Consequently, affirmations and statements critiquing the capitalist economic order and calling for the increasing use of government power continued to pour forth from publications and ecclesiastical bodies throughout Protestantism. In 1933 the Northern Presbyterian General Assembly attacked one of the basic

²³ White, *Social Gospel*, 921-923. See also Paul A. Carter, *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel: Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches, 1920-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954).

²⁴ *Decline and Revival*, 143.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.* 151-152.

operating principles of capitalism by insisting “if the right to live interferes with profits, profits must necessarily give way.”²⁷ This attack on the profit-motive echoed so loudly throughout Protestantism that in 1934 the editor of *The Christian Century* asserted “literally hundreds of church bodies [have] declared that religion demands a society purged of the profit motive.”²⁸ The denominational attack on the capitalistic economic order that garnered the most attention was the Anti-Profit Resolution passed at the Congregational Churches General Council in 1934. The resolution went beyond a critique of the profit motive and called for the “abolition of the system responsible for these destructive elements in our common life, by eliminating the system’s incentives and habits, the legal forms which sustain it, and the moral ideals which justify it.”²⁹

In addition to the attacks and critiques emanating at the denominational level in the early 1930s, the pre-eminent ecumenical council, the Federal Council of Churches (FCC), updated its founding document, the Social Creed of the Churches. Instead of vague critiques of the economic order the new Creed very definitely called for measures such as “the subordination of speculation and the profit motive” and “collective bargaining and social action.” Even more to the point the FCC added a section calling for the “control of the credit and monetary systems and economic processes for the common good,” a clear call for government intervention and even ownership.³⁰

Many denominations went beyond affirmations and resolutions and created councils, such as the Congregationalist’s Council for Social Action, which produced studies detailing what measures the country should take to correct the perceived evils of the capitalist economic system. In sum, the Great Depression triggered a decidedly leftward trend in American Protestantism in the early 1930s. To many observers, it appeared that American Protestantism felt morally bound to call for changes in America’s economic system; changes that meant a larger role for the government

²⁷ *Protestantism and Social Issues*, 75.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

³⁰ *Decline and Revival*, 150.

in the economic life of the country. Social Gospel activist Kirby Page boasted in 1934 “Among all the trades, occupations, and professions in this country, few can produce as high a percentage of Socialists as can the ministry.” Even the preeminent American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr believed that “the American churches probably contained more Left wing political opinion than any of the other religious institutions in the entire world.”³¹ Thus by 1934 the largest mainline denominations in the United States and the largest ecumenical council in the United States had all rather vocally questioned basic capitalist principles such as the profit-motive or called for greater government intervention in the economy to help ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth. The trend or zeitgeist within American Protestantism in the early 1930s clearly suggested an embrace of Social Gospel ethics and concerns.³²

The perception of a wholesale Protestant embrace of Socialism or at least major government intervention in the economy, however, is somewhat misleading. As Historian Robert Miller points out, many of the anti-capitalist resolutions passed in the 1930s were far from representative.³³ Additionally, many of the resolutions passed in a somewhat suspect manner. For example, the attention grabbing Oberlin Anti-Profit Resolution of the Congregational Church did not pass until the tail end of the conference when only 150 of the 764 voting delegates were present to vote.³⁴ Many of the resolutions also passed with little intent to back the words with concrete action, or as a sop to the more vocal firebrands within the denomination. And of course, there was the much studied and discussed “lag” between the more socially minded social clergy and laymen

³¹ *Protestantism and Social Issues*, 64.

³² While the mainline Protestant churches clearly had a greater Social Gospel influence in their reactions to the Great Depression, evangelical and other more grass-roots churches had a variety of reactions. Jonathon Ebel argues that the Depression led to three distinct “religio-economic” discourses. The first interpreted the economic disaster in apocalyptic terms. The second focused on the social aspects of the Christian message and sought salvation in cooperative efforts by believers. The third claimed the depression as a purifying trail sent by God to strengthen their faith. For more see Jonathon Ebel, “In Every Cup of Bitterness, Sweetness: California Christianity in the Great Depression,” *Church History* 80:3 (September 2011), 590–599.

³³ *Ibid.*, 114.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

whose primary focus was less grandiose.³⁵ Finally, more theologically conservative evangelical churches, such as the Southern Baptists, by and large stayed away from any talk about reforming or changing the economic system of the country. Many evangelicals also had a theologically driven opposition to FDR and the New Deal, believing that they were probable signs of the End Times.³⁶ They tended not to sit on ecumenical councils and thus were not as represented as their mainstream brethren in the national conversation. Despite the conditional nature of the churches' move to the left in the Great Depression, at the time events were moving much too quickly for most observers to pause and take note of those conditions.

Along with Social Gospel-inspired calls for government to fix the broken economic system, many Protestants also pushed for a larger governmental role in social aid and welfare. Even before the Great Depression, some churches had been insisting that the federal government provide broad-based social welfare programs. Short on funds and with the economic impact of the Great Depression in full force, an increasing number of pastors began supporting government programs such as Social Security. While some embraced it conditionally, others felt such programs, which took welfare responsibility out of the churches hands, were "Divine Revelation." According to the limited data available, upwards of 3/4ths of Protestant ministers accepted if not embraced the government's growing, and the churches' diminishing, role in welfare. Whether in the economy writ large, or more specifically in social welfare policy, Protestant ministers were accepting, even demanding, greater government involvement and direction.³⁷

Spiritual Mobilization was not only a reaction against this perceived leftward trend within Protestantism, it was also a backlash against FDR and New Deal policies. When James Fifield first gathered together with other like-minded Congregationalists in late 1934, they, like many national

³⁵ Ibid., 115.

³⁶ Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 107; Matthew Sutton, "Was FDR the Antichrist? The Birth of Fundamentalist Anti-liberalism in a Global Age," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 98, No.3.

³⁷ Greene, "End of the 'Protestant Era?'" , 608.

observers, were keenly aware of the perception of a leftward trend in churches' attitudes, especially towards the economic structure of the country and social welfare policies. The Oberlin Resolution, recently passed by representatives of their own denomination, provided the immediate backdrop for their initial meeting. The Resolution, however, was not sufficient in and of itself to explain Fifield's and his friends concern. Only placing the resolution in the context of the perception of a larger national drift to the left, with Protestant pronouncements simply being symptoms of that larger drift, explains why they felt compelled to act. It was only after FDR's second inaugural address and the beginning of the so-called "Second New Deal," especially Social Security, that they officially launched Spiritual Mobilization in early 1935. Fifield's call to resist the "trend towards pagan stateism" at the start-up of Spiritual Mobilization makes it clear how much the New Deal's institutionalization of charity, traditionally the church's domain, pushed the formation of the new organization.³⁸

Fifield and his supporters saw the New Deal and its policies as symptoms of a deeper national spiritual malaise. The root cause of that malaise, to their mind, was the Social Gospel. Despite the clear role the New Deal played in its founding, Spiritual Mobilization was not simply a knee-jerk reaction to its social, political and economic programs. It was the social and economic pronouncements of mainstream Protestantism coupled with the New Deal's legislative achievements that prompted Spiritual Mobilization's founding. While many Christian bodies and denominations had been issuing Social Gospel inspired pronouncements since the turn of the century, the drastic increase in volume and scope of those pronouncements along with the New Deal signaled a dramatic shift in Protestant thought to Fifield. Thus it was not until the Social Gospel appeared to be getting the upper hand in the political and economic life of the country through the New Deal that Fifield and his compatriots felt compelled to act. In their minds the New

³⁸ As quoted in Eckvard Toy, "Spiritual Mobilization: The Failure of an Ultraconservative Ideal in the 1950s" (*The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Apr., 1970), pp. 77-86), 78.

Deal and Social Gospel thought were not unrelated phenomena; the New Deal and its policies could largely be explained by the rise and prominence of the Social Gospel. Spiritual Mobilization's focus on reaching pastors and ministers makes it clear how much the Social Gospel was the primary source of Fifield's concern.

James Fifield, Pagan Stateism and the Los Angeles First Congregational Church

So who was this Congregationalist minister that sought to lead a national, non-denominational "crusade" for the Mobilization of Spiritual Ideals? James Wendell Fifield Jr., born in Chicago, Illinois in 1899, was the third of six children of Congregationalist pastor James Fifield Sr. He spent his early years in Kansas City, Missouri before attending Oberlin College in Ohio. During his first year at Oberlin, America entered World War I on the side of the Allies and young Fifield left school to enlist in the United States Infantry. The war and Fifield's enlistment in the Army appear to have had a lasting impact on Fifield's worldview. For the rest of his life Fifield carried a conviction that what happened in Europe mattered to America. He almost always framed his concerns and vision in an international context focused on what was happening in both Europe and America. After the war, he returned to Oberlin, graduating in 1921. Like his father, and his older brother Wendell, James decided to enter the ministry upon graduation and applied for admission to Chicago Theological Seminary.

Oberlin and Chicago Divinity School left their mark on Fifield, most pointedly in his theology. Prior to Fifield's matriculation at Oberlin, the Congregationalist minister George Frederick Wright had turned Oberlin into one of the primary centers where Christian thinkers attempted to harmonize Christianity with Darwinian evolutionary theory. Fifield's time at Oberlin led him to embrace Wright and other theological liberal's "modernist" project. Throughout his ministerial career, Fifield followed Wright's lead in attempting to harmonize scientific and religious truth. For Fifield natural scientific laws were God's laws. As he argued "In the beginning God

created man in his own image through evolutionary processes. He gave man dominion over the earth, provided he observed the laws, the laws of God and the laws of life, the laws of science and the laws of faith.”³⁹ Thus economic laws, at least the economic “laws” that he supported, demanded the same obedience as the Ten Commandments in his worldview.

Similarly Chicago Divinity School gave Fifield several theological tenets that he never abandoned. When Fifield attended Chicago Divinity School, it was one of the theological centers pushing the envelope of liberal theology. Under the direction of noted liberal theologian Shailer Matthews, the Chicago school had developed a line of theology known as “Modernistic Liberalism.” As religious historian Sydney Ahlstrom points out, Modernistic Liberalism designated those “who took scientific method, scholarly discipline, empirical fact, and prevailing forms of contemporary philosophy as their point of departure. From this perspective they approached religion as a human phenomenon, the Bible as one great religious document among others, and the Christian faith as one major religio-ethical tradition among others.” While Fifield followed Shailer’s line of thinking, primarily through the historical studies of Chicago faculty member Shirley Jackson Case, he perhaps more than others in the school “sought to salvage what [he] could of traditional belief, piety, and ethics.” Given his theological training it is hardly surprising that Fifield emphasized the close correlation between natural and divine laws, nor that he self-consciously argued his positions descended directly from the “traditional” Protestantism of the Pilgrims. As he frequently reasoned he was simply acting “in the spirit which brought the Pilgrim Fathers to this country to escape the State controls of Religion which had become dominant in the old world.”⁴⁰

³⁹ “God, Goodness and Government” Radio Address by James Fifield, Box 6, Fifield Folder, Howard Kershner Papers (HK), University of Oregon Special Collections.

⁴⁰ June 9, 1964 James Fifield to J. Howard Pew, Box 6, Fifield Folder, HK. Fifield similarly manifested his “Modernistic Liberalism” by hosting numerous “Congress of Faiths” that brought together as many religious representatives as Fifield could find, including representatives from traditionally “un-American” faiths such as Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism.

Perhaps the great irony of Fifield's ministry was that while he vociferously condemned Social Gospel thinkers, his theology was closer to the Social Gospel than the theologically conservative Christianity embraced by many of those he influenced. Indeed Fifield's theology that led him to speak out on social, economic and political issues had its roots in the same liberal theology that produced the Social Gospel. Both Fifield's political theology and the Social Gospel were attempts to adapt Christianity to modern ideas with an emphasis on bringing about "The Kingdom of God" in the social, political and economic life of the country. Where Fifield differed from his theologically liberal cousins was in the means to achieving this shared goal of the evolution of society. While both Fifield and the social gospellers believed the liberal idea that the immanence of God manifested itself through history, Fifield felt God's instrument for reforming society was the enlightened individual basing their life on the ethics and teachings of Jesus. Those who embraced the Social Gospel, however, felt collective action particularly at the government level was God's chosen way to perfect the social order. In other words Fifield maintained that those who followed the Social Gospel "think the world should be run mostly by governments" while he "believed in a free society. [I] contend that individuals acting on their own wills, under God, build a better world."⁴¹

In many ways Fifield tried to mimic the great 19th century clergyman Henry Ward Beecher. Like Beecher, who used his prestigious pulpit at the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn to earn national acclaim, Fifield used his pulpit to catch the national limelight. Also like Beecher, Fifield embraced a liberal theology while expounding political, social and economically conservative ideas. While the political Liberalism of the Social Gospel has occasionally obscured the relationship between liberal theology and political conservatism, historically liberal theology and political conservatism were allies more than adversaries. As Ahlstrom notes theological "liberalism often encouraged

⁴¹ "Does Government Belong in Business?" Spiritual Mobilization Pamphlet, JHP, Box 40, 1954 Spiritual Mobilization Folder.

complacency and self-satisfaction. It throve mightily among the most socially conservative classes of people.”⁴² To this point it is helpful to remember that the economic arch-conservative William Graham Sumner was initially a theologically liberal minister before embarking on his storied academic career.⁴³

While certainly not mere window dressing, Fifield’s theologically inspired political ideology did leave him open to criticism. The way he eventually meshed his theology with a support for laissez-faire economics while actively courting dollars from the businessmen at the top of the economic pile left him open to charges of insincerity. To critics, the seamlessness with which Fifield’s theology translated into conservative economics was just a little too convenient. Fifield’s eventual partnership with big business leaders, and arch-villains to adherents of the Social Gospel, such as Sun Oil President J. Howard Pew and DuPont Executive Jasper Crane called his theology into question. It was hard for Fifield to claim the moral mantel of speaking truth to power while taking contributions from the “money-changers” in the temple.⁴⁴

Theological liberalism imparted one final, lasting principle to Fifield; a core belief that the way to change people was through ethical preaching and moral education. Contrary to theological conservatism’s stress on the depravity of man, theological liberalism emphasized man’s autonomous nature and his capacity for altruistic action.⁴⁵ In other words, traditional Calvinist doctrines emphasized the inability of man to bring about anything good, and that man’s only hope for change was through casting himself on the mercy of God through Christ. Theological liberalism, on the other hand, gave man at least some control over what he became, making education a viable

⁴² Ahlstrom, 788.

⁴³ Fifield’s connection to Henry Ward Beecher had a personal touch as well. His brother L. Wendell Fifield, also a Congregational Pastor, headed Beecher’s old pulpit at Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims in New York from 1941-1955. It seems more than coincidence that James Fifield’s brother, who shared his theology and ideology and even relocated to Los Angeles to serve with his brother in 1955, was a successor to Beecher’s pulpit.

⁴⁴ For one example of just such criticism of Fifield see Aubrey B. Haines, “The Fifield Concept of ‘Spirituality,’” *The Christian Century*, October 18, 1967, pgs. 1332-1334.

⁴⁵ Ahlstrom, 779.

means to bring about a change in man's nature and actions. Fifield's turn to long-term moral education through Spiritual Mobilization came from his theological conception of man. In this way Spiritual Mobilization was a quintessential theologically liberal endeavor; its entire premise rested on a belief that education, persuasion and reason could bring about a change in man's behavior. Educating the clergy through Spiritual Mobilization could change the social, political and economic direction of the country.

While Fifield's theological liberalism influenced his ministry, particularly his founding of Spiritual Mobilization, his early career experiences as a pastor also profoundly shaped his thought. After graduating with a Bachelor of Divinity Degree in 1924, Fifield took up a small pastorate in South Dakota before moving to oversee a much larger, and more prosperous, flock in Grand Rapids, Michigan.⁴⁶ Fifield's time in Grand Rapids proved to be of enduring importance in shaping his ideology, providing him the time and context to begin developing his concept of pagan stateism. Because of his service in Europe during WW I, Fifield had kept up an interest in the continent and frequently traveled there. Many of his travels coincided with the tremendous political upheavals occurring in Europe during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Fifield's visits to Europe overlapped with Mussolini's rise to power in Italy, and later with Hitler's rise to power in Germany. He also visited Russia in the early 30s, and came away appalled at what he saw. From these experiences Fifield recounted "Way down in my soul there gradually developed a very deep conviction that the things I had seen in these other countries should never, God forbid, come to the United States of America." Having personally witnessed some of the devastation of World War I, it is hardly surprising that Fifield was highly sensitive to how events in Europe could impact the United States.

⁴⁶ *A History of First Congregational Church of Los Angeles*, "Chapter 21: The Fifield Decades" (No publication data available) at <http://www.thetintypeshop.com/church/Library/Davis/forward/Davisbookindex.html> accessed on 11-10-2012.

Fifield further concluded that what he saw in Germany and Italy was essentially the same as what he saw in Russia. He argued that all three countries followed “a perfectly obvious pattern which develops in logical sequence.” First comes “high-minded, social talk of security,” Social Security mandated by the government, then “the growth of bureaucratic controls” culminating in “changing the thesis of government being the servant to that of government being the master. The development of a mortal-God status for the state.”⁴⁷ Fifield’s observation of these three countries not only illustrated the threat, in his mind, but also provided the solution. Watching the Fascist take-over of Germany Fifield observed, “I saw organized labor capitulate. Then I saw organized business groups run for cover. I saw educational interests which maintained academic freedom, yield under pressure of government authority. For example, in Germany only a small group of free pastors refused to recant and knuckle in and some of them died. Thus I came to believe that the [statist] trend can only be thwarted at the spiritual level.”⁴⁸ Watching the brave stand of a few pastors in the face of Hitler’s growing power convinced Fifield that the church, through the pastors, was the key to ensuring such a thing would never happen in the US. As Fifield put it “when I had seen the free pastors in Germany stand up to the rack and be counted, I felt that the final bulwark in this country must be on the spiritual level through the church.”⁴⁹

Fifield’s reaction to the growth of Fascism in Italy and Germany and Communism in Russia led him to formulate his concept of “pagan stateism.” From his observations, Fifield concluded that state-power was the natural adversary of spiritual power, particularly the Christian principle of the omnipotence of God. He felt that if the state became provider then men would rely on the state, and not on God. Thus the state, through its beneficence would come to “demand the total citizen, body, mind and soul.”⁵⁰ The state, rather than God, would control and dispense the bounties of nature

⁴⁷ “Looking Towards a Better World,” Address before the Union Club, May 7, 1946, pg. 2, JHP, Box 10, S Folder.

⁴⁸ “Better World” address, pg. 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 4.

making God's role superfluous. "Stateism" or government control was pagan because it sought to put itself in God's place.

Fifield's concern with the Social Gospel and the New Deal sprang from his international observations. The similarities he saw between Fascism and Communism convinced him that the state was not only a threat to individual freedoms, but also a threat to Christianity and Christianity's God. The revival of Social Gospel thought that met him on his return from Europe filled him with alarm as he saw the Social Gospel as paving the way for the very thing he thought most threatened Christianity; state-power. FDR's implementation of the New Deal, particularly Social Security, was the final warning bell in Fifield's mind, the clear call to action. Spiritual Mobilization's founding purpose to "check the trends to pagan stateism" came out of these experiences, fears and concerns. Its credo, which changed little over Spiritual Mobilization's nearly 30 years, clearly reflects Fifield's concerns and convictions at this time: "Man as a child of God has inalienable rights and responsibilities: The State must not be permitted to usurp them. It is the duty of the church to uphold them."⁵¹

Fifield's international observations and the connection he saw between Fascism, Communism, the New Deal, and "pagan stateism," are in many senses not surprising. Fifield's visceral reaction to the New Deal's social welfare policies largely stemmed from what he saw as state encroachment on traditional church responsibilities. Churches had long held a central place in community life and most of the organized charity prior to the New Deal was either under the direction of churches or inspired by church teachings. When, as Liz Cohen argues, workers, and other Americans, began making a New Deal by abandoning old local, ethnic and religious

⁵¹ This credo appears over and over again in Spiritual Mobilization literature. See for example "A Share in Spiritual Mobilization" pamphlet, HK, Box 17, Spiritual Mobilization Folder.

organizations for the stability of federally run social welfare; Fifield saw that as turning from God to the State.⁵²

Additionally, Fifield's successful pastorship in the middle of the Great Depression provides another clue to his political and economic convictions. Fifield's parish did not suffer the same economic and membership distress that characterized much of American Protestantism during the early 1930s. By the end of 1934, Fifield had grown his congregation into a new building and received an honorary Doctorate of Divinity Degree from his Alma Mater. Fifield's success in Grand Rapids likely underscored in his mind that anyone could duplicate his success simply by adopting his principles. Fifield felt that his success came from "Voluntaryism," "our free way of life," "Freedom" or as he eventually came to call it Freedom Under God. Freedom Under God would grow out of his concept of pagan stateism, providing the positive vision to the threat that prompted the founding of Spiritual Mobilization. Though largely unarticulated in the 1930s, Freedom Under God for Fifield explained how he had acted with faith in God, not in government, and managed to prosper during a time of economic turmoil. His personal example was universally applicable. Thus the real solution to the Great Depression was not government intervention, but greater faith in God.

Fifield's achievements, particularly with regard to the healthy financial state of his parish, got him noticed by the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles. The Los Angeles church had recently finished building a massive new worship complex using a huge loan obtained during financially better times. The old pastor, Dr. Carl Patton, was leaving to become Professor of Homiletics at the Pacific School of Religion, leaving behind a church \$750,000 in debt.⁵³ The church first contacted the promising Fifield and offered him a position as Senior Minister in July of 1934. Fifield, however, had just finished constructing a new home in Grand Rapids and initially declined

⁵² Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁵³ This is the equivalent of almost \$13 Million dollars today.

the offer. At the General Council of the Congregational Church in Oberlin that fall, the same council that passed the Anti-Profit Resolution, a committee from First Congregational church took Fifield and his wife to dinner. The committee convinced Fifield of the great potential of the Los Angeles First Congregational Church, and so he and his wife flew out to Los Angeles to look over the position. Looking things over and recognizing the opportunity buried in the risk, Fifield finally accepted the position in 1935. Fifield would go on to serve as Senior Pastor of the Los Angeles First Congregationalist Church for the next 33 years until his retirement in 1968.⁵⁴

The move to Los Angeles would prove to be tremendously successful for both Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization. Not only did LA give Fifield access to a larger, national audience, it also put him in the middle of Los Angeles's growing conservative scene. The building blocks of the future conservative movement were starting to develop in Los Angeles in the 1930s. Economic conservatives such as theme park entrepreneurs Walt Disney and Walter Knott as well as movie mogul Cecil B DeMille were beginning to connect with each other and openly advocate for their economic principles. Social conservatives such as Four Square Church founder Aimee Semple McPherson, fundamentalist preacher Bob Shuler and other evangelical leaders were also growing in influence and power. These raw and as yet indistinct pockets of conservatism proved essential building blocks for the future growth and success of the Spiritual Mobilization network, and eventually the postwar conservative movement.⁵⁵

After arriving in Los Angeles, Fifield wasted no time using his keen business sense to rescue the struggling church. He quickly won the confidence of his parishioners and got the church's

⁵⁴ *A History...* "Chapter 30: Ministers Report to All Member's Business Meeting June 8, 1966."

⁵⁵ For Aimee Semple McPherson's place in modern Conservatism See Matthew Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007); For Los Angeles's importance to the early conservative movement and how Walter Knott, Bob Shuler and to a lesser extent Walt Disney and Cecil B. DeMille tie into it see Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011) and Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

finances on the path to security by instituting such money making innovations as multiple Sunday services, a revenue producing College of Life that offered over 30 classes for those willing to pay and a Drama Workshop that required similar fees.⁵⁶ The multitude of services that Fifield offered through the church, including a counseling center with professional psychologists, coupled with his charismatic leadership, brought people to the church in droves. When Fifield first took over the church there were less than 1,000 members; within a few years he had quintupled that to 5,000 members and 21,000 parishioners.⁵⁷ This influx in membership meant an influx in capital, both human and fiscal. Within seven years Fifield had paid off the church's debt and acquired extensive new properties by buying up the block it was located on in downtown Los Angeles piece-by-piece. The turnaround of the church brought Fifield national acclaim. When he ceremonially burned the church's mortgage in 1942, *Time* magazine ran an article on it.⁵⁸ His financial success led to demand for his consulting services on how to help other churches similarly fill their coffers, a service he provided to more than 70 other churches.⁵⁹ Fifield's on the side consulting services were another indication of his belief in the universality of his principles and the interrelated nature of spiritual and economic. As a pastor, Fifield demonstrated an entrepreneurial flair that made him sympathetic to the businessmen he collaborated with for much of his life and ministry.

Much like Henry Ward Beecher's Plymouth Pulpit, the Los Angeles First Congregationalist Church became the epicenter of Fifield's broader vision. Though Fifield rejoiced over his material successes in putting a once shaky church on solid financial ground, his vision of the church and what it could do for the community and the nation was more expansive. Upon his ascension as head of the church he declared, "I vision [sic] here a church of increasing influence on the Pacific

⁵⁶ *A History...*, "Chapter 22: Open the Door and Turn on the Lights."

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, "Chapter 21: The Fifield Decades."

⁵⁸ "Religion: Triumphant Campaign," *Time*, (Aug. 3, 1942). Incidentally, Fifield kept the ashes from the burned mortgage in the church as a reminder of the church's, and his, accomplishment.

⁵⁹ *A History...* "Chapter 24: First Church Lends a Helping Hand."

Coast and in our nation.”⁶⁰ Even while focusing on building up the material aspects of his church, Fifield foresaw using those materials to help bolster his broader crusade, a crusade based on his spiritual principles. Spiritual Mobilization was the first step in this broader program that Fifield initially referred to as his Crusade for Freedom. Throughout the years, Fifield would institute many and varied programs with some aimed at church members, some at the community, others at the state and some at the nation. All of the programs, however, fit under the umbrella of his Crusade and sought to promote the same general ends, namely his theologically-inspired concepts of “pagan stateism” and Freedom Under God. The Los Angeles First Congregational Church provided Fifield the base from which to launch a crusade that influenced and shaped American Protestantism, American life and the conservative movement that outlived him and his crusade.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Chapter 26.

Chapter Two: Spiritual Mobilization on the National Stage

On February 9th, 1954 Senator Joseph McCarthy stood to address a crowd of 5,000 people assembled at the First Congregationalist Church of Los Angeles. McCarthy's address, organized under the auspices of the church's Freedom Club, hit on his usual conspiratorial anti-Communist themes.⁶¹ McCarthy's presence at First Church had everything to do with the church's Senior Pastor, the Reverend James Fifield. Fifield had not only founded First Church's Freedom Club, and invited McCarthy to address it; he had turned the Freedom Club into a national organization with chapters all over the country. In many senses it was the laymen's auxiliary to his pastor-focused Spiritual Mobilization. McCarthy's appearance illustrates the importance of Fifield's ministry, and his church, in bringing together the constitutive parts of the conservative movement. Fifield's efforts were so integral to Conservatism that his church became a must stop for those making the rounds on the conservative speaking circuit in the postwar years. In the first 5 years of the 1950s such conservative heroes as Senator William Knowland, Dan Smoot of the Smoot report, Admiral Arleigh Burke, anti-New Deal academic Dean Manion of Notre Dame Law School, conservative "China Lobby" member Minnesota Representative Walter Judd and even Dixiecrat and South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond all made speaking stops at Fifield's church.⁶²

Several historians and commentators have noted, in part, Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization's contributions to modern Conservatism and Libertarianism. Kim Phillips-Fein sees Fifield's Spiritual Mobilization, as representative of a larger cultural effort by conservatives in the late 1940s and early 1950s to bring religion and capitalism together, though it was at best a "fringe group" with rather shallow and incoherent motives and principles. Phillips-Fein's business-centric analysis leads her to see Spiritual Mobilization more as a hobby or tool of businessmen like J.

⁶¹ See "Removal of Teachers Backed by McCarthy: Senator Repeats Charges Lattimore is Soviet Agent," *Los Angeles Times*, February 10, 1954, pg. 1.

⁶² Though the Freedom Club had a definite conservative bent in selecting its speakers, it was reputable enough that other national and international public figures addressed the club. For example, noted anti-Nazi and pacifist pastor Martin Niemoeller came and addressed the club in 1952. See "Niemoeller tells Faith's hope in world of Fear," *Times* March 17, 1952, Pg. 10.

Howard Pew than as any kind of serious theological, ideological, intellectual or political organization.⁶³ Similarly Brian Doherty sees Spiritual Mobilization as a passing group of “libertarian outreachers to Protestant clergy.” While Doherty does argue that “Spiritual Mobilization reached more people with more radical libertarian ideas than any other group in the late 1940s and early 1950s” his analysis sees Spiritual Mobilization as simply an important, if somewhat peculiar, early building block in modern Libertarianism.⁶⁴

The analytic lenses used by excellent scholars such as Phillips-Fein and Doherty keeps them from seeing the importance of Spiritual Mobilization, James Fifiel and his ministry in the larger picture of Postwar American life. Fifiel’s ministry, epitomized by Spiritual Mobilization and to a lesser extent his Freedom Clubs, played a vital part in the political life of the country by serving as a central networking node and ideological crucible in the early conservative movement. Fifiel’s founding of Spiritual Mobilization created a framework on which networks of individuals and organizations grew together into an ideological pole composed of libertarian economics, evangelical Christianity and Republican politics. Though barely remembered, even by modern conservatives, Fifiel and his Spiritual Mobilization’s activities and ideology brought together key actors, constituencies, and organizations under a religiously-inspired ideological banner that stretched from the depths of the Great Depression to the 1960s. Fifiel’s Spiritual Mobilization not only exerted far-reaching influence in its own day, its principles and activities inspired others to build on the foundation that Fifiel laid. Fifiel’s fundamental ideological principles of “pagan stateism” and Freedom Under God would live on, infused into the very heart of modern Conservatism.

⁶³ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen’s Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009). 70-77.

⁶⁴ Brian Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling history of the Modern American Libertarian Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 271-276.

Spiritual Mobilization's "Crusade for Freedom" in the Early Years

When Fifield moved to Los Angeles in 1935, he brought his Crusade for Freedom with him, including the newly organized Spiritual Mobilization as well as his long running radio program Radio Evensong. Starting Radio Evensong in Grand Rapids in 1932, Fifield continued and expanded the program to three radio stations upon arriving in Los Angeles.⁶⁵ While its content ran across a broad spectrum of religious topics and themes, it repeatedly stressed Fifield's theological concept of "pagan stateism." Like Fifield's Freedom Clubs, it targeted laymen, though more focused on a regional rather than a national audience. For Fifield, however, it was simply part of his larger ministry, or Crusade for Freedom.

Fifield's prestigious pulpit and growing fame from his multiplying activities gave him ample opportunity to spread his message of the dangers of "pagan stateism." Though Cowling and Hocking continued to support Spiritual Mobilization and do their best to propagate its principles, it quickly became a one-man show centered on Fifield. Fifield published tracts under the auspices of the First Congregational Church and began building a mailing list of fellow ministers. He also took his message to church, rotary, lay and business groups across the country.⁶⁶ He was prominent enough in LA that *The Los Angeles Times* regularly printed synopsis of his sermons and reported on many of his speeches. One particular sermon carried in the *Times* carried the pagan stateism sounding title "Regimentation Assassin of Freedom Says Pastor." In this sermon Fifield argued that America, because of the Great Depression, was selling its freedom for security, a rather poorly disguised attack on Social Security. In the sermon Fifield also hit on government interference in education and newspapers.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ "A History...", chapter 30.

⁶⁶ "History and Activities of Spiritual Mobilization: As Derived from the Minute Books," 1, JCI, Series I, Subseries A, Box 70, Folder 14.

⁶⁷ "Regimentation Assassin of Freedom," July 27, 1936, *Los Angeles Times*, pg. 7.

It is not a coincidence that Fifield's veiled references to the New Deal focused on social welfare programs such as Social Security and federal education measures. Just as social welfare had traditionally been the province of the church, education also had historically fallen under the auspices of churches. Fifield appeared to take such government infringement on his, and the church's, personal responsibilities and prerogatives rather personally. Fifield did not see the federal government's increasing involvement in education as indispensable and friendly aid; rather he saw it as further evidence of Americans' apostasy from God to the state. What was once the province of the spiritual and sacred was becoming unnecessarily defiled by slipping into the realm of the pagan and secular.

Though Fifield's activities on behalf of Spiritual Mobilization largely flew under newspapers' radars as, true to his individualist ethos, he generally addressed individuals or small groups; there is some trace of his efforts and ideology in his early years in LA despite the loss of his personal papers to history. From the evidence available, it is clear that Fifield took every opportunity to promote the principles that lay behind his Spiritual Mobilization crusade. Occasionally his efforts garnered the press's attention, such as a *Los Angeles Times* article in 1938 reporting on the wide distribution of a Fifield authored Spiritual Mobilization pamphlet "Christian Ministers and America's Future."

From glimpses, such as the pamphlet, it is possible to see the formation and propagation of Fifield's principles. Fifield opened the pamphlet by arguing that in the United States there was a "trend toward dictatorship being furthered by political and economic means" a trend that came about because "ministers and laity alike have been caught up in the humanitarian talk of the New Deal and have been blind to its perils." "The leadership needed" to fight this trend, Fifield continued, "should be provided by the clergy because the problem is basically spiritual." In typical fashion Fifield then closed the pamphlet by arguing that the clergy could check the state's

dictatorial trend by “restor[ing] individual thought on a widespread scale,” a restoration that would spring naturally from “the spiritually committed church” which was “our last line of defense against the totalitarian trend.”⁶⁸

Fifield’s emphasis on spiritual principles underlying America’s economic and political life was a key tenet of his Crusade. “Statist” or “totalitarian” New Deal programs were, for Fifield, a symptom of deeper spiritual distress, and thus the symptom would disappear if addressed at the proper level. This reasoning explained Spiritual Mobilization’s *raison d’être*, to reinvigorate or “revive” the spiritual principles that Fifield felt the church, and the nation, stood on by stirring America’s spiritual leaders, the clergy, to action. Though Fifield initially struggled to articulate the spiritual principles he felt the nation needed, as this pamphlet shows over time he developed a clearer vision of the dangers of pagan stateism and the promise of Freedom Under God.

Starting with this 1938 pamphlet, Fifield also began to stress Spiritual Mobilization’s stand against pagan stateism more aggressively. When Fifield first founded Spiritual Mobilization in reaction to the connections he saw between the Social Gospel, the New Deal and rising dictatorships abroad, his focus on pagan stateism was primarily defensive. He felt that if he could get enough pastors to take a stand, they would be able to stave off totalitarianism within the United States. Starting in 1938, Fifield shifted Spiritual Mobilization’s focus from staving off political totalitarianism to spreading its spiritual principles through a revival. Spiritual revitalization through a national religious revival became the new goal. Pagan stateism was no longer a threat that Spiritual Mobilization simply needed to hold the line against; it was a threat to attack. With this new emphasis Fifield would increasingly push Spiritual Mobilization into the public eye. It would no longer be a quiet effort by a single pastor to win his fellow clergymen to his cause one-by-one; it would truly become a national crusade with an increasingly public presence.

⁶⁸ “Minister sees Dictator Trend,” Oct 3, 1938, *Los Angeles Times*, pg. 8.

In addition to overseeing Spiritual Mobilization's public activities, Fifield connected with a number of notable individuals. In 1938 Fifield, who had been increasing his church membership exponentially the previous few years, decided to launch yet another Freedom Under God initiative by starting a Sunday Evening Club patterned after the more famous Chicago Sunday Evening Club that brought in nationally renowned speakers. Fifield pulled in Cal Tech President Roger Millikan, who was already on Spiritual Mobilization's board of advisors, and nationally renowned clergyman Dr. Henry Emerson Fosdick as prominent advisers for the club. Closely following Spiritual Mobilization's mission the club sought to act as "a non-sectarian weekly service of inspiration and fellowship, devoted to the promotion of moral and religious ideals." Showing how much his embrace of free enterprise and individualism did not flow from a race-based ideological impetus, Fifield invited Howard University Chaplain Howard Thurman, one of the godfathers of the modern Civil Rights Movement, to deliver the Club's inaugural address.⁶⁹ Following Thurman were such notable speakers as English poet Alfred Noyes, Colorado Governor William Sweet and Jewish textile magnate Alfred Kohlberg, head of the (in)famous pro-Chiang Kai Shek China Lobby.⁷⁰ In 1939 just recalled US ambassador to Germany William E. Dodd held an anti-Nazi rally at the Club attended by such celebrity figures as University of California system president Gordon Sproul, *Times* editor

⁶⁹ *A History...* "Chapter 22: Open the Doors and Turn on the Lights." Fifield has occasionally been portrayed as a classic Conservative reactionary to the modern Civil Rights movement. As his invitation to Dr. Thurman well before WW II, his work with the Los Angeles Inter-racial church and, as discussed later, his Department of Negro Work demonstrate, his views on race and race relations are not nearly so easily categorized. His racial nuance complicates Kevin Kruse's assertion that Conservatism's embrace of free market ideology stemmed largely from Southern white reaction to the Civil Rights Movement. While race undoubtedly played a role in the how and why of Conservatism's absorption of laissez-faire economics, Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization demonstrate that religious belief offers a complementary explanation as to how and why libertarian economics and individualism became paramount on the Right. Being a champion of laissez-faire capitalism does not automatically make one racist, nor racially-motivated. For an example of Fifield as racial reactionary See Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*, 70-73.

⁷⁰ *A History...*, Kohlberg's address was, as appropriate to his reputation, entitled "Brain Washing in China."

Harry Chandler and movie star Spencer Tracy.⁷¹ Historian Arnold J. Toynbee and popular writer Will Durant would also make appearances at the Los Angeles First Congregationalist Church.⁷²

Along with his expanding network of friends and supporters, Fifield also spread his beliefs and ideology through his growing prominence as a clergyman and as a national and international commentator. While the *Los Angeles Times* had covered a number of Fifield's sermons over the years, in 1939, it promoted Fifield's international observations in three articles that went well beyond the usual coverage of Fifield. In the first article the *Times* reported on Fifield's prediction that 1939 would be a "momentous" year as it would be either a "year of our Lord" or a year "in which the forces of paganism [read: political dictatorship] continue their ascent." The result, Fifield contended, depended on whether or not "the democratic nations can get together upon a united front for action against common perils."⁷³ True to his principles Fifield argued that greater government control epitomized by the dictatorship of Hitler was essentially pagan, or anti-Christian. The centralization of political and economic power was antithetical to the realm of God; God could not operate where men held such power.

In June of that year Fifield clarified and expanded his analysis of international events when he reported on his recent trip to Europe in an address titled "The World Outlook and Spiritual Ideals." Fifield argued that there were great prospects for peace because the world was "deeply interested in Spiritual Progress" as evidenced by France's "repudiation of radicalism and a return to the gospel of hard work and individual responsibility in social conduct." Such a revival had strengthened the democracies' hand and was a warning for America to abandon its current policies

⁷¹ Ibid. Sproul, like Millikan, was also a member of Spiritual Mobilization's advisory board.

⁷² Fifield and Will Durant had known each other since 1930 when they met in Grand Rapids. Durant, along with Noyes, briefly served on Spiritual Mobilization's Advisory Committee starting in 1943. In 1973 Durant wrote Fifield a sentimental letter praising Fifield's beliefs and principles and showing some ambivalence to his own embrace of FDR and the New Deal in the 30s. See Will Durant to Fifield June 1, 1973 Series I, Subseries A, Box 70, Folder 14, JCI.

⁷³ "Pastor Declares 1939 to be a Momentous Year," Jan 2, 1939, *Los Angeles Times*, pg. A3.

and let “the States and individuals recover” and fortify “the future of private enterprise.”⁷⁴ Finally in August of that year Fifield called for prayer to save the world from “wrong trends” [read political and economic centralization or “statism”] to which “our human failures have contributed.” [read lack of faith in God] This prayer would be answered if “civilization” [read the US and Europe] would return to “fundamentals such as religion proclaims” [read individual faith in God].⁷⁵ In other words, a spiritual revival, or an extension of God’s realm, was the real way to combat the growth of Fascism, Communism and other programs of political and economic centralization.

The coming of WW II, in addition to heightening Fifield’s prominence, also heightened his sense of urgency. Though Fifield’s service in the US Army during World War I had made him sensitive to events in Europe and their impact on America, the dramatic growth of international Fascism and Communism in the run-up to World War II filled Fifield with concern and underlined the need for the spread of the principles behind Spiritual Mobilization in his mind. Fifield felt that the New Deal was simply a less virulent form of the Fascist trend sweeping through Europe and Asia and attributed the root cause to the spread of “pagan stateism.” Pagan stateism helped Fifield explain a historically Christian nation like Germany’s embrace of Hitler and his ideology; Germans had literally apostatized and turned to worshiping the power of the State. The parallels Fifield saw between the centralization of the New Deal and the centralization of Hitler’s Germany led him to see the “solution” to both in an embrace of faith in God and a reliance on him and not the State. Fascism and Communism, like any trends to political and economic centralization, were best fought by a firm commitment to “Christian” individualism. In such a worldview, “civilization’s” turn to prayer and the “fundamentals” of religion would automatically undercut the threat of Hitler, Mussolini and the New Deal.

⁷⁴ “Pastor Back from Europe Sees Prospects for Peace,” June 18, 1939, *Los Angeles Times*, pg. A1.

⁷⁵ “Turn to Prayer Advocated in World’s Hour of Gloom,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 28, 1939, Pg. A2.

Fifield's sense of urgency convinced his church that Spiritual Mobilization needed more serious financial backing. Before 1940 Fifield had a very modest budget for Spiritual Mobilization, a budget that allowed him to send out a few pamphlets a year in addition to his personal evangelizing on behalf of Spiritual Mobilization and its principles. In 1940 the Los Angeles First Congregational Church board voted to give Spiritual Mobilization's budget a hefty increase.⁷⁶ Fifield soon put this money to good use and got more press coverage by starting a national campaign to get at least 30,000 clergymen to sign Spiritual Mobilization's pledge.⁷⁷

The financial boost to Spiritual Mobilization provided by his church, and Fifield's increasing attention to its crusade, led to its rapid growth. During 1941, Spiritual Mobilization City Chairmen and State Directors got over 2 million people to sign its basic pledge, a pretty sizable number in the days before modern political mobilization techniques had been honed and perfected. In addition to his work among the grass roots, Fifield also lined up enough high profile support to officially incorporate Spiritual Mobilization in the state of California on July 29, 1942.⁷⁸ Fifield expanded Spiritual Mobilization's organizational muscle by hiring a comptroller, Frank Wolcott, to run the day-to-day operations. At its incorporation Spiritual Mobilization boasted an impressive Board of Advisors that included names such as U.S Senator Albert Hawkes (R-NJ), Cal Tech president Robert Millikan, Human Events editor Felix Morley, nationally known clergyman Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, and University of California system president Robert Gordon Sproul.

The incorporation of Spiritual Mobilization allowed Fifield to clarify Spiritual Mobilization's mission and principles in its statement of purpose. The statement, which all board members endorsed and which never changed throughout Spiritual Mobilization's existence, outlined its devotion to Christian, "American" and individualist principles. It read:

⁷⁶ "History and Activities of Spiritual Mobilization: As Derived from the Minute Books," 3, Series I, Subseries A, Box 70, Folder 14, JCI.

⁷⁷ "Spiritual Mobilization Plan Reported Making Gains," *Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 1940, Pg. A3.

⁷⁸ "History and Activities of Spiritual Mobilization", 3.

To promote in a non-political, non-theological and non-denominational manner the basic freedoms and spiritual ideals which are inherently Christian and American. To work through churches and the clergy for the championing of free institutions, free speech, free pulpit, free enterprise, free press and free assembly. To provide individuals a channel through which to make their efforts effective in behalf of basic freedoms and spiritual ideals.⁷⁹

Fifield's solution to the country and the world's problems was to empower individuals to join their efforts in championing "freedom," including "free enterprise."

True to his belief in decentralized power, or "individual freedom," Fifield set-up Spiritual Mobilization initially to allow maximum freedom for State Directors, City Chairman and other representatives. As Fifield explained to a supporter "Our thought is particularly at the start to ask [them] to work in [their] own way. We find we can learn a good deal from people when we give them freedom."⁸⁰ In Fifield's vision each representative would serve as "rallying foci" for Spiritual Mobilization's point of view, leaving little for Fifield to do but send printed material for the representative's use.⁸¹ Through its printed tracts Fifield rallied those who believed "in the Christian concepts" of "(a) Sacredness of the individual and (b) The state as servant, not master." Those who represented Spiritual Mobilization stood for "the inter-related freedoms – free pulpit, free enterprise, free press, free speech and free assembly."⁸² In other words, Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization believed that freedom was indivisible and that a threat to any one freedom was a threat to all. With a more coherent ideology and a growth in its activities, the incorporation and reorganization of Spiritual Mobilization signaled the beginning of a new era of prominence for it, and Fifield's larger Crusade for Freedom.

A Growing Crusade: Spiritual Mobilization During World War Two

While Fifield's anti-statist message took on new and urgent meaning with the growing threat of international Fascism, the outbreak of WWII forced Fifield to carefully reconcile the need for a

⁷⁹ "Spiritual Mobilization Articles of Incorporation," JCI, Series I, Subseries A, Box 68, Folder 18.

⁸⁰ James Fifield to J Howard Pew, Dec, 1944, Ibid.

⁸¹ Spiritual Mobilization Pamphlet 1944, Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

strong central government to prosecute the war with the anti-statist principles of his spiritual message. It is hard not to understand Spiritual Mobilization's success during the late 1930s and early 1940s as driven in large part by an almost universal concern about Fascism with Hitler's state-centered Germany serving as the perfect example for Fifield to point to in laying out the anti-statist principles of his crusade. Fifield successfully tapped into the same dynamic that Senator Joseph McCarthy would tap into after the war, using international events and threats to make the case for a domestic crusade of action. Unlike McCarthy, who had the political and cultural space to launch a furious attack on federal government officials and agencies, Fifield's Spiritual Mobilization faced as many pitfalls as opportunities in the face of the massive mobilization of society for World War II. Fifield's deft ability to navigate through the dangerous waters of the politics of WW II gave new strength and greater influence to both Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization. The World War II period proved to be the time when Fifield brought together key players in the Spiritual Mobilization network who would play important roles in Spiritual Mobilization, the nascent conservative movement and postwar American life.

It is quite evident that the international growth of Fascism and Communism before and during World War Two reinforced the urgency and need for Spiritual Mobilization in Fifield's mind. Almost every public statement Fifield made from 1939 until 1945 referenced international events and their relationship to the United States. America's entry into World War Two did little to calm Fifield's sense of urgency, and the incorporation of Spiritual Mobilization in 1942 was a direct response to that urgency. While the incorporation of Spiritual Mobilization officially separated its operations from the operations of the Los Angeles First Congregationalist Church, Fifield continued to see both as inter-related parts of his Crusade for Freedom. The legal separation allowed for a separation of budgets, easing the strain on the church treasury and forcing Spiritual Mobilization to seek other revenue sources. Fortunately for Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization, the success of the

pledge drive and the growing prominence of both Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization attracted the support of some of the country's most influential, and wealthy, businessmen and business leaders.

While Fifield had worked with and solicited support from businessmen throughout his ministry, the incorporation of Spiritual Mobilization allowed him to reach those beyond his congregation for funds. It was an outreach that took a couple of years to reach peak efficiency. Though Spiritual Mobilization had been making tremendous progress since 1938, the first year of its incorporation saw a rather paltry budget of \$13,000 for its operations. Fifield wisely used this budget to focus on catching the attention of some of the most prominent business leaders in the country. By the end of Spiritual Mobilization's first year as a not-for-profit corporation, Fifield and Sun Oil President J. Howard Pew were corresponding regularly.

Spiritual Mobilization's pledge drive most likely first caught the eye of Pew, who was always on the lookout for causes and organizations that brought together religion and capitalism. Pew had long been arguing for the morality of free enterprise, as he liked to call it. Even as a member of the infamous Liberty League, Pew's speeches tended to focus on the underlying morality of capitalism while attacking FDR and the New Deal as undermining what he saw as the Christian ethic behind the "American way of life."⁸³ Pew's particular defense of business and capitalism had led him to form a close relationship with Jasper Crane, CEO of DuPont Chemical, who shared his view of the inherent Christianity of unfettered capitalism or "Economic Freedom." Crane and Pew had come to know each other through the National Association of Manufacturers. Pew appears to have introduced Spiritual Mobilization to Crane shortly after he himself came in contact with Fifield.

The influx of business supporters epitomized by Pew and Crane not only had a dramatic impact on Spiritual Mobilization's budget, it also materially affected Fifield and Spiritual

⁸³ George Wolfskill, *Revolt of the Conservatives: A History of the American Liberty League, 1934-1940* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

Mobilization's conception of pagan stateism. Before incorporating Spiritual Mobilization and relying on businesses and businessmen to provide the lion's share of the budget, Fifield spent as much time talking about the threat of the State to freedom of the press, academic freedom, constitutional government and other freedoms as he did talking about free enterprise. After 1942, Fifield increasingly emphasized free enterprise as the first among equals. Unsurprisingly much of this new emphasis came about from his active courting of business dollars. In his personal correspondence with those who had the means to donate substantially to Spiritual Mobilization Fifield would make sure free enterprise was prominently mentioned.⁸⁴ By his own admission most of Fifield's talks and broadcasts in 1943 took aim at two of FDR's four freedoms, freedom from fear and freedom from want. For Fifield and his business supporters the economic issue of freedom from want was an "unworthy objective for our nation."⁸⁵ Again showing how his liberal theology influenced his worldview, Fifield argued that fear and want played important, divinely warranted roles in man's evolution. Moving forward Fifield's concept of pagan stateism revolved more and more around economic issues.

This new influx of business support and emphasis on economic issues was not the product of peacetime. Remarkably, the expanding support for Spiritual Mobilization epitomized by Pew and Crane occurred in the middle of World War II. In August 1943, Fifield, who had recently had a day-long conference with New Jersey Senator Albert Hawkes, wrote both Pew and Crane to seek their advice on whether to take a sabbatical from his church to dedicate his full effort to furthering Spiritual Mobilization. He wrote "There appears to be a growing conviction among thoughtful people that 1944 will be the most important year in American history since the Civil War." Because of this growing conviction Fifield had been asked "by some people of the Mobilization...to take a

⁸⁴ See for example James Fifield to Leonard T Beale, Jan 18, 1945, Box 8, Spiritual Mobilization Folder, JHP. "Fundamentally the stateism problem in America is a spiritual problem. If the basic-freedom victory is won – free enterprise, free press and other categorical freedoms will be vouchsafed." And James Fifield to Evan Randolph March 15, 1945, Ibid. "Our 'Crusade for Freedom' is the larger fight for freedom of which the battle for free enterprise is part. We believe it will finally be determined by spiritual considerations."

⁸⁵ James Fifield to J. Howard Pew, August 25, 1943, JHP, Box 4, S Folder.

leave of absence...and devote myself entirely to the Mobilization for six months or a year.” Before making such a momentous decision, however, Fifield, wanted their “counsel and guidance” as he only felt he should take such a leave if “I could render a real service” by so doing.⁸⁶ Evidently Fifield felt enough supporters, probably Hawkes most prominently, felt strongly enough about the capability of Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization that such a move would bring about fantastic results, despite international events.

Even in the middle of a war, Pew, Crane and Hawkes took the time to respond to and encourage Fifield. Pew replied to Fifield’s letter by suggesting Fifield needed to read Henry Wriston’s anti-Social Security book *Challenge to Freedom* and Edgar Queeny’s *Spirit of Enterprise* before he made a decision.⁸⁷ Such a reading list suggested that Pew was leaning toward Fifield taking just such a leave. Crane rather more explicitly argued that the leave was a good idea, as “I don’t think there is anything that the clergymen of the country need more than contact with you and exposure to your ideals for America.”⁸⁸ It is remarkable that in the middle of World War Two, men such as Hawkes, Crane and Pew, who were all focusing tremendous amounts of energy on war related work, felt that Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization was just what the country needed. Even in a time of such international turmoil, these men felt that a domestic crusade centered on spiritually motivated anti-statist principles was a high priority.

While the run up to and early years of WW II allowed Fifield to get press attention and catch the eye of men like Pew and Crane, the war also proved a hindrance to Spiritual Mobilization’s operations. In a letter to Pew, Alfred Haake, a University of Wisconsin trained economist and former Liberty League member, detailed the war’s effect on Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization.

⁸⁶ James Fifield to J. Howard Pew, August 10, 1943, JHP, Box 5, S Folder.

⁸⁷ J. Howard Pew to James Fifield, August 19, 1943, Ibid.

⁸⁸ Jasper Crane to James Fifield, August 13, 1943, Ibid. It is important to note that in referring to the secular field here, Crane is simply noting that Fifield has no ecclesiastical authority over the ministers he is trying to reach. Thus he is not acting in the “sacred” field or through the proper channels of authority in the church, but rather the “secular” field, or those actions and organizations that carry no official imprimatur.

Haake noted that 1941 was Spiritual Mobilization's best year, from obtaining signatures for its "basic freedoms" pledge to enrolling State Directors, City Chairman and representatives for Spiritual Mobilization. The coming of the war, however, had stopped Spiritual Mobilization's progress by diminishing its budget and "because of the depletion in the ranks of his working personnel, many of whom are now chaplains in the armed forces."⁸⁹ Fifield himself admitted some of the war's costs to Pew by noting that people "read little but war news" and so Spiritual Mobilization needed to "minimize our use of printed tracts."⁹⁰ Despite the war's distracting effects, Fifield still had a mailing list of 23,000 ministers including "1,100 very select names of outstanding leaders among the clergy and about 550 preachers who constitute the remains of [Fifield's] personal organization."⁹¹

Despite the demands of World War II draining his resources and depleting his personnel, Fifield drew increasing support from core followers, such as Pew, because of his beliefs and program. Though Pew had been regularly corresponding with Fifield, and had drawn close enough to him to become part of his inner-circle of unofficial advisers, he had, like a good businessman, decided he needed a more thorough investigation of his new "investment." Consequently, he had instructed Alfred Haake to make inquiries about Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization during a trip to the West coast on behalf of the American Economic Foundation (AEF) in late 1943. Haake along with Fred Clark, who was the founder of AEF, met with Fifield for over 2 hours and interviewed businessmen and civic leaders up and down the West coast, asking them about Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization. From this trip Haake wrote a long and glowing letter about Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization. While noting some of the difficulties that Fifield had run into with the onset of WW II, Haake urged Pew to unhesitatingly support Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization. In a long and

⁸⁹ Alfred Haake to J. Howard Pew, Nov. 13, 1943, pg. 1, Ibid.

⁹⁰ James Fifield to J. Howard Pew, Oct 8, 1943, Ibid.

⁹¹ Alfred Haake to J. Howard Pew Nov. 13, 1943, pg. 1, Ibid.

revealing paragraph he laid out what he found appealing about Fifield and his program, enunciating in terms of economics and Christianity the basic anti-statism of Spiritual Mobilization's ideology:

In what I have seen and learned I am convinced that [Spiritual Mobilization] is one of the most important ideas ever conceived...it is important to mobilize the preachers in defense of Christianity itself in the threat of 'state-ism'. The basic issue today and for the coming generation, in terms of economics and politics is 'Security v. Freedom'. We must choose one or the other, for we cannot have both, and if we choose security we not only lose freedom but fail to get security itself except at mere subsistence level. In terms of human life, the issue is 'Christ or Ceasar', or spirit vs. materialism. It means the Christian religion is menaced not merely by the Jap and the Nazi, but, even more seriously by the failure of American citizens to see the threat of materialism, or security, to Christianity in their own midst. There is a job that needs to be done to arouse the preachers to the threat against the very churches for which they labor. Perhaps, if they can see that State-ism is a threat against their own churches they can see that they do the world no kindness by merely venting spleen on people more prosperous and fortunate than themselves. Put another way, the preachers can be brought to see that their sympathy with what they thought was 'liberalism' is really part of the conspiracy against Christianity itself. Well, the man who can bring that truth home to the preachers will be rendering the world a real service⁹²

Fifield's ideology and program, explained so clearly by Haake, demonstrates how much Haake, Pew and Fifield shared a belief in the interdependence of the spiritual and the economic realms. Haake recognized a difference in how one argues in economic v. spiritual terms, but to him, Pew, Fifield and others in the Spiritual Mobilization network there was no substantive difference between the economic debate of Freedom v. Security and Christianity's concern with the spiritual v. the material. State intervention, or "State-ism," was not just a threat to economic efficiency; it was a threat to Christianity because its driving force was a concern solely with the material conditions of man. Conversely, capitalism or "free enterprise" was more than an efficient economic system; based on Christianity it allowed for the free exercise of Christian principles. In Haake's view, Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization not only understood the real issues at stake, but also proposed a program that effectively addressed those issues. Pew, who obviously shared Haake's views on the

⁹² Ibid., pg. 3. Haake was also very taken with Fifield as a person noting " he is as able a man as I have ever met in the ministry. He is head and shoulders above the rest, mentally and spiritually as well as physically." He also notes that Fifield is a "man's man."

economic and the spiritual, replied by expressing thanks for the report “which largely confirmed my own views.”⁹³

Haake’s report solidified Pew’s support for Spiritual Mobilization, leading Pew to invest heavily with both time and money in Fifield’s organization. By the end of the year Pew had sent Fifield a check for \$1,000, the maximum that Spiritual Mobilization accepted from individual contributors.⁹⁴ In addition to Pew’s personal contribution, Fifield pressed him to spread the news about Spiritual Mobilization among his contacts in the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) because “individuals and corporations which have a stake in the anti-stateism effort should certainly be glad to [donate to SM] if properly approached.”⁹⁵ Though Pew pushed back a little on Fifield’s idea of having NAM members substantially underwrite Spiritual Mobilization, he willingly went to work raising funds. He got Sun Oil to contribute \$5,000, the maximum Spiritual Mobilization accepted from corporations, to Spiritual Mobilization in 1944 and organized a meeting between Fifield and such NAM heavy-hitters as himself, Crane, former president H.W. Prentiss, Harvey Firestone of Firestone Tires and Charlie Hook of Republic Steel. This meeting not only got Fifield immense exposure within the business community, it also produced more tangible results when Crane, Pew, Hook, Firestone and Prentis all sent out fundraising appeals for Spiritual Mobilization targeting fellow corporate leaders.⁹⁶ These fundraising appeals were also helped by Spiritual Mobilization receiving a tax-exempt ruling from the Department of Treasury, enabling all who sent funds to write off the donation as a charitable contribution.⁹⁷

⁹³ J. Howard Pew to Alfred Haake, Nov 22, 1943, Ibid.

⁹⁴ See James Fifield to J. Howard Pew, Jan 4, 1944, JHP, Box 6, S Folder.

⁹⁵ James Fifield to J. Howard Pew Nov 22, 1943, JHP, Box 4, S Folder.

⁹⁶ See H. W. Prentis to John Ballantyne, Jan 15, 1945 JHP, Box 8, Spiritual Mobilization Folder. It was probably through this New York meeting that fellow NAMer B. E. Hutchinson first learned about Spiritual Mobilization, though he would not get as involved as Pew and Crane until a couple of years later.

⁹⁷ In an attempt to keep Spiritual Mobilization from relying on just a few individuals and corporations, Fifield only allowed \$1000 from any individual and \$5000 from any corporation.

Fifield's successful recruitment of business leaders like Pew, Crane, Firestone and Prentis significantly boosted Spiritual Mobilization's finances. By the end of 1944, just over 2 years after officially incorporating Spiritual Mobilization, Fifield had a budget of \$75,000, or 6 times the original \$13,000 budget.⁹⁸ Fifield used this increasing financial and moral support to rebuild Spiritual Mobilization's operations and expand its national footprint. In early 1944 Fifield began advertising Spiritual Mobilization's crusade in the major religious journals of the day, such as *Christian Century*.⁹⁹ He also decided that despite the continuing war, Spiritual Mobilization should start sending out written material again. Most importantly, Fifield began circulating a monthly Spiritual Mobilization bulletin, sending 250,000 bulletins "through 70,000 carefully selected ministers of all denominations." The increased activities brought an increased reaction in the religious community with some groups feeling strongly enough about Spiritual Mobilization's influence to publicly condemn it. Fifield argued that attacks such as a resolution passed by a group of Unitarian ministers condemning Spiritual Mobilization that got notice in the *Chicago Tribune* was simply "the best indication of our increased effectiveness" and that "every knock is a boost."¹⁰⁰

In addition to the increasing support of businessmen like Pew, Fifield also attracted other big names to the Spiritual Mobilization advisory board during World War II. The advisory board, which Fifield printed on every letter, pamphlet and tract, was meant to boost Spiritual Mobilization's public presence. By the end of 1943 Fifield had retained original board members like Sen. Albert Hawkes, Don Cowling and Norman Vincent Peale and added such prestigious names as Philosopher Will Durant, Poet Alfred Noyes, Congregationalist General Secretary Douglas Horton and Princeton Theological Seminary president John MacKay. Though the board did not meet, Fifield frequently asked members for advice and drew them into Spiritual Mobilization projects and programs as he saw fit. For example, not long after Freidrich Hayek's book *Road to Serfdom* came

⁹⁸ "A History of Spiritual Mobilization," pg. 5.

⁹⁹ James Fifield to J Howard Pew, March 17, 1944, JHP, Box 6, S Folder.

¹⁰⁰ James Fifield to J Howard Pew, Sept 14, 1944, Ibid.

out, Fifield and Pew worked to get it in as many minister's hands as possible.¹⁰¹ Additionally, they began a dialogue with John MacKay about MacKay writing a similar book "from the spiritual rather than the economic point of view" with a planned initial printing of 100,000 copies "for distribution to pastors of churches in America."¹⁰² Though the project eventually got shelved as more pressing issues and proposals caught Fifield's attention, it along with Spiritual Mobilization's push for *Road to Serfdom* shows the relationship between Fifield and his board members, and Spiritual Mobilization's national ambitions as well as its new economic emphasis.

True to his long-running concern with events outside the United States, Fifield continued to leverage the war and make his anti-statist points in the context of the international atmosphere. In an emotionally charged pamphlet in 1944, Fifield tried to rally the American people to his crusade and express his faith in the eventual triumph of his principles. Titled "The Great Common People of America Will Not Fail," the pamphlet laid out Fifield's principles, and how they connected to the great worldwide conflict. Perhaps echoing his own experience abroad at the end of World War I, Fifield felt that the war had shown Americans the importance of his principles as "they [now] see with their own eyes what state-ism has wrought elsewhere and what it is threatening to do to America." In a final feverish rallying cry Fifield enunciated the terms in which he viewed the war and its lessons

Shall the state be master or servant? That is the issue! There is no middle ground of compromise. The great common people of America, with characteristic courage, will repudiate and terminate the state-ism trend. They will see the issues clearly before it is too late. They will match the courage of their fore-bearers and their fighting men today!

Such fighting words, and the stark terms in which Fifield laid out his principles and connected them to spiritual, specifically Christian, ideals stirred the hearts, and opened the pocket-books, of those who shared his point of view. By the end of the war, Fifield had

¹⁰¹ James Fifield to J. Howard Pew, Dec 14, 1944, JHP, Box 6, S Folder.

¹⁰² See James Fifield to John MacKay Dec. 14, 1944, Ibid.

enlisted 1,573 new representatives among the clergy, had opened offices in Chicago and New York, was sending out a monthly bulletin along with numerous tracts and pamphlets, and was sending out lecturers like Alfred Haake and Donald Cowling to address groups of ministers across the country. Haake, who had joined Spiritual Mobilization as head of its Chicago office in 1943, had followed his own advice to Pew and literally devoted himself to Spiritual Mobilization and its Crusade for Freedom. Though the war had proved a trying time for Fifield, he and Spiritual Mobilization faced the postwar period from a position of newfound strength. Moving forward Spiritual Mobilization had acquired the funds, the core network of supporters and the economic emphasis that would allow it to grow to new heights and exert national influence in the pivotal decade after World War II.

The Postwar Push: From Pagan Stateism to Freedom Under God

The end of World War II led to a recalibration of Spiritual Mobilization's efforts. No longer could Fifield point to the imminent threat of Hitler's Germany to stir the concern of his fellow citizens and advance his theological anti-statist principles. To deal with the changing social, political and economic landscape, Fifield decided that all current Spiritual Mobilization tracts and pamphlets were obsolete and that he needed to scale back Spiritual Mobilization's program until he got a better sense of what direction to take.¹⁰³ As part of this recalibration and re-organization Fifield wrote to all the members of the Advisory Board and released them from their commitment with the option of accepting a reappointment if they so desired. Several Advisory Board members, including Alfred Noyes and Will Durant, felt that SM had accomplished its mission and that the statist threat had been largely beaten back with the defeat of the Axis and consequently did not accept re-appointment. By and large, however, the Advisory Board all re-upped their commitment to

¹⁰³ "A History of Spiritual Mobilization," pg. 6.

Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization. This vote of confidence along with the addition of financial support from businessmen such as Pew, Crane and Chrysler CEO B.E. Hutchinson inspired Fifield to move the morally and financially re-invigorated Spiritual Mobilization forward quickly by focusing on Communism, Socialism and the "lesser" state-isms associated with them.

As a sign of things to come, Spiritual Mobilization printed and distributed a pamphlet based on an article by Herbert Hoover entitled "Collectivist Trend Sweeping Over World." The pamphlet, in addition to emphasizing spiritual principles, was indicative of the tone and issues that Fifield felt Spiritual Mobilization needed to address in the postwar period. In the pamphlet Hoover noted that though "Monstrous evil forces have been defeated," America faced great challenges. Specifically Hoover noted that "a score of Fascist nations have shifted to Communism and half-a-dozen nations once liberty-loving have shifted to Socialism." Most shockingly America's closest ally, England, had recently succumbed to this trend and "whatever the name of these European systems...they are all collectivist" and a danger to freedom. Even America, with the New Deal and war controls had tasted collectivism and Americans had seen with their own eyes "the flood of bureaucratic violations of liberty and the moral degradation" that follows collectivism. Americans need not despair, however, as America could reverse this international trend by again "proclaiming our faith" in the "American System" which "over three centuries" Americans have built "from things of the spirit." Namely the American System "acknowledges the Fatherhood of God, the dignity of man" and ensures the "inalienable freedoms" that "come from the Creator Himself, not from the state." Hoover, who was not known as a particularly religious man, called the nation's attention to the very issues, such

as pagan stateism, and principles that Fifield had been promulgating since the inception of Spiritual Mobilization.¹⁰⁴

A closer look at Fifield's relationship with Hoover shows that it was not coincidence that Hoover wrote such an article, or that Fifield then published it. While it is not clear when Fifield first met Hoover, they quickly established a vibrant relationship. Fifield would frequently write Hoover to report on his activities and ask advice. For his part, Hoover would visit Fifield when he was down in Southern California, a privilege that Fifield relished. From their communication it is evident that Fifield looked up to Hoover as a mentor. In one letter Fifield shared how much Hoover's visits meant to him as "I get very discouraged with the battles of life and often lose perspective, but I am always restored when I talk with you. You make everything seem so simple, so clear and even so obvious."¹⁰⁵ Hoover was literally like a godfather to Fifield, giving him advice and encouragement in his ever-expanding ministry and crusade.

While the Hoover pamphlet continued Spiritual Mobilization's stress on economic issues by focusing on Socialism and war controls, its deeper importance was that it marked a shift in Spiritual Mobilization from just warning about the dangers of pagan stateism to also stressing and eventually emphasizing Fifield's positive vision of Freedom Under God. Before the postwar period Fifield would vaguely refer to Spiritual Mobilization as a Crusade for Freedom. While catchy and idiomatic, the vacuity of this term did little to distinguish Fifield's vision from those who disagreed with him. What was the difference, after all, between a Crusade for Freedom and FDR's insistence on the "four freedoms" that included a reference to state-provided economic security. Starting around the time of the Hoover pamphlet Fifield, perhaps sensing the need to bring greater clarity to his vision for the

¹⁰⁴ "Collectivist Trend Sweeping Over the World," Spiritual Mobilization Pamphlet, JHP, Box 8, S Folder.

¹⁰⁵ James Fifield to Herbert Hoover, October 31, 1951, JCI, Series I, Subseries A, Box 54, Folder 19.

country, stopped talking about a crusade and began labeling his vision as Freedom Under God. This new moniker gave some definition to Fifield's vision, freedom was inseparable from God, but was broad enough to allow him to further refine and develop it. It was also around this time that pagan stateism popped up less and less in Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization's writings. Though Spiritual Mobilization never stopped warning about the dangers of stateism, it now focused increasingly on Freedom Under God. What had started out simply as a negative warning had grown into a larger, positive vision.

Perhaps nothing epitomized the emergence of a positive emphasis in Spiritual Mobilization's efforts than its first bulletin in 1946. In the Director's message to Spiritual Mobilization's representatives Fifield started off by warning of the dangers of Liberalism cut off from religious belief before finishing by asserting

It is time to exert the dignity of individual man as a child of God, to exalt Jesus's concept of man's sacredness and to rebuild a moral fabric based on such irreducibles as the Ten Commandments. Spiritual Mobilization's job is to help direct the great social revolution so as to conserve and increase spiritual ends. In that process there is an available, Infinite Resource¹⁰⁶

The bulletin also had an article by Hoover devoted to the "Moral and Spiritual Recovery from War" and a page-long article emphasizing the positive aspects of Spiritual Mobilization's efforts. Spiritual Mobilization had come a long way from a reaction to Social Gospel thought and the political triumphs of the New Deal.

The January bulletin with Spiritual Mobilization's new emphasis presaged a burst of growth in Spiritual Mobilization's program. By June of 1946 Fifield had gathered enough empathetic businessmen to form a Business Men's Committee to assist with fundraising for the organization. The committee included such notables as Jasper Crane of DuPont Chemical and Wilmington businessman and NAM officer Donaldson Brown. Fifield

¹⁰⁶ Jan 1946 Spiritual Mobilization Pamphlet, JHP, Box 10, S Folder.

inaugurated the Committee at a large Spiritual Mobilization meeting in New York in June of 1946. At the meeting he also pledged that Spiritual Mobilization, which then had roughly 3,000 representatives, would sign-up 10,000 pastoral representatives by Easter 1947.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, the race sensitive Fifield also opened up a “Department of Negro Work” to reach out to Black Protestantism and installed black preacher Irving Merchant to head Spiritual Mobilization’s efforts to enlist black Americans in the Spiritual Mobilization crusade. In a bid to attract the public’s attention Spiritual Mobilization sponsored a debate between Norman Thomas and Advisory Board member Upton Close on whether government trends were leading the country into dangerous socialism.¹⁰⁸ Most significantly Fifield continued to send out a monthly bulletin to 101,000 ministers across the country that contained articles by himself, Alfred Haake, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, Dewitt Emery of the National Small Businessmen’s Association and Maurice Franks of the Yardmaster’s Union. This bulletin also went out to 2,500 weekly newspapers with an estimated readership of 20 million people.¹⁰⁹

1946 also proved important for the Spiritual Mobilization network as First Church Congregant and eventual Spiritual Mobilization Advisory Board member Leonard Read started the Foundation for Economic Education. Read, who knew Fifield, Spiritual Mobilization and the Freedom Under God crusade intimately from his time serving as a trustee of First Church, initially left for New York to work for the National Industrial Conference Board. He quickly decided that he did not like their approach and opted, with the support of prominent businessmen and fellow Spiritual Mobilization advocates Pew, Crane, James Ingebretsen, and Bill Mullendore to start his foundation. While never formally

¹⁰⁷ June 1946 Spiritual Mobilization Pamphlet, JHP, Box 10, S Folder.

¹⁰⁸ “Debate Scheduled,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 6, 1946, A9. See also “A History of Spiritual Mobilization,” pg. 7.

¹⁰⁹ Alfred Haake to J Howard Pew, March 27, 1945, JHP, Box 8, S Folder. Fifield, who considered himself a true friend to laboring men everywhere, was particularly pleased to have the head of a union write a monthly article for the Bulletin.

linked, the informal ties between Spiritual Mobilization and the Foundation for Economic Education would ensure a steady exchange of ideas, information and personnel. Most importantly, the founding of FEE signaled the entrance of an ideological ally in Spiritual Mobilization's broader crusade.

The formation of Read's Foundation for Economic Education did not divert any dollars from Spiritual Mobilization. Instead, Spiritual Mobilization's budget did nothing but grow despite or perhaps because of FEE's entrance onto the national stage. Fifield successfully expanded his work in so many directions with a budget that had more than quintupled from \$13,000 at its incorporation in 1942 to \$117,000 in 1946.¹¹⁰ Spiritual Mobilization's budget, which would balloon to nearly a half a million dollars in the next few years, would never dip below \$200,000 again. With such a firm financial underpinning Spiritual Mobilization could ensure continuity for all its various efforts, and expand on those efforts year by year.

1947 proved to be a year in which Fifield pushed two very public programs. First Fifield pledged Spiritual Mobilization to a voter registration drive intended to register 5 million new Christian voters. In an effort that would be duplicated on the Religious Right 25 years later Fifield attempted to work with clergymen to ensure that the "right" kind of voter got registered and voted. He sent out millions of cards and pamphlets that urged people to "regain a sense of personal responsibility which manifests itself at the ballot box" and fill out the enclosed card which would then enable Spiritual Mobilization to send back "techniques, suggestions and helps" in getting Christians registered to vote. Fifield, who never missed an opportunity to publicize Spiritual Mobilization and its mission, also

¹¹⁰ 1946 Pamphlet...

included a two-paragraph summary of Spiritual Mobilization and its mission in every pamphlet touting its successes and listing its Advisory Board members.

In addition to the voter registration drive, Spiritual Mobilization also started a sermon campaign with the goal of getting 25,000 pastors to preach on the topic “Perils to Freedom” on Columbus Day 1947. Fifield sent out a subscription encouraging pastors to sign-up for the sermon campaign. Those who signed up and pledged to preach on “Perils to Freedom” received a reading list from Fifield that included Austrian Economist Freidrich Hayek’s *Road to Serfdom*; a Human Events pamphlet entitled “Blueprint for World Conquest” about the threat of Communism; Paul Hutchinson’s anti-statist book *The New Leviathan*; and Garet Garret’s anti-New Deal tract “The Revolution Was.” Obviously with a reading list heavy on anti-communism and the threat of domestic state power Fifield had some very specific “perils” in mind for this campaign. The campaign proved to be tremendously successful with 25,066 pastors signing up and roughly 15,000, including Norman Vincent Peale, sending their sermons to Spiritual Mobilization.¹¹¹ Getting approximately 10% of the nation’s ministers to sign-up for a sermon campaign, particularly one so centered on the threat of statism was no small accomplishment. Between the Spiritual Mobilization bulletin and the “Perils to Freedom” sermon campaign, Fifield was successfully disseminating his ideology to and through one of America’s most influential groups.

Though the “perils” campaign obviously denoted a negative warning rather than a positive vision, Fifield tempered it with his message in the next Spiritual Mobilization Bulletin. In the Bulletin Fifield further developed his concept of Freedom Under God and its relationship to pagan stateism while stressing the need for a spiritual revival. Fifield

¹¹¹ James Fifield to O.D. Donnell, Oct 22, 1947, JHP, Box 15, Spiritual Mobilization Folder.

started out by arguing that he and his fellow pastors “must develop religious and spiritual revival in America...NOW.” He argued “we ministers must get people to stand on their own feet – to be give-minded instead of get-minded in relation to government and the common weal.” Pagan stateism had so sapped Americans sense of “individual responsibility,” that something had to be done to change American’s attitudes and actions. For Fifield the answer was simple “To deepen our own faith and our parishioner’s faith in God is the way to overcome dependence upon Washington.” Faith in God was the antidote for “Those who are lured by the promise of security are those who have no deep sense of the Peace, Power and Presence of God.” Freedom Under God meant turning away from the pagan state with its false “promise of security” and finding peace and security by relying on God to “stand on [your] own feet.” Economic self-reliance was the epitome of faith in God.

The “Perils to Freedom” campaign, and the opportunity it offered Fifield to further clarify his vision of Freedom Under God, was just one of many public campaigns Spiritual Mobilization carried out over the years. Despite the increasingly public nature of Spiritual Mobilization, it never lost its grass roots character. Fifield started out personally talking to his fellow ministers, and he never stopped addressing them in groups or as individuals whenever he got a chance. In addition to the sermon campaigns and voter registrations drives, Spiritual Mobilization hired regional representatives to organize conferences of ministers to hear the Spiritual Mobilization message. These regional representatives worked with individual ministers and small groups year round, and whenever Fifield, Cowling, Peale or another Spiritual Mobilization board member came to town, they would gather as many ministers as possible to meet with them and hear them speak. Because these conferences and meetings were intentionally unpublicized and often flew below the press’s radar, it is hard to get a sense for how often they happened and how many ministers attended. What is certain is that they occurred consistently throughout Spiritual

Mobilization's existence and played a key role in connecting ministers and laymen who shared Spiritual Mobilization's ideology. Reverend Edmund Opitz, who would join Spiritual Mobilization and eventually head up its regional conferences program, first connected with Spiritual Mobilization at one such conference.¹¹²

These conferences not only played a critical role in networking, they were also ideological crucibles that encouraged deeper thinking about Spiritual Mobilization's principles. The conferences were set up as discussion forums for thoughtful questions dealing with how Christian principles applied to American economic, social and political life. Of course the session topics, such as "Force v. Persuasion" and "Government and the Higher Law," lent themselves to Spiritual Mobilization's ideology, but the format ensured that participants were not simply preached at by those running the conference. Those who attended the conferences reported that their thinking on questions such as "Can men be made good by legislation?," "Can public welfare replace private charity?," and "Can the state force us to do our Christian duty toward our fellow men?" was stimulated in new directions. For example, after attending a conference Dr. Peale reported, "he had developed several new lines of thought and points of view as a result of the Conference."¹¹³

Additionally, the conferences served a further purpose of keeping Advisory Board members involved in Spiritual Mobilization's efforts and focused on its mission. Often Fifield, eventual Spiritual Mobilization president James Ingebretsen or conference organizer Opitz would write a board member for assistance in setting up a conference. Getting Board members involved not only allowed Spiritual Mobilization to outsource its efforts, cut costs and associate a prestigious name with its conference; it also increased the likelihood that

¹¹² "A History of Spiritual Mobilization...", pg. 23.

¹¹³ James C Ingebretsen to Francis Downs, May 22, 1951, JCI, Series 1, Subseries A, Box 54, Folder 18. Questions such as "can men be made good by legislation?" were an obvious attempt to rebut Social Gospel thinking and its emphasis on government as the tool to make society better.

the Board member would attend the conference. In some cases, a little extra pressure was required before the Board member committed. For example, after Board member Peale initially declined to help organize such a conference, Fifield expressed his disappointment and wrote rather pointedly “I understand full well how busy you are. I, personally, think that the saving of freedom should have a high priority on your list and everybody’s list these days.”¹¹⁴ Peale quickly wrote back that he had reconsidered and would be glad to take the lead in organizing the conference.¹¹⁵

Spiritual Mobilization’s grass roots organizing also applied to battling economic pronouncements from organizations such as the Federal Council of Churches. Since economic pronouncements from denominational and ecumenical councils prompted the creation of Spiritual Mobilization in the first place, Fifield made sure that Spiritual Mobilization never lost its focus on the threat of such pronouncements. Though Fifield publicly attacked the logic behind pronouncements such as the Oberlin Anti-Profit Resolution, his strategy was non-confrontational. Rather, Fifield wanted to work “from the inside” and change the thinking of those behind the pronouncements and organize opposition to such thinking within the organizations and groups that initially promulgated them. Meetings dealing with the economic life of the country put on by the Federal Council of Churches received special attention from Fifield and the Spiritual Mobilization network. For example, in 1947 the Federal Council of Churches hosted a conference on Church and Industry in Pittsburgh, PA. The meeting, headed by FCC president Charles Taft¹¹⁶, sought to gather member clergy to study what clergy should do about the labor situation in the country. Fifield, attending as a member clergyman, assumed leadership of the economic

¹¹⁴ James Fifield to Norman Vincent Peale, Feb 8, 1953, JCI, Series I, Subseries A, Box 14, Peale Folder.

¹¹⁵ See James Fifield to Norman Vincent Peale, Feb 19, 1951, Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Charles Taft was the brother to Conservative hero Robert Taft of Ohio, though Charles was much more moderate in his economic views than his brother.

conservatives at the conference and successfully forced modifications in the final statement that made it more amenable to his views on free enterprise. Though the final statement was not all the Fifield hoped for, his presence and organizing ability kept the conference from becoming a total disaster in his mind and in the mind of his supporters.¹¹⁷

Fifield's success in organizing Spiritual Mobilization supporters and disseminating Spiritual Mobilization's Christian based anti-statist ideology did not go unnoticed. Not only did Fifield increase financial support for his organization from prominent businesses like General Motors and Bank of America, he also won large grants from foundations such as the Volker Fund and the Sloan Foundation. This steadily increasing financial support enabled him to continue programs like the voter registration drive¹¹⁸ and the regional conferences as well as start new programs, like a sermon contest.¹¹⁹ The increased support, and the influence Fifield was able to wield because of it, caught the attention of those who opposed his point of view. At the end of 1946 Reinhold Niebuhr attacked Spiritual Mobilization's ads in religious publications. His and other more politically liberally minded clergy's protests led *Christian Century* to yank Spiritual Mobilization's ads in early 1947.¹²⁰ In early 1948 *The Nation*, self-described as the "flagship of the left," printed an article entitled "Battle for the Clergy: The Story of 'Spiritual Mobilization' a growing Protestant Movement."¹²¹ This article, written without any contact between the author and Fifield or any other Spiritual

¹¹⁷ See James Fifield to J. Howard Pew Feb 27, 1947 and J. Howard Pew to James Fifield March 10, 1947, JHP, Box 15, Spiritual Mobilization Folder.

¹¹⁸ The voter registration drive made the news in 1948 when Rev. Aner Bloom was named the Los Angeles chairman of the national campaign. The article also mentioned that June 6th of that year was designated as "National Registration Sunday." See "Pastor Chosen as Chairman in Campaign to Swell the Vote," *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1948, pg. 5.

¹¹⁹ "Two Pastors Share Pulpit in Contest," *Los Angeles Times*, June 30, 1952, A6.

¹²⁰ See James Fifield to J. Howard Pew Feb 27, 1947, JHP, Box 15, Spiritual Mobilization Folder. Shortly afterward Fifield decided to stop advertising in religious publications, see "A History of Spiritual Mobilization," pg. 8.

¹²¹ "Battle for the Clergy: The Story of 'Spiritual Mobilization' a growing Protestant Movement," *The Nation*, February 28, 1948, pgs. 151-153. The article's title actually appeared on the cover for that week's edition of *The Nation*.

Mobilization representative, was a hatchet job that sought to paint Fifield as a Fascist Anti-Semite. The piece was so slanted and questionably researched that Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization actually used it as a fundraiser.¹²² Whatever the (in)accuracy of *The Nation* article, it, along with critics like Niebuhr clearly demonstrated that Fifield's Spiritual Mobilization was indeed "a growing Protestant movement."

1949-1957 Freedom Under God at its Peak

Starting in 1947, Fifield, who had battled various health issues over the years culminating in surgery to repair a damaged hernia, felt a desire to pass the Spiritual Mobilization torch on to someone else.¹²³ In close consultation with Jasper Crane, J. Howard Pew and Norman Vincent Peale it was decided that Fifield would step down, Peale would take over as head of Spiritual Mobilization and Pew and Crane would round up a Businessmen's Committee to ensure a continually expanding budget. Spiritual Mobilization's rapid expansion and growing influence, however, prompted many of its strongest supporters to pressure Fifield to remain as head.¹²⁴ Fifield went from trying to shut down Spiritual Mobilization and pass on its activities to Peale and Pew to expanding its scope. Peale and Pew, however, pressed on with their organization and formed the Christian Freedom Foundation in 1950 with Quaker Howard Kershner as president and editor of its magazine *Christian Economics*. This breakdown in coordination did not, however, lead to a split between Fifield, Peale, Pew and Kershner. Instead they decided there was enough work to be done in reaching clergymen with their message that both organizations would prove beneficial to the broader goal. Like with FEE, the birth of the Christian Freedom Foundation signaled the arrival of an ally, not a competitor.

¹²² See Charlie White Fundraising Letter March 31, 1948, JHP, Box 19, Spiritual Mobilization Folder. Spiritual Mobilization actually reprinted the article in its entirety.

¹²³ James Fifield to J. Howard Pew April 15, 1947, JHP, Box 15, Spiritual Mobilization Folder.

¹²⁴ See James Fifield to J Howard Pew June 30, 1949, JHP, Box 24, Spiritual Mobilization Folder.

Fifield, instead of retiring from his Spiritual Mobilization responsibilities, now found himself heading an increasingly complex and public crusade. Spiritual Mobilization soon expanded its efforts by running a national radio program and a monthly magazine. Concurrently Fifield stepped up his related Freedom Under God efforts with various programs at his church, including the popular Freedom Club as well as two separate television shows.¹²⁵ Starting in 1949 the expansion of Fifield's Freedom Under God crusade, and its increasing focus on anti-communism, was both an indicator of and preparatory for the rapid nationwide spread of McCarthyism. Unlike McCarthyism, however, Freedom Under God's networking and emphasis on principles instead of personalities and politics meant that it would continue on after McCarthy's fall.

In January 1950, the official minutes of the Spiritual Mobilization Board of Directors mention that six new people joined James Fifield and Frank Wolcott on the board. These six included Don Belding, president of HUGM Advertising and eventual president of the Freedoms Foundation; Hubert Eaton president of Forest Lawn Inc.; H.W. Luhnow head of the great backer of conservative causes the Volker Fund¹²⁶; William Mullendore, president of the Southern California Edison Co.; Movie Director and Producer Cecil B. DeMille and Attorney James C. Ingebretsen.¹²⁷ Ingebretsen in particular would play a large role in the future of Spiritual Mobilization, assuming the Executive Vice-Presidency within a couple of years and then assuming the presidency from Fifield starting in 1954. All of the members of the Board of Directors were of necessity living in Southern California and met together quarterly to discuss Spiritual Mobilization business. At nearly the same time as the additions to the Board of Directors, Chrysler CEO B.E. Hutchinson agreed to chair a finance

¹²⁵ For the popularity of Fifield's Freedom Clubs see Dochuk, *From Bible Belt...*, 117.

¹²⁶ When Luhnow could not personally make it he would send Herbert Cornuelle. Cornuelle would go on to make a name for himself in the early conservative movement, particularly among Libertarians.

¹²⁷ "A History of Spiritual Mobilization." pg. 11.

committee to help Spiritual Mobilization raise funds.¹²⁸ Hutchinson, who was a devout Episcopalian, joined Pew, Crane and Mullendore as enthusiastic lay supporters of Spiritual Mobilization who put Spiritual Mobilization and its crusade high on their priority list.

One of the most pressing matters that the board assisted with was the spread and direction of Spiritual Mobilization's recently launched monthly, *Faith and Freedom*. What is striking and important about this monthly was how unabashedly it brought together libertarian economic theory with Christian principles and themes. Starting with its first issue in Dec. 1949 *Faith and Freedom* became the masthead of Spiritual Mobilization until its doors closed over a decade later. As with Spiritual Mobilization's general emphasis, the design of *Faith and Freedom* targeted ministers. Every issue started with some thoughts by the editor Bill Johnson, setting the tone for the issue and attempting to tie together the various articles into a few simple themes¹²⁹. After the editor's comments came a series of articles written by a literal "who's who" of the early conservative movement. A partial list of contributors over its decade long run includes: humanist individualist Frank Chodorov, popular economic writer Henry Hazlitt, Austrian Economist Ludwig Von Mises and his colleague Friedrich Hayek, Foundation for Economic Education President Leonard Read, former President Herbert Hoover, leading conservative intellectual Russell Kirk, the enfant terrible of the Right William Buckley Jr., Christian Freedom Foundation President Howard Kershner, libertarian intellectual Rose Wilder Lane¹³⁰, "Mr. Libertarian" Murray Rothbard, J. Howard Pew and Dean of the Notre Dame Law School Clarence Manion. All of these conservative (or self-identified libertarian) intellectual's and activist's thoughts and

¹²⁸ "A History of Spiritual Mobilization," pg. 20.

¹²⁹ Bill Johnson's hiring as editor shows some of the collaboration and coordination between Spiritual Mobilization and FEE as well as the ideological similarity. Previous to coming aboard as editor of *Faith and Freedom* Bill Johnson had worked for FEE and was hired with Leonard Read's recommendation. His seamless transition from FEE to Spiritual Mobilization shows the level to which the two organizations shared ideology, outlook, strategy and beliefs.

¹³⁰ Lane was also the daughter of Laura Ingalls Wilder, author of the still popular *Little House on the Prairie* series of children's books.

opinions came together under an explicitly religious banner. Some did a better job of relating their articles and topics to spiritual principles than others. Murray Rothbard, Von Mises and Hayek, understandably enough, did not have much religion in their economic exegeses that appeared in the magazine. The other writers, however, bridged the gap by relating the spiritual principles behind what Von Mises, Hayek etc. considered simply good economics.

After the main articles, *Faith and Freedom* always had a book review section, largely dedicated to reviewing economic and spiritual works. Following this was a page of quotes, some letters to the editor, a sermon from a contributing clergymen and a final page, the Director's Page, where Fifield held forth his own views. While its circulation numbers appear modest, it sat at 20,000-30,000 for most of its existence; the fact that it targeted ministers ensured a fairly low subscription total. Additionally, a smaller newsletter that condensed *Faith and Freedom's* content went out to a reported 140,000 ministers.¹³¹ Most importantly, however, it became a crucible where some of the biggest and brightest names in the New Right fleshed out their ideologies and were exposed to Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization's concepts of pagan stateism and Freedom Under God.

Faith and Freedom's list of contributors is impressive, and as any student of Conservatism would note, actually quite intellectually diverse. This diversity, however, did not dilute its ideology as *Faith and Freedom* regularly tied its articles to a few principle themes, particularly pagan stateism and Freedom Under God, themes that Fifield had been propagating for years. It is in the pages of *Faith and Freedom* that the ideology and beliefs of those in the Spiritual Mobilization network most clearly come together in a consistent, thematic critique of the New Deal and the Social Gospel. The central theme in the ideology

¹³¹ James Fifield Jr. to Paul Hawkins, May 11, 1950, JCI, Series I, Subseries A, Box 54, Folder 17.

of Spiritual Mobilization is that the “dignity of the individual” is at heart a “Christian Philosophy.”¹³² Or, as businessman H. W. Prentis put it “The fundamental principle is a religious one – the sacredness of the individual soul in the eyes of a Sovereign God.”¹³³ In this view each person is significant because they are a child of God, and thus each person is an end in himself or herself, there is no more sacred cause than the individual. Most of Spiritual Mobilization’s supporters argued that this concept of the dignity and worth of the individual was a Christian concept, that it was Christ and his teachings that introduced or at least made the concept of the individual sacred.

It is not hard to see where this idea of Christian Individualism came from with Christian parables such as the “Lost Sheep” where the shepherd leaves the ninety and nine to find the lost one. To Spiritual Mobilization and its supporters, because individualism was inherently Christian, any idea or philosophy that focused on the individual was therefore Christian. This helps explain why an explicitly religious organization like Spiritual Mobilization welcomed the writings of Frank Chodorov, an avowed atheist who self-identified as a humanist individualist. For Fifield and those like him, Chodorov’s concern with the individual was inherently Christian, whether he admitted it or not, and thus he helped “spread” Christian ideas with his individualist writings. This emphasis on the individual and individualism united the Spiritual Mobilization network and was the base from which the rest of its ideology and beliefs flowed.

The flip side of the coin of Christian Individualism for Spiritual Mobilization and its supporters was the belief that God ultimately watched over each individual and that each individual should look to God, and not to anybody or anything else. They often invoked the Declaration of Independence to explain this logic. Since man had inalienable rights that

¹³² Editor’s Comments, *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 2, Number 1, Pg 1.

¹³³ Quotes, H.W. Prentis, *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 1, Number1, Pg11.

came from God or in other words it was God who set man in a state of nature that allowed him freedom, man could only maintain that freedom and those rights by acknowledging and looking to God. Nothing should come between a man and his God, as God was the source of all of man's blessings, most importantly his freedoms. It is this belief and conception of man and his individual relation to God that prompted Spiritual Mobilization's concern with the New Deal. New Deal programs inhibited this relationship, in their view, because it encouraged the individual to look to the state and not to God for his blessings and his freedoms. Additionally, New Deal and other "statist" programs focused on the general or collective welfare, and not on the individual. Anything that put the group's or society's welfare above the individual was collectivist, and therefore inherently anti-Christian. Thus Fifield encouraged his fellow clergymen "to sound the alarm, to rally the people to the worship of the one true God, instead of silently witnessing their procession to the altar of a pagan philosophy of bureaucratic paternalistic government."¹³⁴ State intervention usurped God's rightful place, endangered individual rights and led to "statolatry."

This focus on keeping the state from usurping God's role in man's life allowed Spiritual Mobilization and its supporters in corporate America to flip the charge of gross materialism on their opponents. Those who, like J. Howard Pew, stood to benefit from libertarian economic policies argued that their concern was not with economics or wealth, but with spiritual principle. It was their opponents, those who wanted state intervention in the economy, particularly the re-distribution of wealth who, they argued, dangerously emphasized the material, starting the country down the "road to serfdom" away from God. As one quote in *Faith and Freedom* put it

Too great an emphasis on things material has encouraged a nonreligious view. This has been encouraged by totalitarians. They would make the

¹³⁴Director's Page, *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 1, Number 2, Pg.3.

state, for their own immediate ends, the ultimate authority in men's lives. They abhor spirituality as they hate human freedom. They know spirituality and freedom go hand in hand. Dictators cannot live where religion and freedom flourish ¹³⁵

A focus on material means and material measures would, according to this view, inevitably lead to despotism. Belief in God, defined as looking to God as provider, literally led to freedom and lack of such a belief, or looking to the state to provide, automatically led to bondage.

Faith and Freedom did not always restrict itself to generalities in explaining how the growth of state power lead to a loss of liberty and the restriction of Christian principles and faith. Its first issue ran an article written by Herbert Hoover, titled "Government and Compassion" that attacked the New Deal's welfare programs. Hoover argued that "Charity has been a religious precept from which no civilized people can depart without losing its soul" and that compassion is "the philosophy of Christ." The welfare state would undercut the Christian principle of compassion, Christianity itself in Hoover's view, because the "day that we decide that the Government is our Brother's Keeper, that is the day the spirit of compassion has been lost."¹³⁶ In other words, allowing the government to take responsibility for each individual's compassion through mandated welfare programs would, in essence, lead to a loss of Christian faith. This government directed concern with the collective or general welfare restricted individual rights and initiatives. Welfare programs allowed the individual to abdicate his personal Christian responsibility to the poor by removing his ability to choose. For Hoover, coerced compassion was no compassion at all.

Hoover's article signaled another layer in *Spiritual Mobilization's* concept of pagan stateism. In Fifield's first conception of pagan stateism, he argued the pagan, or anti-Christian, nature of the state stemmed from its attempts to set itself in God's place. It's

¹³⁵ Quotes, James Farley, *Faith and Freedom*. Volume 2, Number 2, Pg. 12.

¹³⁶ "Government and Compassion," *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 1, Number 1, Pg 8.

beneficence, with a resulting lack of individual initiative, was what made it inimical to Christianity and Christianity's God. Hoover's contention, however, was the state's paganism came as much from its coercive nature as from its beneficence. It was not that the state simply put itself in God's place; it violated the most basic God given right; freedom to choose.

This evolution in thought is best epitomized by a 1952 Spiritual Mobilization pamphlet. The pamphlet starts out by stating Spiritual Mobilization's credo:

Man, being created free as a child of God, has certain inalienable rights and responsibilities; the state must not be permitted to usurp them: it is the duty of the church to help protect them. Spiritual Mobilization's work and belief are based on a profound faith in God, the Author of Liberty, and in Jesus Christ, who never once advocated the use of the coercive powers of government to accomplish what he knew to be God's will for men.

The first sentence of the credo remains unchanged from the one adopted by Fifield when he founded Spiritual Mobilization in 1935. Added to it, however, is a new sentence stressing that Christ's teachings were inimical to the "coercive power of government." This new emphasis on coercion as pagan, or anti-Christian, was a natural progression for an organization that was founded in opposition to Social Gospel thought. If one of the basic tenets of the Social Gospel was that government, or state power, was the tool that could perfect society and bring the "Kingdom of God," then the opposite of that was that state-power could not, by its nature, accomplish God's purposes. While Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization had started off by questioning whether men can "be made good" by legislation, it had progressed to arguing that not only was government legislation unequal to the task, it was inimical to it. The state could not bring about God's purposes; it could only subvert them no matter the good intentions.

While Hoover attacked welfare in general as “coerced compassion,” Social Security in particular was a frequent target of *Faith and Freedom*’s contributors. Social Security made a convenient target because it fit so neatly into a broader argument about Freedom v. Security, or God v. State. The debate about Freedom v. Security was not a new dichotomy. *Faith and Freedom*, however, tied the debate to spiritual principles with freedom the province of God and the desire for man created security or the State, decidedly not. The problem with Social Security was not simply that it gave power to the state, a growing idol in their view, but that the entire theoretical foundation of Social Security went against what God intended. Henry Grady Weaver, author of the popular pro-capitalist book *Mainspring*, argued in an article titled “The Case of Beverly Smith” that Social Security was akin to a girl born with a defect in her nervous system that kept her from feeling pain. The ability to feel pain is, Weaver argued, nature’s way of warning men and women that something is not right and needs addressing. The loss of that ability would be disastrous, as it was for Beverly Smith. He concluded by arguing that “God, in his infinite wisdom, ordained that the human race must suffer a certain amount of pain, as nature’s warning system that all is not right with the human system...New Dealism, socialism, communism, fascism – all the totalitarianisms – preach the one doctrine of security.”¹³⁷ Evangelical Minister R. J. Rushdoony even more explicitly argued that “[Those who support Social Security] neglect also the fact that not paradise but insecurity and hard labor are ordained for fallen, sinful man by the Almighty Creator as a part of the promise of his redemption.”¹³⁸ Attempting to avoid the pains and vicissitudes of life violated spiritual principles by circumventing God’s plan. Security was a siren song that lured men to spiritual, and eventually political, disaster.

¹³⁷ Henry Grady Weaver, “The Case of Beverly Smith,” *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 1, Number 1, Pgs. 5-6.

¹³⁸ R. J. Rushdoony, “Noncompetitive Life: Two Instances from Contemporary Indian Reservation life portray the hazards of social and personal irresponsibility,” *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 1. Number 7, Pg. 10.

While Spiritual Mobilization's founding was largely in response to Social Gospel pronouncements like the Oberlin Anti-Profit Resolution, its ideology and activities demonstrate the extent to which it continued to base its existence on combating the Social Gospel and other "misleading" spiritual principles. 1950 saw the final days of the Federal Council of Churches, and Spiritual Mobilization made sure to note its demise by devoting its April issue of *Faith and Freedom* to the FCC's final conference on the church and economic life.¹³⁹ Spiritual Mobilization followed up its critique of the FCC's positions by noting in its final issue of the year that the old FCC was giving way to the new National Council of Churches and that it would "watch the developments with interest and hope."¹⁴⁰ *Faith and Freedom* did more than "watch the developments," it actively tried to affect their outcome. Almost every issue carried an article that directly attacked the Social Gospel point of view, and by implication the General Board of the NCC. In one issue, Fifield argued that

I have as great passion as any minister for social justice, but the clergy must recognize the witness of history – the more than twenty civilizations which rose, solidified, jelled, and decayed because there was no spiritual bond to hold physical factors together. Many of those who would have the state become master instead of servant in America are motivated by the finest sort of social dedication ¹⁴¹

Similarly, Minister George Koether of the Christian Freedom Foundation contributed a piece titled "The Snares of Virtue" that argued that good intentions were dangerous as they alone were not enough to ensure wise actions.¹⁴² Henry Link blasted the Social Gospel's calls for wealth distribution by arguing "Whatever the desirability of [equal wealth distribution]...the basic appeal of this gospel [the social gospel] is to the

¹³⁹ See *Faith and Freedom*, Vol. 1, Num. 5.

¹⁴⁰ William Johnson, Editor's Comments, *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 11, Number 4, Pg. 1.

¹⁴¹ James Fifield Jr., Director's Page, *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 1, Num 3, Pg. 3.

¹⁴² George Koether, "The Snares of Virtue," *Faith and Freedom*, Volume II, Num 1, Pg. 4. The frequent contributions to *Faith and Freedom* from Koether, Kershner and other Christian Freedom Foundation employees demonstrates the continued cooperation between Spiritual Mobilization and the CFF. These were coordinating, not competing, organizations.

covetousness of the masses and to their feelings of envy and hatred for the rich.”¹⁴³ Even more to the point, Spiritual Mobilization’s Board of Director’s gave a leave of absence to James Ingebretsen to help J. Howard Pew compile a Lay Committee report assailing the General Board for ignoring the Committee and dangerously injecting the church into the political and economic issues of the day. Spiritual Mobilization’s focus on the NCC and its ecclesiastical leaders makes clear that it was attacking what it saw as the root cause of spiritually bankrupt New Deal programs; Social Gospel beliefs and institutions.

Henry Link’s reference to the “covetousness of the masses” underscores one of the blind spots in Spiritual Mobilization and its theological ideology. One of the assumptions behind the theologically inspired Freedom Under God was a belief that the way the market and free enterprise operated in America was essentially just. In other words, men received a just recompense for their labors, thus millionaires “earned” and “deserved” their millions as much as the laboring man “earned” his pennies and dollars. Freedom Under God was blind to structural inequalities built into the American form of Capitalism. This blind spot led those who embraced Freedom Under God to slip into the trite belief that wealth was a mark of hard work and God’s favor, not a result of luck or having the economic deck stacked in their favor. In this way they fell into the hypocrisy of using the very material measures they accused their opponents of being so focused on.

True to its founder’s long established pattern of focusing on intercontinental events, *Faith and Freedom* had an increasing and controversial focus on international Communism. Within the first year *Faith and Freedom* carried a Henry Hazlitt article on the failure of Communism among the pilgrims, an Albert Noyes article on the growth of Communism in England, a Frank Chodorov article on how the Fair Employment Practice Commission was

¹⁴³ Henry Link, “A Plea for Religious Intolerance: Is a God without Commandments worse than no God at all?” *Faith and Freedom*, Volume II, Number 21, Pg. 5.

promoting Communistic thinking, an article by a missionary couple in China arguing that agricultural collectivization showed “The Savagery of Communism,” and most provocatively in the Oct 1950 issue Fifield argued on the Director’s Page that there were more communist meetings taking place in Los Angeles than church meetings. In the following issue Fifield noted that his statement had “brought an enormous response” and that “it has served to stir a lot of ministers to action who had been complacent about freedom’s peril.”¹⁴⁴

In addition to *Faith and Freedom* Fifield and the Board of Directors oversaw the distribution of Spiritual Mobilization’s radio program *The Freedom Story*, James Ingebretsen’s *Pause for Reflection* column, and assisted Fifield with his Television Program *The Lighted Window*. *The Freedom Story* was a weekly 15-minute broadcast that beamed Spiritual Mobilization principles to every state in the country on over 600 radio stations. The show consisted of a 10-minute dramatization and concluded with a short summary of its lessons by Fifield. For Example, in one episode entitled “You are Relatively Richer than your Rich Neighbor” Fifield explains that

‘sharing the wealth’ is not just bad economically but that it is morally wrong to take by force that which belongs to one person to give to another. Thou shalt not covet. Thou shalt not steal. Christian charity must be voluntary. Our nation has

¹⁴⁴ “A Lesson from History: An unusual story about Governor Bradford and the Pilgrim experiment with communism,” Henry Hazlitt, *Faith and Freedom*, Vol 1, Num 2, January 1950, pg. 10; “Commentary by Albert Noyes,” Alfred Noyes, *Faith and Freedom*, Vol 1, Num 6, May 1950, pg. 10; “Federalized Race Prejudice,” Frank Chodorov, *Faith and Freedom*, Vol 1, Num 6, May 1950, pg. 7; “The Savagery of Communism,” Judith and Arthur Burling, *Faith and Freedom*, Vol II, Num 1, Sept 1950, pg. 5; “Director’s Page,” James W. Fifield Jr., *Faith and Freedom*, Vol II, Num 3, Nov 1950, pg. 13. Fifield’s claims even made the Los Angeles Times see “Reds Meetings Outdo Churches, Dr. Fifield Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sept 13, 1950, pg. 15. Frank Chodorov’s article gives some insight into the relationship between racially-inspired anti-statism and its more color-blind cousin. Chodorov, who was not known for being pro-Southern or as an advocate for racism or segregation, attacked race-based government programs as discriminatory on the individual level. While his angle of attack was one that segregationists did not employ writ large until much later in the 1950s and 1960s, the agreement on the issue shows some natural congruence between race-based and individualist-based ideologies. His attack on Affirmative Action programs presaged the successful attack of the neocons and other “color-blind” conservatives starting in the 1970s that continues to influence judicial decisions today.

grown strong because our government was founded on the principle of Freedom Under God. Let us keep it free. Let us keep it strong¹⁴⁵

James Ingebretsen's *Pause for Reflection* columns similarly disseminated Spiritual Mobilization principles through short vignettes in 335 weekly and 15 daily newspapers.¹⁴⁶ Fifield's *Lighted Window*, while officially done under the auspices of the First Congregational Church, simply sought to move *The Freedom Story* to the new medium of television. Though the show did not run long, and got Fifield in serious financial difficulties, millions reportedly tuned in to watch Fifield and hear his spiritual anti-statist principles.

As evidenced by these articles and activities, Spiritual Mobilization largely restricted itself to a broad focus of attacking Social Gospel thinking while propounding its version of Christian principles, only occasionally highlighting a specific program or policy. Spiritual Mobilization's leaders and supporters did not stake their cause on any particular issue or political battle, rather the focus was on the long term. This focus on principles instead of personalities and politics allowed Spiritual Mobilization to ride the coattails of McCarthyite populism without sinking when McCarthy went down. The thinking and beliefs behind this approach are most clearly spelled out in a memo James Ingebretsen wrote in 1954.

The simple ideas which you would want people to subscribe to and which flow from our creed would be that the area of government can be determined by principle and does not have to be left to expediency and, secondly, that the function of the church and religious leadership would be to help spell out these principles and not to develop itself into an instrument of power or political action to try to work out the problem of expediency, being willing to leave that to the politicians and others, who actually have to cope with the problems, and knowing if it can help work the body of moral principles into the thinking of the people that will in the long run be decisive in deciding the areas within which government will actually move. Even though the game of politics is played in the middle of the road with accordance to expediency today, it is clear that the more people who are in the game with a firm grasp of

¹⁴⁵ "You Are Relatively Richer than Your Rich Neighbor" episode transcript, Box 45, Spiritual Mobilization Folder, JHP.

¹⁴⁶ James Ingebretsen to Arden Firestone July 23, 1956, Box 54, Folder 35, JCI papers.

principles and right principles the more nearly the end result will accord with those principles rather than with other principles ¹⁴⁷

In other words, the Social Gospel was winning, as evidenced by the New Deal, because it had successfully inculcated its principles in the population over the previous decades. Now it was time for Spiritual Mobilization to turn the tables on its Social Gospel opponents by inculcating its spiritual principles with an eye to the future. Such a long-term educational focus came easily to an organization founded on theological liberalism.

In addition to expanding Spiritual Mobilization's efforts, Fifield also expanded his Freedom Under God crusade through his church. Over the previous decade Fifield had been slowly building up the church's assets, including buying up the entire downtown block on which it was located. His reputation and influence had also been growing, as evidenced by his press coverage. In the 14 year period from 1934 to 1948 Fifield received press mention in the *Los Angeles Times* a total of 17 times. During the peak of Spiritual Mobilization and Freedom Under God's influence, 1949-1957, he received mention 33 times, or nearly double the coverage in basically half of the time.

The single most successful campaign that Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization launched, the Committee to Proclaim Liberty, occurred in the run up to the 4th of July in 1951. As part of the overall Freedom Under God campaign, Spiritual Mobilization sponsored the Committee to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. As Co-coordinators of the Committee, James Ingebretsen and William Mullendore rounded up an impressive list of Committee members to advocate remembering "the religious values of the fourth of July as conceived by the nation's Founding Fathers." Mullendore and Ingebretsen got 56 prominent Americans, to match the 56 signers of the Declaration, to join the Committee including Herbert Hoover, Gen. Douglas

¹⁴⁷ "Memo: Reorientation of Advisory Committee and Representative List," JCI, Series I, Subseries A, Box 68, Folder 13.

McArthur, Gen. Mark Clark, Gen. Matthew Ridgway, Bing Crosby, Walt Disney, Henry Luce, Jackie Robinson and Ronald Reagan.¹⁴⁸

In addition to the Committee itself, Spiritual Mobilization urged every minister in America to preach a sermon on “Freedom Under God” during church that week, asked every mayor and governor to proclaim June 30-July 6th as Independence week and asked every church to ring its bells for 10 minutes starting at Noon on the 4th of July. The climax of the campaign was a television broadcast during the evening of Sunday July 1st on CBS.

Ingebretsen gave opening remarks for the broadcast then gave way to Hollywood star James “Jimmy” Stewart who served as Master of Ceremonies. Bing Crosby then gave an Independence Day message and Lionel Barrymore read the Declaration of Independence. University of Southern California’s choir performed “Heritage” followed by a message from Oksana Kasenkina who had literally leaped to freedom from the Soviet Embassy in DC. The broadcast ended with a video address from General Matthew Ridgway in Tokyo where he was overseeing UN forces in the Korean War. The Committee to Proclaim Liberty was such a successful campaign that literally thousands of churches joined in and 48 governors and the mayors of America’s 50 largest cities all issued proclamations marking the week as Independence Week.¹⁴⁹

Though this massive publicity campaign focused solely on the theme “Freedom Under God” and did not attempt to connect that message to any particular political platform or economic idea, the motivation for it was as politically minded as any of Spiritual Mobilization’s efforts. Spiritual Mobilization’s support for the program stemmed entirely

¹⁴⁸ The Committee had a definite Spiritual Mobilization flavor to it as nearly 20 members of the Committee either financially supported Spiritual Mobilization or served on either its Board of Advisors or its Board of Directors. Included in this list were J. Howard Pew, B.E. Hutchinson, J.C. Penney, Harvey Firestone, Cecil B. DeMille, Alfred Kohlberg, Felix Morley, Norman Vincent Peale and Leonard Read. See “Special Program Commemorating 175th Anniversary of America’s Independence,” SJCI, eries I, Subseries A, Box 70, Folder 11.

¹⁴⁹ “Independence Week to Emphasize Freedom,” *Los Angeles Times* June 14, 1951, A1.

from the belief that restoring or reviving people's belief in "Freedom Under God" would naturally lead the country out of the spiritual confusion and materialism it found itself in, and consequently out of the New Deal. Spiritual Mobilization and its supporters believed that what had made America great were the spiritual principles it was attempting to revive, and that a return to those principles would dig out the "the root of contemporary social, economic, and political problems," as they saw them.¹⁵⁰ Recognizing Freedom Under God was the anti-thesis of "pagan statism."

Into Obscurity

James Fifield had always been the driving force behind Spiritual Mobilization. It was his reputation, his charisma and the strength of his convictions that had kept the organization and its network of supporters together for more than 20 years. There was no dynamic leader waiting in the wings to take over Spiritual Mobilization and make it relevant to a new generation. After a few attempts to fill the leadership void created by a retiring leadership and retiring network of supporters Spiritual Mobilization quietly closed its doors in 1962. Starting in 1954 Fifield slowly began passing control of Spiritual Mobilization to others by stepping down as president in favor of laymen James Ingebretsen. While this arrangement worked out well for several years, the lack of Fifield's drawing power at the head of the organization led to a slow decline. Ingebretsen did not have the reputation or ability to successfully rally Spiritual Mobilization's supporters, and corporate donations began to slowly spiral down. By 1957 Spiritual Mobilization's finances were so bad that *Faith and Freedom* was discontinued for several years. The financial crunch came at a bad time for Fifield as his wife was diagnosed with cancer at the beginning of the year and he found

¹⁵⁰ Rector Samuel Shoemaker, "Freedom and Faith," *Faith and Freedom*, Volume 1, Number 4, Pg. 15.

himself spending more and more time with her and their two daughters as she fought for her life.

Additionally Fifield's personal finances were in disarray as the money he had put down as collateral to fund *The Lighted Window* did not find replacement dollars from willing sponsors. These private difficulties kept him from personally appealing to and rallying his supporters as he had done countless times before when Spiritual Mobilization's budget started to get tight. The death of his wife in November 1957 further distanced him from Spiritual Mobilization and its work as he intentionally dedicated more and more time to raising his two daughters.

Spiritual Mobilization limped along until 1960, still drawing support from a list of blue chip companies and eager laymen supporters like Hutchinson, Pew and Crane. By 1960, however, Ingebretsen, Hutchinson, Pew, Crane and other Spiritual Mobilization supporters were well into retirement, and while their convictions remained unchanged, they too were looking to shed responsibilities rather than add to them. Businesses which had supported Spiritual Mobilization for decades also began to draw down their support as new organizations, such as the American Enterprise Association and *National Review*, sprouted up taking corporate dollars and seeking to make a more direct and immediate impact on economic policy and political life. The chain of corporate leaders who supported Spiritual Mobilization were easing into retirement, and the new corporate leaders did not share their same zeal for Spiritual Mobilization and its long-term emphasis on spiritual principles as the solution to economic and social problems.

While Spiritual Mobilization's passing was little noted in the upsurge of conservative activity that would culminate in Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign, its legacy proved profound. When Fifield first launched Spiritual Mobilization in 1935 it was a lone

voice crying in the wilderness. Its blend of libertarian economics and Christianity epitomized in the concept of pagan stateism was at distinct odds with the direction that American Protestantism appeared to be moving. By the end of the 1950s American Protestantism had reversed course, perfectly symbolized by the Congregational church repealing its Oberlin Anti-Profit Resolution.¹⁵¹ While changing international circumstances and postwar prosperity explain much of the growing embrace of Capitalism among protestant ministers, Spiritual Mobilization's consistently proclaimed principles provided the many that began to doubt the social gospel-inspired thinking with an alternative point of view. As one young pastor wrote to Spiritual Mobilization in 1954:

I am writing to express appreciation to you and the Coast Federal people for the subscription to *Faith and Freedom*. It will help me to crystallize my changing viewpoint concerning the social aspects and application of our Christian faith. Perhaps I am typical of other disillusioned young ministers who just a few years ago, in seminary experience, became enamored with the Social Gospel with a naïve idealism that could not stand the test of actual life...I am no longer preaching the Social Gospel as I once did.¹⁵²

Spiritual Mobilization offered an ideological home, or lighted window, for the many clergy and laymen caught up in the changed circumstances and whirl of events that came about in the postwar decade. It helped fill the vacuum created by increasingly discredited Social Gospel beliefs among American Protestants.

Spiritual Mobilization outlasted the economic, social and political trends in Protestantism that brought it into existence. While impossible to quantify, Spiritual Mobilization's enormous efforts aided the conservative shift among America's clergy. Spiritual Mobilization's legacy, however, was much more profound than its impact on American Protestantism. Its ability to draw together like-minded individuals motivated by a similar view of the application of Christian principles to American life would prove of enduring importance in the formation of the modern American Right.

¹⁵¹ Spiritual Mobilization and its supporters celebrated this symbolic achievement. See Donald Cowling to Jasper Crane, January 13, 1953, JEC, Box 6, Cowling 1945-1958 Folder.

¹⁵² 20th Anniversary Pamphlet, JCI, Series I, Subseries A, Box 68, Folder 8.

Its emphasis on seeking to change minds and hearts over the long-term, a product of Fifield's theological liberalism, became a staple of the conservative movement and its calls for a return or revival of spiritual values embodied in the concept of Freedom Under God would prove of major importance in the rise of the Religious Right. Fifield himself never gave up his Freedom Under God crusade. Long after the demise of Spiritual Mobilization he continued his multiple efforts through his church, including a new television show and a shared syndicated column with one of his daughters. The key principles and motivating beliefs behind Spiritual Mobilization would live on in supporters such as Pew, Crane, Edmund Opitz, Leonard Read and Norman Vincent Peale. Indeed, those principles and beliefs became embedded and carried forward in organizations like Read's Foundation for Economic Education, Pew's Christian Freedom Foundation and Norman Vincent Peale's *Guideposts* magazine. Spiritual Mobilization and Freedom Under God did not sink into the dustbin of history, but lived on in new enterprises and new organizations.

Chapter Three: Spiritual Mobilization and American Libertarianism

In 1946, Leonard Read left as head of the largest Chamber of Commerce in the United States and moved to New York ostensibly to gain greater influence as Vice-President of the National Industrial Conference Board (NICB). Within months of moving, however, Read left the NICB to pursue a bold new project, founding his own economic think tank, the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). Read's project was particularly audacious as the idea of a "think tank" was barely in its infancy at the time. Indeed Read founding FEE signaled the beginning of the era of partisan and ideological think tanks.¹⁵³ While in essence "patenting" a model that has been widely copied down to the present day, Read's influence on modern American political, social and economic life runs deeper. Through nearly 40 years of evangelizing at FEE, Read gained such prominence that upon his death President Ronald Reagan eulogized him by declaring "Our Nation and people have been vastly enriched by his devotion to the cause of freedom."¹⁵⁴

Leonard Read and the Foundation for Economic Education played a crucial part in the formation of the modern conservative movement. At the time of its founding right after World War II libertarian economic principles and belief were at a low point in American society. As Jennifer Burns notes, it was the "most successful libertarian organization in the postwar years" because its founding "quickly replaced the scattershot efforts of a myriad of small anti-New Deal organizations."¹⁵⁵ Its rapid growth and competent staff brought it further influence on the nascent conservative Right. FEE staffers like distinguished

¹⁵³ Gregory Eow, "Fighting a New Deal: Intellectual Origins of the Reagan Revolution, 1932-1952 (Ph.D., Dissertation, Rice University, 2007), 158. Greg Eow argues that in addition to starting the general field of ideological think tanks, such important conservative think tanks today as the Institute for Humane Studies, the Liberty Fund and the Cato Institute literally copied the model that Read devised. IHS founder F. "Baldy" Harper spent some formative years as a senior staffer at FEE in the 1950s.

¹⁵⁴ FEE, "In Memoriam: Leonard Read 1898-1983," (Irvington, N.Y.: Foundation for Economic Education, 1983) 12.

¹⁵⁵ Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market: Ayn Rand and the American Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 115.

journalist Henry Hazlitt, eventual Institute for Humane Studies founder F. “Baldy” Harper, and well-known Libertarian activist Herbert Cornuelle, all joined the staff within its first few years. Its advocacy for libertarian economic positions through commissioned pamphlets and the intellectual network it brought together made it, as Daren Dochuk points out, a “progenitor of the Libertarian renaissance.”¹⁵⁶ Within its first few years it published pamphlets authored by economists such as Milton Friedman, George Stigler, Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig Von Mises.

FEE’s connection with Hayek and in particular Von Mises proved enormously important to its rising influence. Together Hayek and Von Mises founded what became known as the “Austrian” school of economics and both proved tremendously significant in reaching academics and lay people alike with their laissez-faire economic principles. Hayek and Von Mises popularity and growing influence depended in large part on their association with FEE. As Kim Phillips-Fein argues, FEE popularized Hayek and Von Mises among conservative intellectuals and business leaders.¹⁵⁷ FEE’s relationship with Von Mises was so close that he regularly gave lectures at and attended FEE functions and was considered an employee.¹⁵⁸ FEE also proved important in the founding of Hayek’s international libertarian economic group the Mont Pelerin Society, supplying the second largest contingent of Americans at its inaugural conference and continuing to influence it during its early years.¹⁵⁹ Through its work with the likes of Hayek and Von Mises, FEE became an

¹⁵⁶ Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011), 117.

¹⁵⁷ Kim Phillips Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen’s Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 52.

¹⁵⁸ *Goddess of the Market*, 141.

¹⁵⁹ “Fighting a New Deal,” 158; *Invisible Hands*, 55. FEE and its supporters, like Jasper Crane, played a crucial role in organizing the first MPS meeting in the United States, see *Invisible Hands*, 43-52. The largest contingent came from the Chicago School of Economics.

ideological pillar of modern Conservatism “undermining and challenging the intellectual defenses of liberalism.”¹⁶⁰

FEE spread its ideology and influence through pamphlets, organized events, lectures, personal correspondence, speaking tours and through its flagship publication *The Freeman*. Though difficult to quantify, anecdotal evidence demonstrates how far reaching FEE’s influence is within modern Conservatism. Read loved to explain FEE’s influence in terms of the spread of ideas, telling stories of sharing an anecdote or thought that eventually came back to him in sometimes surprising ways. For example, he shared how a businessman whom he had never met before and was unfamiliar with FEE had heard what turned out to be an anecdote comparing Socialism to sharing grades in school from a FEE publication just the week before in a Rotary meeting.¹⁶¹ Perhaps the most significant “spreader” for FEE was *The Freeman*. The magazine was central to the intellectual development of many within the movement. For instance, behind the scenes conservative activist and funder J William Middelndorf wrote Read to tell him how *The Freeman* was one of his personal “bibles” for economic education.¹⁶² General Electric CEO Lemuel Boulware thought so highly of the magazine that he had all GE employees read it, including a young actor recently hired by the company named Ronald Reagan.¹⁶³ Reagan became a life-long reader of *The Freeman* famously having his picture taken reading it on Air Force One while president.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ *Invisible Hands*, 67

¹⁶¹ Leonard Read to L.L. Smith, Nov 26, 1951, Box 13, B.E. Hutchinson Papers (BEH), Hoover Institute Archives.

¹⁶² *Invisible Hands*, 115. Middelndorf played a crucial part in drafting Goldwater to run for president in 1964. He later wrote a memoir of his time in the conservative movement entitled *Glorious Disaster: Barry Goldwater’s Presidential Campaign and the origins of the Conservative Movement*.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 101.

¹⁶⁴ In the picture, a copy of which is prominently displayed at FEE headquarters to this day, Nancy is snuggled up close and reading over his shoulder.

Historians and commentators have effectively chronicled and argued for FEE's historical importance to the modern conservative movement, though they have tended to focus strictly on its economic principles and policies. Darren Dochuk sees Read and FEE as little more than propaganda machines for libertarian economic policies, Kim Phillips-Fein sees him as simply an "advocate for the pure, free-market," Brian Doherty sees his value mainly in his attempts to educate people about libertarian economics and Greg Eow sees him as someone "who presented the case for laissez-faire solely on the system's ability to produce wealth and meet economic wants."¹⁶⁵ This incomplete view of Read and what he was trying to do with FEE does not adequately explain his appeal, importance or why, as Dochuk notes, he attracted so many in the early conservative movement including evangelical Christians.¹⁶⁶ A closer examination of Read, his "freedom philosophy," FEE staffers such as Edmund Opitz and the ideology of *The Freeman* reveals the extent Read and his organization grew out of the same beliefs and worldview that motivated the Reverend James Fifiield and his Spiritual Mobilization.

Read and FEE are critical to understanding the formation of and enduring nature of the conservative movement as along with Spiritual Mobilization, FEE became an ideological bridge connecting economic and religious (or social) conservative individuals, groups and organizations. Read and Spiritual Mobilization founder Fifiield wisely built their ideological bridge at the narrowest point between economic and religious conservatives, individualism. The shared focus on the individual as the supreme receptacle of all rights and freedoms brought economic and religious conservatives within talking distance. Both the religious and economic right measured freedom and rights at the individual level, groups and

¹⁶⁵ *Bible Belt*, 116-117; *Invisible Hands*, 27; Brian Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling history of the Modern American Libertarian Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), "Chapter Four: Fighting for the Freedom Philosophy"; "Fighting a New Deal," 157.

¹⁶⁶ *Bible Belt*, 121-122.

societies importance lay not in the aggregate but in their individual members. For the economically motivated this meant that individual economic choice, whether by producers, consumers, owners or employees was sacrosanct and thus the unfettered market was the only way to safeguard economic individualism. For the evangelically motivated this meant that individual initiative in all areas of life, but particularly in the moral and spiritual realm, was not only the safeguard of all individual rights and freedoms, but also the way to salvation. Individualism was thus paramount with both groups and provided a natural congruence between them.

This natural congruence, however, was not enough to ensure that both groups would end up part of the same movement; it took Leonard Read and his Foundation for Economic Education building an ideological bridge based on this congruence to help bring the sides together. Individualism provided a natural pathway to connect economic and religious conservatives, but it was a widespread belief in the Christianity of individualism that became the foundation on which Read and FEE built their bridge. The spiritual and more deep-seated attraction of Christian individualism became a way for Read, FEE and its supporters to connect libertarian economic ideas with Christian ideals in a powerful ideology that broadly appealed to both economic libertarians and religiously social conservatives. Along with Christian individualism, Read also built his enduring bridge on the idea of the moral market, or that the free market was a necessary part of man's spiritual development. The final piece in the bridge that Read helped construct was a shared belief in the supremacy of spiritual principles in American life and the consequent necessity for a "spiritual" revival to get the country on the right track. Together Christian individualism, the moral market and the supremacy of spiritual principles became the basis for the enduring ideology that Read and his associates constructed at the Foundation for Economic Education.

James Fiffeld and Spiritual Mobilization's influence on Leonard Read and his Foundation for Economic Education

A look at Leonard Read's early life hardly suggests he would become a prominent figure in the modern conservative movement, lauded by the likes of Ronald Reagan. Born in 1898 in the small backwater of Hubbarton, Michigan, Read would never finish high school let alone attend college. His hardscrabble background included running a wholesale produce business in Michigan before the business's failure led he and his family to relocate to California in 1925. Starting in 1928 Read began working for the Burlingame Chamber of Commerce and quickly ascended the ranks, eventually becoming head of the Western Division of the Chamber of Commerce head-quartered in Seattle. It was while running the Western Division that Read had a life-altering encounter with William "Bill" Mullendore, an executive at the Southern California Edison Company and former personal assistant to Herbert Hoover at the U.S. Food Administration during the first World War. Read had heard that Mullendore was outspoken in his opposition to various Chamber of Commerce policies and made an appointment to meet him. Instead of convincing Mullendore, however, Read came away as a newly baptized libertarian.¹⁶⁷ Read's meeting with Mullendore was the beginning of his life-long journey as a libertarian. Mullendore and retired Harvard economist Thomas Nixon Carver became personal tutors to Read, sending him all the classical laissez-faire authors from Adam Smith to William Graham Sumner to Herbert Spencer. The education Mullendore and Carver gave Read became instrumental in Read's

¹⁶⁷ For in-depth accounts of Read's conversion see "Fighting a New Deal," 115-116; Mary Sennholz, *Leonard Read: Philosopher of Freedom* (New York: Foundation for Economic Education, 1993), 54-57; *Radicals for Capitalism*, 151-153.

successful and nationally recognized efforts as head of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce from 1939-1945.¹⁶⁸

Read's time with the Chamber on the West Coast also introduced him to Rev. James W. Fifield Jr. who profoundly influenced Read's life and thought. Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization provided Read a pattern to follow, flowing from Fifield's liberal theology, of an organization that focused on long term moral education as a means to change society. Fifield also introduced Read to Christian individualism through his concepts of pagan stateism and Freedom Under God. How Fifield and Read first met is unclear, but by the time Read left the West Coast to found FEE, he was a trustee of Fifield's First Congregational Church in Los Angeles and an Advisory Board member of Fifield's religious, free-enterprise promoting Spiritual Mobilization.¹⁶⁹ The similarity in set-up, operation, focus, approach and ideology between Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization, and Read and the Foundation for Economic Education demonstrate the profound influence Fifield had on Read, his thought, and his foundation.

As Eow insightfully illustrates in his dissertation, Read's time as the head of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce was a training ground for starting and running FEE. Though Read's experience with the Chamber undoubtedly influenced his vision for FEE, how he set-up and operated his foundation indicates that he took as much or more from Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization than from his time at the LA Chamber. Like Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization, Read set-up FEE as an instrument to disseminate the ideas and principles he felt most important to the country's future. Both men dominated their organizations and both men's success largely rested on the strength of their convictions and their personal

¹⁶⁸ For more on Read's time with the Chamber please see "Fighting a New Deal," 127-135.

¹⁶⁹ William Mullendore might have been the one to introduce Fifield and Read as he became an adviser to Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization upon Fifield's move to Los Angeles in 1935.

appeal. Like Spiritual Mobilization, Read set-up FEE with a Board that had little say in its day-to-day operations and was primarily made-up of those who would lend it prestige and assist in fundraising efforts. Though both men's individual personality came to represent the organization they headed, both had a decentralized vision of how their respective organization's worked. While setting the direction of Spiritual Mobilization and providing its guiding principles, Fifield liked to let people "work in [their] own way" to achieve the organization's aims.¹⁷⁰ Similarly Read did not like to think of himself as the director or "boss" of FEE, rather he was a "protector" whose job was to insure that everyone at FEE had as much freedom as possible to carry out FEE's purposes.¹⁷¹

In addition to largely copying Fifield's blueprint to set-up FEE, Read also followed Fifield's example in how FEE actually operated. Like Spiritual Mobilization, the Foundation for Economic Education targeted "thought leaders" in the hopes of spreading its influence as widely as possible. Spiritual Mobilization targeted clergymen because of their influence on their congregations and the Foundation for Economic Education targeted educators, businessmen and to a lesser extent clergy for similar reasons.¹⁷² Also like Spiritual Mobilization's grass-roots emphasis, FEE worked mostly with individuals and small groups in informal, off-the-record kinds of meetings. Though in its hey-day in the 1950s Spiritual Mobilization ran some public campaigns, its primary emphasis, like FEE, was spreading its ideology through word-of-mouth by those who had become converted to the cause. Additionally, both Spiritual Mobilization and FEE had a similar approach of casting their "bread upon the waters" by distributing pamphlets, free of charge, to those who asked for them.

¹⁷⁰ James Fifield Jr. to Phillip Randolph, March, 1945, Box 8, S Folder, J. Howard Pew Papers (JHP), Hagley Museum and Archives.

¹⁷¹ *Philosopher of Freedom*, 93.

¹⁷² For Read targeting "thought leaders" see *Radicals for Capitalism*, 162.

The most striking similarity between the organizations was that both sought to change the political “climate” through education rather than simply attacking specific policy “plants.” Spiritual Mobilization provided Read with an example of an organization that focused on changing hearts and minds over the long-term instead of getting a particular party elected or specific policy changed. Spiritual Mobilization sought to change America’s political culture by convincing the clergy to abandon Social Gospel thought and embrace Freedom Under God; FEE sought to change America’s political culture by educating thought leaders on the principles, such as individual freedom, that underlay a successful economy. Similarly, both organizations focused more on the moral and spiritual principles behind economic activity instead of promoting specific economic policies. As Read stated FEE’s mission was to “to discover, gather and fasten attention on the sound ideas that underlie the free market economy, which, in turn, underlies the good society.”¹⁷³ For both groups economic, social and political problems needed addressing at a deeper level than mere policy prescriptions.

World War Two had a similar effect on Read and Spiritual Mobilization’s approach to changing the political, economic and social “climate.” Before and during the war both Read and Spiritual Mobilization mainly attacked what they viewed as the false or misleading principles behind the policies they disagreed with. After the war Fifield turned Spiritual Mobilization’s emphasis from the negative pagan stateism to the more positive vision of Freedom Under God. Similarly Read, who as head of the Chamber had successfully combated several economic policies he found harmful, decided that proving the wrong was not enough. He saw that simply plucking out the bad ideas, or weeds, was insufficient as “if the intellectual soil from which these fallacies sprung were rancid, new ones would spring up in their places.” Though plucking up the fallacies was useful “Finding the right is the key

¹⁷³ *Philosopher of Freedom*, 79.

to salvation, for the wrong can be displaced only by the right.” It seems more than coincidence that Read felt the need to expound his positive vision while sitting on the board of Spiritual Mobilization and watching Fifield undergo a similar transition in approach.¹⁷⁴

Though Spiritual Mobilization provided a model or pattern for Read to follow in setting up his own organization, there were more concrete connections between the two organizations. In addition to the 15 years Fifield and Read had known and worked together, Spiritual Mobilization and FEE also shared an overlapping network of supporters. Bill Mullendore not only continued to serve as a personal mentor to Read, but he simultaneously sat on the Board of Directors for Spiritual Mobilization and the Advisory board for FEE. Donaldson Brown, who joined Spiritual Mobilization’s Board of Advisers during WW II and sent out fundraising appeals for Fifield’s organization, was one of the seven founding members of FEE. Retired DuPont executive Jasper Crane and retired Sun Oil president J Howard Pew similarly advised and served with both organizations simultaneously. Crane in particular ensured that FEE would have a heavy Spiritual Mobilization flavor by recommending nearly 10 people who served on Spiritual Mobilization’s Advisory board to serve in a similar capacity for FEE. Included on his list was Spiritual Mobilization co-founder Donald Cowling, prominent Spiritual Mobilization supporter Norman Vincent Peale and Fifield himself.¹⁷⁵

The level of coordination and ideological symmetry between Spiritual Mobilization and FEE was so great that personnel frequently moved from one organization to the other. For example, in 1949 FEE staffer Bill Johnson left to become editor of Spiritual Mobilization’s *Faith and Freedom* and in 1955 Spiritual Mobilization conference organizer

¹⁷⁴ Read as quoted in *Philosopher of Freedom*, 62-63.

¹⁷⁵ Jasper Crane to Leonard Read, April 16, 1946, Jasper Crane Papers (JEC), Box 34, Folder 1, Hagley Museum and Archives. Crane also recommended, among others, John Foster Dulles and historian Charles Beard.

Edmund Opitz left to become a senior staff member at FEE. Even after leaving the organization Opitz continued to assist Spiritual Mobilization Vice-President James Ingebretsen in planning and organizing conferences for Spiritual Mobilization. The similarity in set-up, function, mission and even personnel between Spiritual Mobilization and the Foundation for Economic Education led one historian to term FEE the “ideological offspring” of Spiritual Mobilization.¹⁷⁶

Leonard Read and Pagan Stateism

While borrowing heavily from Fifield in structuring and running his organization, Read’s ideology and beliefs most clearly demonstrate Fifield’s profound influence on Read. Though Fifield and Read never carried on an extensive correspondence, Fifield had plenty of opportunity to influence Read’s thinking. As a member of Fifield’s congregation, Read would have heard Fifield’s sermons every Sunday. Even had he missed one of the actual services, Fifield’s weekly radio broadcasts allowed Read to hear Fifield’s thought without leaving his home. As a Trustee of First Congregational Church, Read would have had even more frequent and intimate contact with Fifield and his thought. Read also served on Spiritual Mobilization’s Board of Advisers allowing him to see how Fifield organized and ran Spiritual Mobilization and putting him on a mailing list for all of Spiritual Mobilization’s publications. Read’s relationship with Fifield was such that he also attended Spiritual Mobilization’s conference-retreats.¹⁷⁷ Though this circumstantial evidence provides a basis for understanding how Fifield influenced Read, evaluating Read’s thought through his

¹⁷⁶ Eckvard Toy, “Spiritual Mobilization: The Failure of an Ultraconservative Ideal in the 1950,” (*The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Apr., 1970), pp. 77-86), 78.

¹⁷⁷ There is a 1946 conference program with Leonard Read’s name on it among his papers in the FEE archives. Additionally, there is an undated newspaper picture of Read with Fifield and a Reverend Edward Green at a Spiritual Mobilization conference in the Midwest among James Ingebretsen’s papers. Though these two documents could be from the same conference, there is no way to be sure. Spiritual Mobilization intentionally did not keep lists of those who attended its conferences to ensure that any who attended would feel safe participating.

writings and speeches shows how much he engaged with Fifield. Fifield's influence shines through in how Read evolved from a utilitarian defense of capitalism to a defense based on how moral and spiritual considerations and tie in with libertarian economic policies and principles.

As Read's sympathetic biographer points out, he was "essentially a social philosopher who was more interested in moral and psychological principles than in economics proper."¹⁷⁸ Read's engagement with Fifield's concept of pagan stateism shows how much moral concerns and ideas influenced Read's thinking on economics and how much he embraced the liberal theology behind Fifield's pagan stateism. Like Fifield, Read believed that the state was inherently pagan, anti-Christian or anti-God. He posited "Perhaps man can render no greater service to God than effectively to argue among men that man [through government] is ill-suited to usurp the role of God."¹⁷⁹ Government was anti-Christian, or pagan, in the sense that it tried to put itself in God's place. Even more pointed, the parallels between this statement of Read's and Spiritual Mobilization's credo are striking. The credo, which Fifield created when he founded Spiritual Mobilization in 1935, similarly asserted that "the state must not be permitted to usurp" God's role. Both Read's statement and the credo insist that man not try, through government power or the state, to take-over God's role. The presence of the somewhat archaic verb "usurp" in both statements is an additional indicator how much Read was borrowing from Fifield as his own thinking matured.

In the maturation of his thought, Read did not simply restate Fifield's concept of pagan stateism, he built on it by both clarifying the concept of pagan stateism and attaching it to social, economic and political principles in new ways. Read frequently looked to the

¹⁷⁸ *Philosopher of Freedom*, 121.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

founding of the United States to explain and justify his principles. On more than one occasion he argued that the American Revolution was revolutionary because it “unseated the government as endower of men’s rights and placed the Creator in that role” by “more severely limit[ing] the government than ever before.” Fifield’s idea that the state is pagan because it seeks to take over God’s role through its beneficence, endowing men with rights, is clearly visible in Read’s argument. This succinct definition of pagan stateism is not the end of Read’s thought. He goes on to assert, “The American revolution... was not the armed conflict with King George III. It was, instead, a revolutionary idea and ideal...holding that man is endowed by his creator with certain inalienable rights.”¹⁸⁰ While Fifield first posited the pagan nature of the state and loosely contrasted it with the “American way of life,” Read took that contrast and made it more explicit and ideological. Fifield’s concept of pagan stateism rather vaguely implied that the American Revolution was really a recognition of God’s proper role in man’s life, hence his emphasis on Freedom Under God. Read, however, took this implicit recognition and made it explicit, building on and clarifying Fifield’s concepts.

Read’s argument that the American Revolution was about beliefs or ideas and was an “evolution” in political thought demonstrates how much his, and Fifield’s, ideology sprang from liberal theology. For both men, God was guiding society, through history, to a more perfect state, a “kingdom of God.” This evolution in society, its ideas, beliefs and principles was how God manifested himself. The immanence of God and his purposes revealed through the upward march of history was an idea that sprang directly from the liberal theology of the 19th century that sought to incorporate evolutionary principles into Christianity. What Read and Fifield believed about God and history shaped their views of man and society.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 162.

After laying the groundwork of pagan stateism and its connection to what he perceived to be America's founding principles, Read went on to connect Fifield's concept of pagan stateism to limited government and capitalism. Read argued that

This revolutionary concept – the very essence of Americanism – was at once spiritual, political and economic. It was spiritual in that it proclaimed the Creator as sovereign and thus the endower of men's rights, it was political in that it implicitly denied the state was sovereign and held that it was only designed to secure men's rights, and it was economic in this sense: if an individual has a right to life – it logically follows that he has a right to sustain his life – the sustenance of life consisting of the fruits of his own labors and the right to control them.¹⁸¹

Read argued that the basis of "Americanism," or the "American way of life," was the spiritual concept that the Creator was sovereign, Freedom Under God. From this flowed the political truth of limited government and the economic truth of the sacredness of private property. Read built on Fifield's framework of pagan stateism to argue that a belief in God underlay the proper political and economic principles that are "the very essence of Americanism."

Read not only built on Fifield's thought by arguing the state stood in opposition to God's purpose and designs, he also clarified how. In his book *The Free Market and Its Enemy* Read contended, "The market is not just a materialistic device, as many seem to believe. Spiritual expression is implicit in the free market, and the spiritual development of man is contorted by an interference with the market."¹⁸² While Fifield first advanced the idea that overweening state-power stood in opposition to God's purposes and prerogatives, or that stateism and faith in God were mutually exclusive, Read took that idea a step further. He

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Leonard Read, *The Free Market and Its Enemy* (New York: Foundation for Economic Education, 1965), 1-2.

argued that government intervention or interference in the market “contorted” or unnaturally shaped man’s spiritual development. In other words, by assuming God’s role in man’s life, the state kept man from what would otherwise be a natural, spiritual progression. As an idol the state literally came between the individual man and his God, subverting the relationship Read deemed most fundamental to true Americanism.

Read also explained how, from this point of view, pride ultimately led to pagan stateism. Read theorized “It is this foolish and untenable pride that lays the ground for the communists and others who would take over.” This “pride” enabled communist power because Communism was based on “hate, envy and greed.” In his pride, man assumed that he could play God and “take over” or “plan” things through the power of the state.¹⁸³ For Read this belief in man’s power to plan and control was the height of conceit. At its root pagan stateism stemmed from man’s belief in his own abilities, even perfectibility. This explanation of pride and how it related to pagan stateism also underscores that Read, like Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization, was reacting to Social Gospel thought and its emphasis on the perfectibility of society through government power. For Fifield and Read, Social Gospel thought and belief was at the root of political and economic heresy.

Implicitly underlying all of Read’s engagement with pagan stateism is the concept of Christian individualism. Pagan stateism’s great evil was its violation of individual rights, a violation that naturally occurred when the state took God’s place as provider and guarantor of rights and freedoms. In other words, the state was pagan because of its focus on society writ large and its disregard for the individual. Conversely, God’s great goodness stemmed from his concern for the individual, a concern echoed by limited government and the protection of private, or individual property. Individual worth

¹⁸³ *Philosopher of Freedom*, 115.

and salvation were thus rooted in God and not the state. Individualism sprang from religious, specifically Judeo-Christian, roots. Pagan stateism was an attempt to ignore or annul those roots.

Read and Freedom Under God

While Read reflected on, engaged with and built on Fifield's concept of pagan stateism, his insistence that FEE would focus on the positive side of the libertarian argument meant that Fifield's concept of Freedom Under God had a more profound influence on Read's thought. Again and again in his writings Read reflected on the godly virtues of the moral market, or how the free market promoted spiritual purposes. As he asserted in many different ways "Spiritual expression is implicit in the free market."¹⁸⁴ For Read, as with Fifield, there was something sacred about the market. Libertarian economics was at its core about so much more than material wants and material needs.

Read, like Fifield, believed that spiritual and moral laws undergirded the material actions of the free market. This belief, rooted in the theologically liberal view of the evolution of man and the immanence of God, meant that the real concern was not specific economic and social policies, but the "climate" in which those policies formed. In other words, solutions to economic and social problems that focused at the policy level were insufficient; rather a focus on spiritual and moral principles was the best and ultimately the only way successfully to address the country's problems.

The primacy of the spiritual and moral concerns as well as a belief in the supremacy of the individual that Fifield stressed comes through clearly in Read's thinking and writing. In a letter to *The Freeman* editor and long-time individualist activist Frank Chodorov about how best to respond to an article by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. on the need for government

¹⁸⁴ *Philosopher of Freedom*, 125-126.

intervention, Read argued that the best response would be to show how moral decadence is the consequence of [government] intervention and the popular misunderstanding of what really happened. This decadence is all that we owe to the false liberals; but, if the misunderstanding persists further moral deterioration and loss of respect for one's fellow man and for himself can utterly destroy the foundations from which competitive free enterprise functions¹⁸⁵

For Read the moral decadence that many clergy and scholars regularly decried in Postwar America¹⁸⁶, was the result of government intervention, particularly in the economy. Consequently the greatest danger was the threat to the moral foundations on which free enterprise or the free market rested, not government policy hampering the efficiency and effectiveness of the free market. Additionally, Read makes clear that government intervention leads the individual to lose a sense of worth because the individual is now depending on the state and not God. In this way man's individual spirit, and the foundations of free enterprise are crushed.

In a rather lengthy letter to his mentor and ardent supporter Bill Mullendore, Read clearly enunciated the basic framework behind his thinking about the market and how it tied into the Christian individualism inherent in his conception of Freedom Under God. Near the end of the letter Read notes that though his essay had focused on "economic, social and political" things, there was "a belief that underlies all that is here written." The underlying belief was that "the mind of man is but a receiving set tuning in on a Divine and Infinite Wisdom." Man's individual purpose consisted of "an ever increasing consciousness of Divine purpose and principle." Since man's purpose was to become increasingly

¹⁸⁵ Leonard Read to Frank Chodorov, August 9, 1957, Leonard Read to Frank Chodorov Correspondence Folder, Leonard Read Papers (LR), Foundation for Economic Education (FEE) Archives.

¹⁸⁶ Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), "World War II and the Postwar Revival."

conscious of the Divine will, right conduct, for Read, was “human actions in harmony with Divine Principle.” Likewise wrong conduct was “human actions in discord with Divine Principle.” This was the base or foundation of everything else, consequently “all human problems – be they along material, intellectual or spiritual lines, or, shall we add along economic, social or political lines – are moral confrontations; in a word they call for choices between right and wrong.” This belief in the necessity of aligning one’s actions to the Divine will, or to pursue Freedom Under God, meant, “All subjects for study and contemplation...are but division of this One.” For Read, the free market was inextricably connected with moral and spiritual principles, and with the individual’s responsibility to seek the Divine.¹⁸⁷

In a commencement address at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Read explained how the market, free enterprise or capitalism enabled man to fulfill his purpose of seeking the divine and evolving his individualism in the process. He explained “when one has to labor in the rice paddies from sunrise to sunset merely to eke out an animal existence, he doesn’t stand much chance of evolving and developing those numerous potentialities peculiar to his own person.” Free enterprise or the market freed man from this animal subsistence and allowed him to seek higher purposes and develop his individual gifts and talents. The market produced material wealth, which “is but the means to free us from lower employments so that we may labor more industriously for higher employments.” The market was a tool that produced material wealth efficiently and “Material wealth is but a tool to help us develop our God-given faculties of intellect and spirit.” In sum, the market

¹⁸⁷ Leonard Read to William Mullendore, August 10, 1953, LR, William Mullendore Folder.

and the wealth it produced freed man to truly fulfill his purpose by increasing his “consciousness of Divine purpose.”¹⁸⁸

Read’s belief in the primacy of moral and spiritual principles meant that the market was a tool, not an end. Despite his contention that the Free Market was conducive to proper spiritual growth and expression by producing the means necessary for sustaining it, Read did not believe that the simple market mechanism of supply and demand should be the base line of all human action. Moral concerns could and did trump such market mechanisms in Read’s mind. As he explained in a letter to a supporter about seeking to provide what the market demanded (or not provide what it didn’t demand):

If I were making soap, or watches, or automobiles, I would scrupulously follow these recommendations but these recommendations should be limited to things that satisfy desires of the flesh. I would consider the recommendations to be bad were they to be applied to matters of moral, political, economic and social philosophy. Were we to follow them in this foundation, we would be writing tracts on behalf of socialism, for at this particular time it would seem that that is what people want more of¹⁸⁹

For Read the market was good only as long as it was moral. The market was meant to bring you closer to moral law, and its value lay in its ability to do that. Like with Fifield’s *Freedom Under God*, it was the relationship between freedom and divine law that made the free market godly and free. A market that neglected its spiritual function and basis could not, by definition, be free.

Read’s insistence on the need for a moral market, as opposed to simply a market, may seem strange given his and FEE’s historical reputation as the first libertarian think-tank in the United States. This is what sets Read and FEE apart from others in the Libertarian movement such as Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard. For Rand and Rothbard market mechanisms were inherently moral, for Read, and Fifield, the market was moral

¹⁸⁸ “Looking Out for Yourself,” Commencement Address, Illinois Institute of Technology, June 8, 1956, LR.

¹⁸⁹ Leonard Read to J.E. Jury, December 26, 1952, LR.

when it facilitated men seeking the divine (Freedom Under God). This meant that the market did not always and at all times bring out the best in men; rather the market was a better mechanism for drawing individual men closer to God than government intervention. As Read explained it “The market route is the only honest one. Money avarice is more easily controlled than power avarice.”¹⁹⁰ Much like Winston Churchill who insisted that Democracy was the worst form of government, except for all the others, Read saw the weaknesses of the market as less of a danger than the alternative.

Read’s setting up money avarice against power avarice demonstrates how much he had absorbed Fifield’s dichotomous view of God v state, and the concept of Christian individualism that underlay it. In Read’s mind the coercion of the state stood in contrast to the freedom of the market; they were mutually exclusive. For Read, as state power grew the free market diminished and vice-versa. This dichotomous view of the state and the market sprang from what Read considered the underlying beliefs behind them. Read argued that state power came from a “belief in the use of force,” which violated individual rights, and that the power of the market came from “faith in the ability of free men” that ensured individual rights. Thus as state power “increases, there is a correspondingly diminishing faith in the ability of free men to achieve social performance.” Government intervention came from a “belief” in coercion as the way to achieve social, economic and political progress. Consequently, the solution to government intervention was not simply cutting back government power; rather it had to “take a positive form – namely, a rehabilitation of the faith in free men.”¹⁹¹ Changing men’s beliefs, or bolstering their faith in God or freedom,

¹⁹⁰ *Philosopher of Freedom*, 133.

¹⁹¹ Leonard Read, “Economic Slavery or Human Liberty: Do We Still have a Choice?,” Speech given before California Taxpayer Association, 26th Annual Meeting, Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles, February 26, 1952, LR, 3.

would automatically undercut state power. Here was the intersection between Faith and Freedom for Read.¹⁹²

Read's mission to "rehabilitate" the faith of free men led him to use FEE to propagate what he termed the "Freedom Philosophy." This philosophy was at its heart a restatement of Fifield's Freedom Under God. Read dedicated FEE to the spreading of liberty or freedom, which he defined as "doing all the good in man's power, according to God's laws." Real freedom, or "virtuous liberty," came from following God's laws. The connection between freedom, liberty and following God's laws was precisely the connection Fifield drew in his own Freedom Under God campaign.¹⁹³ Also like Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization, Read and FEE sought a "rehabilitation," "rekindling" or "revival" of the spiritual principles that underlie right economic activity. Though not explicitly religious, Read and FEE were as evangelical in nature as Spiritual Mobilization.

Read and FEE sought to "rehabilitate" men's faith by spreading the Freedom Philosophy. As Read explained "Freedom education aims to develop a sense of right, duty and self-reliance."¹⁹⁴ FEE's purpose encompassed much more than promoting correct economic principles, it sought to cultivate the morals and values behind correct economic principles. Unsurprisingly this list of values connects right and duty with self-reliance. The individualistic focus of the Freedom Philosophy closely aligned it with the evangelical impulse. Unlike those who embraced a Social Gospel view of society with its emphasis on collective action through the state, Read and FEE believed that the correct action of individuals was key to social progress. FEE, Spiritual Mobilization, and evangelical

¹⁹² Read's focus on the spiritual principles behind the free market led his biographer to claim that "The rehabilitation of the Judeo-Christian foundation was Leonard's major concern." *Philosopher of Freedom*, 101.

¹⁹³ *ibid*, 72.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid*, 86.

organization's like the Billy Graham Association and the Moody Bible Institute sought to save the world "one soul at a time."

The most striking illustration of Fifield's impact on Read's thought is how Read's advocacy for libertarian or laissez-faire principles changed over time. In Read's first book, written in 1937 before he moved to LA and came in close contact with Fifield, Read made a utilitarian argument for laissez-faire principles by arguing for the adoption of capitalism simply because of its ability to produce goods and meet consumer's needs.¹⁹⁵ As Greg Eow and Mary Sennholz point out, Read's book, titled *The Romance of Reality*, was shot through with the writings and thinking of men like Herbert Spencer, William Graham Sumner, Albert J Nock and Thomas Nixon Carver.¹⁹⁶ Drawing on his readings of Classical Liberalism, of which these men are foremost, Read unsurprisingly employed their naturalistic judgments and arguments. In the book Read went so far as to assert "The people are not uneasy because they desire more religion, better morals or a different political system. They are uneasy because the desire for goods and services, for material things, for wealth, so notoriously exceeds their satisfactions."¹⁹⁷ Read's 1937 utilitarianism and focus on the material benefits of the market stand in stark contrast to his later thought's emphasis on the importance of the underlying spiritual imperative in the free market. Though Read never explicitly expressed his intellectual and moral debt to Fifield, the shift in his arguments for the free market from materialistic utilitarianism to the primacy of the market's spiritual and moral value as well as his deep engagement with the Christian individualism in Fifield's concepts of pagan stateism and Freedom Under God clearly indicate how profoundly Fifield influenced Read, his thought and his foundation.

¹⁹⁵ Though there is evidence that Fifield and Read knew each other on some level starting with Fifield's move to California in 1935, it wasn't until Read moved to LA in 1939 and became a member and trustee of Fifield's First Congregational Church that they had a close association.

¹⁹⁶ *Philosopher of Freedom*, 59. "Fighting a New Deal," 135.

¹⁹⁷ "Fighting a New Deal," 126.

Edmund Opitz, Spiritual Mobilization and the Theology of Freedom

When Leonard Read hired Edmund Opitz away from Spiritual Mobilization in 1955 he was simply reinforcing his and FEE's long established moral and spiritual advocacy for Libertarian economics. Opitz, an ordained Unitarian minister¹⁹⁸, brought moral weight to FEE's activities and arguments, a weight that he added to the organization for over 30 years. Motivated by the same theological Liberalism embraced by Fifield and Read, Opitz focused on and expounded even more explicitly what he saw as the underlying spiritual principles and attitudes behind the free market and the free society. During his time as a senior staffer at FEE, Opitz regularly contributed to its publications, including its flagship publication *The Freeman*, and played a part in shaping FEE's activities and policies while serving as one of Read's confidants.

As with Read, Edmund Opitz's association with Spiritual Mobilization and James Fifield radically altered his thought and his career trajectory. Opitz, born in Worcester, MA in 1914, received his doctor of divinity degree from the theologically liberal Starr of King Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA in 1939. After his ordination Opitz served as a parish minister until the outbreak of WW II, during which he served as a Red Cross field director in India. After the war Opitz assumed the pastorship of the Unitarian church in Hingham, MA. Had he not attended a Spiritual Mobilization conference in Princeton, NJ in early 1951 Opitz may well have continued his pastoral career. At the Princeton conference, however, he met then Spiritual Mobilization Vice-President James Ingebretsen who shortly afterwards hired Opitz to run Spiritual Mobilization's conference program. Opitz ran the

¹⁹⁸ Opitz eventually became an ordained Congregationalist minister like his colleague James Fifield when he felt the Unitarian church was becoming too "collectivist."

conference program for the next 4 years, building up an extensive network and getting to know most everyone in the early conservative movement.¹⁹⁹

Opitz's time at Spiritual Mobilization proved foundational in the evolution of his thought. Though anything but a philosophic and theological neophyte when he joined Spiritual Mobilization, his association with Fifield's organization provided him the time and opportunity to begin to flesh out and disseminate his thought. The first pamphlet that Opitz published under the auspices of Spiritual Mobilization contained many of the ideas and themes that continued in his thought until his death. This text, titled "The Theology of Freedom," also demonstrated to what extent theologically liberal ideas influenced his thought and how, like Read, he engaged and built on Fifield's concepts of pagan stateism and Freedom Under God and the Christian individualism at their core.

In his "Theology of Freedom," Opitz, like Fifield, argued that the state is an idol and thus pagan or anti-Christian. Like Fifield, Opitz contended that those who advocate for state power are really advocating for the state through its beneficence to take the place of God. He stated those who seek to increase government's power believe "it is government which binds us all together and gives us stature. From this perspective, government becomes the all-pervading influence within which we live and move and have our being – usurping the place in thought once occupied by...God." As Spiritual Mobilization's credo warns, the state must not usurp God's place, an idea that Opitz wholeheartedly embraced. Though Opitz fought to beat back pagan stateism, he also lamented that it was rapidly advancing. He noted that the usurpation of God's place had largely happened as "Caesar and God have

¹⁹⁹ While serving with Spiritual Mobilization Opitz arranged for a young man named William Buckley who had recently published his book *God and Man at Yale* to speak at a Spiritual Mobilization conference.

changed places. God is allowed a little time on Sunday morning, but it is Caesar who takes care of you the rest of the week.”²⁰⁰

Like Fifield, Opitz identified the source of this usurpation as the denial of Christian individualism and the exaltation of pagan collectivism. Opitz argued, “The religion of Jesus was founded on two basic premises; ‘The Kingdom of God is within you,’ and second ‘the Kingdom of God is at hand’ – now.” These two basic principles, both of them the product of a liberal theology that stressed the immanence of God and the evolution of history, were, for Opitz, inherently individualistic. As he went on to point out “This generous estimate of the individual was the foundation upon which this republic was established.” Individualism was the founding, liberating principle of the United States, a principle that he equated with Christianity as “political as well as spiritual freedom is the gift of God through Christ.”²⁰¹ The recognition of the dignity and importance of the individual was the key to America’s greatness, and just as important the loss of this ideal to the collectivist focus on the idol, “Society with a capital S,” was leading to its demise.²⁰² The embrace of collectivist ideas meant, “more and more people are backed into the position of believing that they are mere creatures of the state – whereas they once considered themselves Sons of God.”²⁰³

Opitz’s analysis of American life went deeper than arguing for a dichotomous relationship between God and State. He argued, “the trouble begins with our non-religious view of life, which declares that man has obligations only to his fellow men as they comprise society or government.” This humanist view of the world leads to a focus on what Opitz termed “horizontal relationships,” man with man. The problem is that “this view of life is not realistic because it ignores one entire dimension of life” the “vertical relationship”

²⁰⁰ Edmund Opitz, “Theology of Freedom” (Los Angeles: Mobilization for Spiritual Ideals, 1952), 14.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 9.

²⁰² Ibid., 12.

²⁰³ Ibid., 17.

between the individual and God. An exclusive focus on man's horizontal relationship is the root of the problem because "If your equation only has two terms, man and society, then it is logical that society, the sum of individuals, be superior to any given individual who is a mere fragment of society." In other words "the tyranny of mass over man is assured if you have only two terms." The solution is to add God into the equation because "every individual is then linked to a higher Reality, and becomes a person in his own right with prerogatives that his society may not transgress." For Opitz a belief in God was the most fundamental way to assure the rights of the individual or even the minority. Without a belief in the divinity of the individual there was no logical way to prevent the needs of society from always superseding the rights of the individual.²⁰⁴

Opitz's argument for the philosophical necessity of "vertical" relationships to add the proper balance and dimensions to man, government and society is simply Fifield's Freedom Under God restated. Like with Fifield and Read, Opitz believed the solution to America's problems was a heartfelt revival of faith in God that would improve the individual as "there was no way to reform society except by making individuals better."²⁰⁵ A heartfelt belief in God at the individual level would lead "to a recovery of a sense of significance and responsibility" because the individual would become aware that "he is a person in his own right, responsible for his gift of life to the Source of his being."²⁰⁶ This focus on individual change and improvement would in turn lead to "the monster problems before which we feel so impotent" being "deflated to man-size" problems. For Opitz "[American] problems won't be solved by [America], they will be broken down and solved, if at all, by persons." Real solutions, economic, social and political will come because "society will be reformed by the presence within it of transformed individuals." Thus, Government's only purpose was to

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 18-19.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 13.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 11.

assure Freedom Under God by “protecting individuals in their God-given individual rights” and giving them the space and opportunity to transform themselves²⁰⁷. In “Theology of Freedom” Opitz laid out the foundation of his thought, a foundation that he built on as he moved from Spiritual Mobilization to the Foundation for Economic Education.

Opitz at FEE: Historicizing Pagan Stateism and Freedom Under God

Though working for Spiritual Mobilization opened a whole new world to Opitz and allowed him the time and space to begin formulating his own thought, he began to notice that Fifield’s growing distance from the day to day operations of the organization was leading to a leadership vacuum. By 1955 Spiritual Mobilization was no longer presenting its highly successful “Freedom Story” radio program, was no longer pushing its Committee to Proclaim Liberty and was investing less and less in Opitz’s regional conferences program. Opitz began looking for a place to land and unsurprisingly ended up at the Foundation for Economic Education. The ease with which Opitz transferred himself, his beliefs and his ideology from Spiritual Mobilization to FEE is a clear indicator of the ideological and even theological similarity of the two organizations. In essence Opitz went from the parent organization to its offspring where he thrived for the next several decades.

It was while he was working at FEE that Opitz accomplished two great intellectual tasks. First he wrote an anti-Social Gospel book titled *Kingdom Without God: Roads End for the Social Gospel* that attacked what he considered the anti-Christian collectivist theology behind the Social Gospel. Opitz’s book never became popular literature, but it had tremendous circulation among conservative and libertarian intellectuals and thought-leaders at the time. It so perfectly encapsulated Spiritual Mobilization’s founding purpose, which FEE shared in part, to repudiate and correct Social Gospel thinking that Spiritual

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 18-19.

Mobilization and its most prominent supporters gave the book to literally everyone they knew. James Ingebretsen made sure that National Review editor William Buckley received a copy²⁰⁸, and retired Chrysler CEO B.E. Hutchinson mailed a copy to all his friends and acquaintances including the entire Laymen's Committee and General Council of the National Council of Churches on which he was serving. The book quickly sold out of its initial 1500 copy printing and was in its third printing by 1960.

The second great intellectual task Opitz accomplished in his early years at FEE was to expand and historicize Fifield's ideas of pagan stateism and Freedom Under God. In his "Theology of Freedom" Opitz effectively enunciated, clarified and restated these two principles with an occasional reference to their applicability in the founding documents and ideas of the United States. Within the first few years at FEE Opitz articulated a historical version of the evolution from pagan stateism to Freedom Under God and connected this historical narrative to the founding of the United States as well as to contemporary issues in the US.

Opitz started off his theologically liberal project of tracing the immanence of God through history with a narrative beginning with Plato and Aristotle. He argued for both, "man, was a political animal who might find complete fulfillment in the closed society of the Greek city-state." In other words, neither Plato nor Aristotle saw much value in the individual as "the good of the individual is the same as the good of the society" in their thought. This meant that in their philosophy and worldview "Ethics and politics are one, and there is no distinction between Church and State." In other words, Aristotle and Plato defined ethics or morals only in the horizontal relationship to the group's welfare represented by the state or polity; rights were applicable not at the individual level, only at

²⁰⁸ James Ingebretsen to William Buckley Jr., June 5, 1956, Series I, Box 6, Folder 17, JCI.

the level of society.²⁰⁹ Individuals mattered inasmuch as they were part of the polity, which was the equivalent of the state. Opitz argued that this pre-Christian, or pagan philosophy, asserted that the “State was the universal caretaker promising to feed, clothe, house, train and guide its minions.”²¹⁰

The coming of Christ and the birth of Christianity fundamentally altered this philosophy, according to Opitz, by introducing “a concept into the thought of the West which is alien to the thinking of Plato and Aristotle.” This concept was “the idea of the two cities; the City of God and the City of Man,” or that man had both horizontal and vertical relationships. This meant that man needed to not only get by in this life (horizontal), but act in “full awareness that his ultimate felicity may be attained only in another order of existence (vertical).”²¹¹ The concept of the City of God, or the idea that individual man is meant for more than this life, separated ethics or morals from simply political considerations or in other words led to the separation of Church from State. This “distinction between spiritual and secular power” meant that ethics did not evolve out of the polity or state, but rather out of the individual as individual, not group, action assured spiritual salvation.²¹² In other words “the inviolability of the individual is the doctrine [we] inherited from 1900 years of Christian insistence upon the immortality of the soul,” a doctrine that “seeped into men’s consciousness by a kind of osmosis” throughout “the centuries of the Christian era.”²¹³ The “unitary state” or universal state power was pagan because it concentrated all ethics and concerns in the “horizontal” relations of this earth

²⁰⁹ Edmund Opitz, “Liberty and Religion: Some Preliminary Observations,” Paper from some remarks at FEE seminar in Carmel Valley, California, November 16, 1962, Box 8, Folder 8, Edmund Opitz Papers (EOP), University of Oregon Special Collections, 16.

²¹⁰ Edmund Opitz, “Story of our Emerging Republic,” Book Review published in *Christian Economics*, March 5, 1963.

²¹¹ “Liberty and Religion,” 16.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Edmund Opitz, “The Battle for the Mind in Religion,” Address before the Farm Bureau Institute, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming, August 16, 1959, EOP, Box 8, Folder 8, pg. 7.

while Christianity introduced the individualism inherent in the “vertical” relations found in the Kingdom of God.

Though Christian individualism was the most basic and important Christian doctrine with political implications, Opitz argued that the doctrines of the Fall and Free Will also had ramifications in the secular world. Opitz argued that the doctrine of the Fall, or the idea that man fell from a state of perfection and grace to a state of imperfection and sin, implied that government was a product of the fall. “Government” Opitz theorized “is a consequence of Sin; it appears only after the fall.” The fallen nature of government meant that “the total state required by collectivism” is incompatible with “the Christian rationale for government.”²¹⁴ For Opitz Christianity teaches that government as a product of sin is evil even if it is necessary. This lesson “took centuries” to “sink in” as “even churchmen had to learn the hard way that government is not an instrument they could use to correct spiritual error.” As Opitz emphatically states “salvation is not by politics!”²¹⁵

Additionally, the theologically liberal Christian doctrine of Free Will or the ability to choose salvation, which stood in contrast to the traditional Calvinist doctrine of being “chosen” for salvation, had similar political implications. Free Will, or Christian individualism by another name, allowed Opitz to argue that the Fall “resulted from an act of choice.” The fact that God allowed this deliberate act of individual disobedience meant “the God who created man gave him at the same time sufficient freedom to deny his maker.” From this Opitz deduced that if God “gave us inwardly such complete freedom” to actively deny Him then it is only logical that God “wills that the relationships between men should

²¹⁴ “Liberty and Religion,” 17.

²¹⁵ “Emerging Republic,” 1.

be voluntary." Consequently even "the most well-intentioned welfare state" was anti-Christian because it inevitably contains an element of "command and coercion."²¹⁶

Though "the lessons" of the Christian doctrines of individualism, the fallen nature of government and non-coercion may have taken centuries to sink in, when they did "sink in" they "bore fruit in our limited, constitutional government."²¹⁷ The United States, Opitz argued, was "not Christian in any formal sense," but "it is Christian through absorption" because "the basic teachings of Christianity are in its bloodstream."²¹⁸

Using this logic, Opitz contended that the Declaration of Independence was both a religious, specifically Christian, and political document because "it put into words what [the founders were] thinking when it set forth the proposition that the Creator endowed men (individually) with certain rights."²¹⁹ The Constitution not only recognized the individual and his rights, its "balance of powers" was also recognition of man, and government's, fallen nature. In Opitz's narrative, the ancient world of Greece and Rome were anti-Christian or pagan because of their exaltation of the state, an exaltation that assured slavery was the foundation for both societies. The introduction of Christianity began to change the world through the recognition of the immortality of the individual soul. In time the pagan state gave way to Freedom Under God as more and more people accepted the doctrine of Christian individualism, resulting in the founding of the United States with its limited, constitutional government.

Opitz's entire purpose in sketching out this historical narrative was to apply his thought to modern problems. Unsurprisingly, Opitz argued that the welfare state that the United States had adopted through the New Deal was pagan, anti-Christian or even pre-

²¹⁶ Liberty, 17-18.

²¹⁷ "Emerging Republic," 1.

²¹⁸ "Battle for the Mind," 7.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

Christian. Opitz's solution, however, went much deeper than simply axing the welfare state through political action. He argued for a genuine "revival of religion" so that the United States could "recover faith in ourselves and in the values our free society embodies."²²⁰ The founders had set up a system of political liberty by "securing men in their rights" which rights "derive from religious premises" ultimately meaning that "political liberty needs to rest on a religious foundation."

Opitz explained what he meant by "political liberty needs to rest on a religious foundation" metaphorically. Opitz argued "political liberty is the check drawn against the capital stock of our religious heritage. When the check bounces, the inference is that there are no funds in the bank." This meant that the United States "cannot go on drawing upon our religious heritage unless we systematically replenish it."²²¹ Only a religious revival could get at "the roots of collectivism" which went "right down to our basic attitude toward the universe and our primordial demands on life." Opitz argued that America needed a revival of real religious faith to alter its citizen's "fundamental orientation" because if Americans did not "get squared away here...our thinking on the other levels [read political, economic and social] will be distorted."²²² Like Fifield and Read, Opitz's liberal theology led him to embrace the spiritual as underlying political, economic and social action. Economic, political and social problems were at their heart spiritual in nature and anything less than a spiritual solution would inevitably fail.

While Opitz's early years at FEE allowed him to work out a deep, well thought out historical narrative that explained FEE's anti-statism in Christian terms, he also increasingly found himself having to react to the surging popularity of Ayn Rand. Rand's initial entre

²²⁰ Ibid., 6.

²²¹ Ibid, 8.

²²² "Liberty and Religion," 19.

onto the public stage was her best-selling book *The Fountainhead*, published in 1943. Rand's novel exalting individualism and individual effort garnered wide praise in Libertarian and conservative circles of the time. Her success even led to a brief association with Read and FEE with Rand assuming the position of ideological gatekeeper, "ghost reading" FEE publications and giving her approval before publication. However, Rand's rigid ideological outlook and her enormous ego soon led to a break between the groups.²²³ At the time, this break seemed of little consequence to FEE, which was rapidly gaining adherents and support. However, when Rand followed up her initial publishing success with an even bigger hit in her 1957 novel *Atlas Shrugged*, Opitz and FEE could no longer simply ignore Rand.

Though not readily apparent in the initial break between Rand and FEE, the divergence in their paths became increasingly pronounced because of Rand's explicitly atheist philosophy of Objectivism. Rand's larger-than-life brand of individualism initially meshed well with conservative ideology as the shared emphasis on individualism v. collectivism was enough for many to overlook the origins of Rand's individualism. Only when Rand became serious about working out her own philosophy of Objectivism and emphasizing its atheism did her relationship with the leaders of the conservative movement start to sour. Rand's atheism coupled with her growing popularity challenged the underlying Judeo-Christian consensus that largely permeated the early conservative/libertarian movement.

This threat not only led William Buckley and the *National Review* to outright attack Rand, her book and her philosophy²²⁴, it also forced Opitz to tailor his thought to address Rand's challenge. Accordingly Opitz argued that while Libertarians who did not believe in

²²³ For a detailed account of the break, see "Fighting a New Deal," 151-156.

²²⁴ Whittaker Chambers, "Big Sister is Watching You," *National Review*, December 28, 1957, 596.

the spiritual underpinnings of Liberty had their use, they could never “touch all the bases” and convince those who were socialists for ethical or religious reasons to change.²²⁵ At other times Opitz was less conciliatory declaring that “the person [Rand] who declares that there are no objective ethics, must concern [her]self with the difficulty of hanging onto the concepts of Freedom and Truth after [s]he has jettisoned the concept of Right.” He further ridiculed Rand for her atheism by declaring “What shall one name the brand new philosophy which dismisses the ultimate Object, the objects of moral effort, the objects of thought, objective beauty and objective truth? Why, objectivism, of course!”²²⁶ The divergence between Rand and FEE simply underscores the extent to which FEE identified with and propagated Christian individualism over atheistic or humanistic individualism.

In addition to his activities with FEE, Opitz also started an organization of Libertarian and conservative ministers called the Remnant in 1957. The Remnant, which was via libertarian godfather Albert J Nock a reference to Isaiah’s assertion that “in that day The Remnant of Israel...will truly rely on the Lord,”²²⁷ sprang from Opitz’s conference work with Spiritual Mobilization. Like at Spiritual Mobilization, Opitz designed the Remnant to be by invitation only, off the record and exploratory. Its guiding principles were “God is the author of Liberty, not man, nor his state nor his political party.” The over 400 members of the group met to ponder such questions as “how [God] governs the world, how man must do his duty, and leave the outcome to him” by reflecting “on the blessings God has bestowed on their country.” In essence, The Remnant was a quiet, consistent attempt to continue Spiritual Mobilization’s mission after its demise. Like Spiritual Mobilization it attracted both theological liberals, like Opitz himself, and theological conservatives. Though the rolls

²²⁵ “Liberty and Religion,” 10. Indeed Opitz’s basic impetus for writing Liberty and Religion was to respond to Rand and her assertion that religion had nothing to do with liberty.

²²⁶ Edmund Opitz, “Some RANDom Thoughts on Ethics; or, Self-Interest on the Carpet and the Carpet Tweaked,” February 7, 1960, EOP, Box 8, Folder 8.

²²⁷ Isaiah 10: 20.

of the organization remain lost to history, it did include luminaries such as evangelical leader and theologian Carl Henry who was the first editor of Billy Graham's *Christianity Today* and one of the founding members of the still functioning conservative Christian think-tank The Institute on Religion and Democracy.²²⁸

At first glance it seems strange that a minister devoted to the broad general principle of Freedom Under God would make his home in an institution that explicitly sought to promote libertarian economic ideas. As with Fifield and Read, it raises the question why economics and economic policies took such precedence in his thought and efforts. For these men, their liberal theology that sought to narrow the gap between the divine and this world led them to conclude that economics was one of the primary bases of (spiritual) life. The economic and spiritual were so intertwined that a change in spiritual principles or perception would surely change economic principles and perceptions and vice-versa. As Opitz explained in a letter to Pew "Montesquieu remarked that the English 'had progressed furthest in three important things, piety, commerce and freedom.' It is significant that the great Frenchman put piety first." In other words, economic success flowed from righteous living, spiritual principles extended into the realm of economics. Opitz further explained what he saw as the closely related nature of economics and religion when he quoted Lord Acton as saying "Although the doctrine of self-reliance and self-denial, which is the foundation of political economy, was written as legibly in the New Testament as the *Wealth of Nations*, it was not recognized until our age."²²⁹ For Opitz, Read and Fifield, economics and economic life was so basic to human life that it was on par with spiritual life, particularly its individualist principles. In a sense they were anti-Gnostics; there is no separating this world, with its economic necessities, from the next. In a tribute that reveals

²²⁸ See B.E. Hutchinson to J. Howard Pew, March 9, 1959, JHP, Box 64, G Folder.

²²⁹ Both as quoted in Edmund Opitz to J. Howard Pew, September 10, 1953, JHP, Box 36, S Folder.

how much Opitz's economic principles flowed from his liberal theology, the Reverend Robert Sirico insightfully noted that "Ed Opitz confronted the confusion of a purely spiritualized religion when he argued that moral sense can and must be made of the physical world." Economics mattered to Opitz because this world "which was fashioned by a Benevolent God... situated the human family into the exigencies of scarcity – thus to the law of supply and demand."²³⁰ The principles of free enterprise economics were at their heart God's law, and all ministers had a stake in understanding and expounding God's law.

Of FEE, Mormons and Evangelicals

Though Edmund Opitz's continuing time at FEE assured it a presence in the religious realm, FEE had a broader interaction with America's religious scene, particularly the rising evangelical movement. The founding of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942 hearkened the opening of a new era in America's religious life that did more than parallel the era of increasing popularity of libertarian economics that FEE's founding in 1946 helped inaugurate. The communities and movements these seemingly unrelated organizations came to represent had, thanks to groups like Spiritual Mobilization and FEE, a deepening relationship. FEE's personnel, activities, emphasis, and ideological individualism in its early years found a ready audience among the deeply religious in America, especially among key members of the burgeoning evangelical movement.

From its early years Read made sure that FEE did not neglect its relationships with those who influenced America's spiritual life. In addition to serving on Spiritual Mobilization's board, Read also invited various faith leaders to serve as Trustees of FEE. For example, less than two years after starting FEE Read wrote to J. Reuben Clark, who was then serving in the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), and

²³⁰ Robert Sirico as quoted in FEE Annual Meeting minutes, May 6, 2006, FEE.

asked him to serve as a trustee. Clark, because of his duties serving as First Counselor in what is the highest ecclesiastical body in the LDS church, had to ask the President of the Church, George Albert Smith, for permission to serve as a Trustee. Lucky for Read all of the church leaders that Clark wanted to counsel with, including President Smith, were in town for the Church's annual General Conference in April. Clark noted as much by writing, "I have thought the matter over and talked it over with my associates here. They are as sensible as I am, myself, of the great honor involved in becoming a member of the Trustees of the Foundation and they felt it may be an opportunity for some service."²³¹ Clearly Clark, and President Smith, felt that FEE's mission aligned with Clark's ecclesiastical duties or he would not have accepted the position. With one bold letter Read connected FEE and its mission with the highest level of the LDS church.²³²

Within three years of getting J. Reuben Clark as a trustee of FEE, Read hired Congregationalist minister Russell J Clinchy away from his Hartford church. Clinchy, who was a member of Spiritual Mobilization, quickly made his mark at FEE, publishing an article entitled "Charity: Biblical and Political" arguing that true Christian charity was entirely voluntary and that the welfare state, consequently, violated Biblical charity. His piece was so popular that FEE eventually published it as a standalone pamphlet. One FEE supporter was so enthusiastic about the pamphlet that he contributed enough money to FEE to send it to 125,000 ministers. The pamphlet also made the rounds in Washington; the secretary of

²³¹ J. Reuben Clark to Leonard Read, April 7, 1948, BEH, Box 15.

²³² The Mormon presence in FEE did not end with J. Reuben Clark. In the late 1960s Ezra Taft Benson, who had served as Eisenhower's Secretary of Agriculture and who was then serving in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the LDS church became a trustee of FEE. Benson would go on to become President of the LDS church, at which point he resigned from being a trustee for personal reasons. Benson's warm friendship with Read led him to fly out to New York for a FEE sponsored memorial service upon Read's death and give a glowing Eulogy to those assembled. See *Philosopher of Freedom*, 193.

the Senate Foreign Relations Committee wrote to FEE and asked for enough copies to give to all the senators and their staff members on the committee.²³³

Clinchy's hiring did not go unnoticed among evangelicals, catching the attention of evangelical activist Verne P. Kaub. Kaub had long been active in both the religious and economic realms. As the Public Relations manager for Wisconsin Power and Light he had made selling free enterprise one of his foremost passions. Though a layman, Kaub had also become heavily involved in his Congregational denomination, publishing a newsletter entitled "Congregational Tidings." "Tidings" took aim at the Congregational Churches Council on Social Action, a bastion of Social Gospel thought, on both economic and doctrinal grounds. Additionally Kaub burnished his standing among evangelicals by publishing a pamphlet entitled "What's the matter with our Churches?," attacking theological liberalism and modernism in Protestantism while holding up theological conservatives as the true, bible-believing Christians.

Kaub's focus on the intersection between religion and economics was not a passing fancy. His years of arguing against Social Gospel thought and eventually arguing for the Christian basis of free enterprise culminated in the publication of his book *Collectivism Challenges Christianity* in 1946. His book, which targeted "Christian Americans," found a ready response in the early evangelical movement. None other than Harold Ockenga founding president of the National Association of Evangelicals wrote the forward to Kaub's book. Ockenga strongly endorsed Kaub's book noting, "Of all the recent books on which I have laid eyes, and which are essential to understanding the times [Kaub's book] is foremost."²³⁴ Ockenga, who stood second only to Billy Graham in power and influence in the modern evangelical movement, closed his flattering endorsement by hoping "that

²³³ James Ingebretsen to Norman Vincent Peale, April 6, 1951, JCI, Folder 27, Box 64, Series I, Subseries A.

²³⁴ Verne P. Kaub, *Collectivism Challenges Christianity* (Winona Lake: Light and Life Press, 1946), ix.

evangelical Christians will endeavor to give the book the circulation it deserves.”²³⁵ Kaub went on to found the rabidly anti-communist American Council of Christian Laymen upon his retirement in 1949. The council became a clearinghouse for pamphlets and publications attacking liberal Christianity, in particular the Federal and eventually National Council of Churches, on both economic and religious grounds. Kaub and his council became part of the rising evangelical movement, earning warm invitations to NAE meetings where he set up a booth distributing his literature.²³⁶

From early in its existence FEE had, for a variety of reasons, attracted the attention of evangelical Christians and their leaders. Darren Dochuk notes that FEE publications found their way into Southern California’s evangelical community through evangelicals close association with coalescing economic conservatives and through FEE’s association with Spiritual Mobilization.²³⁷ This is not surprising given Spiritual Mobilization’s undeniable presence in Southern California, home base to James Fifield’s Los Angeles First Congregational church and its Freedom Clubs. Fifield, who had ties to the evangelical community through people like Spiritual Mobilization secretary Marie King²³⁸, promoted FEE to his supporters insisting that FEE was “vital to the Freedom cause.”²³⁹ FEE also caught the attention of Carl McIntire’s American Council of Christian Churches, writing Read and all 16 of FEE’s trustees seeking its support.²⁴⁰ FEE’s appeal to evangelicals, however, went beyond its coincidental ties to the evangelical community. Indeed FEE’s ideological basis and moral appeals for libertarian economics resonated with evangelicals. What is most intriguing about the relationship between FEE and evangelicals is how theological

²³⁵ Ibid., xii.

²³⁶ For more on Kaub, his thought and his interactions with his fellow evangelicals please see James McKay, “God’s Market: Christianity and Capitalism in the Ideology of the Emerging New Right,” MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2010.

²³⁷ *Bible Belt*, 117, 122-123.

²³⁸ Ibid, 136.

²³⁹ James W. Fifield Jr. to J. Howard Pew, December 8, 1947, JHP, Box 15, Spiritual Mobilization Folder.

²⁴⁰ Leonard Read to B. E. Hutchinson, November 19, 1948, BEH, Box 15.

conservatives, like Kaub, came to embrace an organization and philosophy deeply embedded in theological liberalism. Verne Kaub's correspondence with and relationship with FEE provides insight into how theologically conservative evangelical Christians came to embrace FEE's theologically liberal inspired ideology and project.

Verne Kaub first heard about FEE around the time that he was getting his book ready for publication. He had long been aware of FEE economist Orvall Watts and his writings and wrote to Watts in August 1946 to express his enthusiasm for FEE and to make a plug for his book. Kaub noted in his letter that though FEE's mission was broader than simply reaching the churchmen that Kaub targeted in his book, he still saw his and FEE's efforts as naturally allied because of ideology. Kaub argued, "It is hardly necessary to study deeply to understand that Christ taught that the individual is the unit of society, that the importance and dignity of the individual is at the heart and core of the Christian gospel." For Kaub, individualism was a Christian concept, and as such any organization that was promoting individualism was in essence promoting Christ's message. FEE's individualist message fit in well with Kaub's belief in individual salvation.²⁴¹

After writing Watts, Kaub followed up with a letter to Leonard Read, hoping that FEE would endorse and help promote his book. Unsurprisingly, the theological differences between Read and Kaub initially produced some friction. Read replied that FEE could not endorse Kaub's book because of its contention that "Freedom, as we understand it, is inconceivable outside and before the Christian era."²⁴² For a theological liberal like Read, who embraced a belief that Christianity was "one major religio-ethical tradition among others," Kaub's assertion was a bridge too far. Kaub responded in a rather fiery and vituperative letter. In it Kaub slammed Read by insisting that though many "crackpots" had

²⁴¹ Verne Kaub to Orval Watts, August 11, 1946, FEE, Verne Kaub Folder.

²⁴² Leonard Read to Verne Kaub, November 30, 1946, FEE, Verne Kaub Folder.

written him letters attacking his book and philosophy “I have received no letter more inconsistent than yours.” Kaub felt that Read was refusing to promote his book because it was not perfect, a standard Read had not held other FEE publication’s to. such as an ideologically inconsistent pamphlet attacking rent control written by George Stigler and Milton Friedman. For Kaub, Read’s refusal was a betrayal of principle because “no one who proposes to lead people back to individualism [read Christianity],” as FEE did, could possibly not agree with the general thrust of his book even if they did not agree with everything he said in it.²⁴³ Feeling mistreated, Kaub signed off “it appears that almost anybody may promote economic heresies and be praised, nevertheless, except very sincerely yours Verne P Kaub.”²⁴⁴ Kaub’s anger stemmed from his feelings of personal betrayal from a group that should have been his friend. The intensity of his feelings shows just how much Kaub identified FEE’s mission with his own.

In contrast to Ayn Rand, who broke with Read and FEE over the “heresies” in the Stigler and Friedman pamphlet, the ideological, indeed theological, similarities between Kaub, Read and FEE meant that Kaub’s hurt feelings did not keep them apart for long. Within a few months Kaub was writing the foundation again, swapping articles and ideas attacking the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Even when corresponding about something as strictly economic and political as the TVA, Kaub found a way to tie it to the religious realm. After writing an article comparing the inception of the TVA to propaganda in Hitler’s Germany, Kaub told Watts that he wrote “about 40 of my ‘Christian Socialist’ friends” asking them “how does it seem to be definitely aligned with a project conceived in

²⁴³ Verne Kaub to Leonard Read, December 5, 1946, 2, FEE, Kaub Folder.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, pg. 3.

falsehood and now publicly exposed as having been so conceived?" For Kaub, it was great "fun" to get his "Christian Socialist" friends "Squirming."²⁴⁵

Kaub's correspondence with FEE took on a new note of enthusiasm when Russell J Clinchy joined its staff. Kaub wrote Read to report that he had heard that FEE "had added a new staff man who will specialize in the religious phases of the fight against the drive toward the Welfare State." Kaub wrote to express his excitement at the prospect and to announce that the ACCL, which he headed "will be happy to cooperate with the Foundation in any and every feasible way." In his enthusiasm for Clinchy's hire Kaub noted that he had always "been puzzled at the failure of patriotic organizations to recognize the Christian background of the concept of individualism and to attempt to rally Christians as such in support of American principles."²⁴⁶ In an effort to build on Kaub's enthusiasm, Read wrote back to Kaub confirming what Kaub had heard, though he noted that Clinchy's hire was less about his religious credentials than "because of his knowledge" of freedom. He closed by assuring Kaub that "we want to cooperate with you in every way we can."²⁴⁷ Obviously both the evangelical Kaub and the more theologically liberal Read felt there was enough commonality between their explicitly religious and explicitly secular organizations to warrant cooperation.

In a separate response to Kaub's letter, Clinchy sought to cultivate Kaub and his support. Clinchy noted that he left the ministry to work at FEE because "I have felt that this opportunity and privilege...is a continuation of my ministry." He went on to note the similarity between his worldview and that of Kaub by saying "I feel, with you, that the essence of a Christian faith is the liberty of the individual which is found in Christ." This

²⁴⁵ Verne Kaub to Orval Watts, January 3, 1947, 2, FEE, Kaub Folder.

²⁴⁶ Verne Kaub to Leonard Read, December 23, 1951, FEE, Kaub Folder.

²⁴⁷ Leonard Read to Verne Kaub, December 27, 1951, FEE, Kaub Folder.

communication gets to the heart of why so many evangelicals and religiously motivated groups and individuals found common cause with FEE. FEE's focus on individual liberty resonated so deeply with these groups that a pastor, like Russell J Clinchy, felt that leaving his ministry at a church to work for FEE was simply "a continuation of my ministry." For evangelicals like Kaub, individualism was a Christian concept; there was no separating individual liberty from Christ or his teachings. Consequently, whether they admitted it or not, groups like FEE were spreading the "gospel" of Christian individualism.²⁴⁸

Though Kaub had noted in his letter to Read that he did not understand why more "patriotic organizations" did not attempt to rally Christians and Americans to Christian individualism, he did not feel that FEE fell into this category. In that letter Kaub noted that FEE staffer F.A. "Baldy" Harper had proved in his recently published "Morals and the Welfare State" that he was a "complete master of the 'intricacies' of this field."²⁴⁹ Indeed, Kaub was so pleased with Harper's piece that he wrote a separate letter to Harper that same day to congratulate him on his article, noting, "I consider it one of the finest statements I ever have read." Kaub went on to explain that Harper's insistence on absolute moral laws was "most pleasing to me, since I have been contending for years that the American political-economic system is based in the Christian ideology, and that men can no more escape the operation of economic laws than they can void the law of gravity." For Kaub, God's laws operated as much in the economic realm as in the physical and spiritual realms, a belief that he identified with his theologically conservative interpretation of Christianity. Without even realizing it, Kaub had come to incorporate what had started out as a theologically liberal idea of the immanence of God into his conservative theological beliefs.

²⁴⁸ Russell J. Clinchy to Verne Kaub, December 31, 1951, FEE, Kaub Folder.

²⁴⁹ Verne Kaub to Leonard Read, December 31, 1951, FEE, Kaub Folder.

The theology of evangelicalism was broad enough to allow the incorporation of a few liberal tenets without challenging its central doctrines.

Kaub's letter or Harper underscores how a shared devotion to individualism created an ideological bridge between theological liberals and conservative. Kaub felt attracted to FEE because it shared his belief in how Christian morals applied to society, particularly the economy. The incorporation of the concepts of pagan stateism and Freedom Under God into FEE's mission and publications, such as "Morals and the Welfare State," resonated with religiously motivated evangelicals.²⁵⁰

FEE's relationship with another evangelical activist, Frederick Nymeyer, also gives insight into FEE's appeal to people of faith. Frederick Nymeyer was a prominent member of the Christian Reformed Faith church, a Calvinist faith of the most doctrinaire kind. He published a small journal entitled *Progressive Calvinism* that touched on both economic and theological issues. He was prominent enough in the evangelical community for J Howard Pew to write him and ask advice on starting up *Christianity Today*. In response to Pew's letter, Nymeyer argued for supporting the patron saint of FEE, Austrian economist Ludwig Von Mises in religious terms. Nymeyer contended "Dr. Von Mises teaches ideas in the field of economics which, in my opinion, are the only ideas in that field that can be completely reconciled with Christian ethics correctly understood. To my mind, anyone deviating from Dr. Von Mises's economics deviates from scriptural ethics." Nymeyer, who was a longtime supporter of FEE, felt so strongly about the connection between libertarian economics and Christianity that he declared Von Mises and his economics essentially infallible.

²⁵⁰ One FEE patroness was so impressed by Harper's "Morals and the Welfare State" that she paid to have it sent to 22,000 Methodist Ministers. See Caroline Hyde Smith to Jasper Crane, November 18, 1951, JEC, Box 34, FEE Folder 3.

The Freeman: Making the Case for the Religious and Moral Underpinnings of Libertarian Economics

Though Read, Opitz and Clinchy clearly demonstrate how much “religion” there was among early advocates of libertarian economics, the clearest evidence of the relationship between spiritual principles and FEE’s mission is in the pages of FEE’s flagship publication *The Freeman*. FEE officially took over *The Freeman* in 1956 when the independent, individualist publication ran into financial difficulties. From that time to the present *The Freeman* has been the mouthpiece of FEE and in its early years the single most important libertarian publication in the world. There was not a member of the early conservative movement from William Buckley on down who was not familiar with *The Freeman* and its contents.²⁵¹ In the pages of *The Freeman*, FEE’s vision of libertarianism came together. While most of each issue was devoted to specific political, economic or social issues, Read, Opitz and other religiously minded FEE staffers and supporters grounded those issues in a broader ideology and theology. Many articles in *The Freeman* explained the connection between the libertarian position on social, economic and political issues and the individualist interpretation of Christianity from which they argued these positions sprang.

Like with Spiritual Mobilization, the foundation of FEE’s ideology was a belief in the moral supremacy of the individual or Christian individualism. Before FEE took over *The Freeman*, it was known as an individualist publication that stressed individual rights and responsibilities. Its editor, Frank Chodorov, however came to his individualism on non-religious grounds. After its absorption into FEE, *The Freeman* began to make the case for the religious, indeed inherent Christianity of individualism. European economist Wilhelm Roepke 's declaration, which Opitz quoted, that “[Christian doctrine] starts from man as an

²⁵¹ Indeed *The Freeman* was so influential in the early right that before starting *National Review* Buckley had tried to purchase *The Freeman*. Had that sale gone through, there would have been no *National Review*, instead *The Freeman* would have become the paper Buckley used to build so much of the conservative movement.

individual endowed with an immortal soul striving for its salvation" most succinctly stated FEE's argument for the Christianity of individualism.²⁵²

Time and time again in *The Freeman* Opitz and other authors tied individualism and individual rights to Christian doctrine and history. For example, in another article Opitz argued "At the heart of the great Western upheaval [the reformation and renaissance] was the idea that the individual worshiper could come into the presence of God without the mediation of any special class of men."²⁵³ Oil Magnate and evangelical Christian J. Howard Pew similarly argued in his *Freeman* article "Governed by God" that "it was Christ who taught us, saying 'If ye continue in my word... ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free,' Faith in God is therefore the condition without which individual freedom and liberty are impossible"²⁵⁴ W. H. Chamberlin in an article entitled "Ethics is Personal" explained that individualism came from the Judeo-Christian tradition because

That sonorous old moral code, the Ten Commandments, is put in terms of what 'thou' shalt or shalt not do. There is not a word in it to suggest that the individual can shuffle off his moral responsibilities onto some vague entity called society. And this is characteristic of the spirit of both Old and New Testaments. The Psalms and the Hebrew Prophets always lay stress on individual right thinking and right doing, irrespective of what may be the political and economic conditions in which the individual finds himself.²⁵⁵ By tying Christianity to individualism, FEE added moral weight to its emphasis on the individual and individual rights.

This religious concept of the individual and his importance had implications beyond the religious realm. Opitz argued, "Think what this belief would do to tyranny. If every man thought of himself as the creature of God and potentially God's child, he certainly would not

²⁵² Edmund Opitz, "The Declaration of Independence Against Itself.," *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, March 1959 Issue, 3-12, pg. 7.

²⁵³ Edmund Opitz, "Capitalism and Our Culture," *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, March 1958 Issue, 32-36, pg. 35.

²⁵⁴ J Howard Pew, "Governed by God," *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, July 1957 Issue, 9-11, pg. 11.

²⁵⁵ W. H. Chamberlin, "Ethics is Personal," *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, March 1959 Issue, 16-22, pg. 21.

long submit to being the creature of any other man or of any group of men or of any government.”²⁵⁶ Individualism and individual worth are, according to Opitz, catalysts for action in man’s political and social life. Believing that he is a child of God is the basis by which he can and will seek political and social freedom. Christian individualism thus became the beginning point for FEE’s ideology.

Opitz and other *Freeman* writers not only argued for Christian individualism as potentially leading to the end of political tyranny, they also made the case that Christian individualism already had struck a blow against tyranny through the founding of the United States. In the same article where Opitz laid out the case for the Christian basis of individualism, he argued that the spread and acceptance of this idea led to the American Revolution:

By the middle of the eighteenth century Americans were protesting that the exactions of the British crown were violating their rights as men, whereas but a generation earlier they had demanded their rights as Englishmen. A revolution in thought and outlook separates the former concept from the latter. In drawing the lines of battle on their rights as Englishmen, the colonists had in mind the concessions which their ancestors, beginning with the barons at Runnymede, had wrung from their sovereigns. In standing on their rights as men, the colonists drew upon another dimension, the theological²⁵⁷

For Opitz it was the American acceptance of the religious, or theological, concept of the individual that underlay the Revolution’s emphasis on rights.

Christian individualism not only inspired the rights-based rhetoric of the Revolution it was, according to the ideology of FEE, the central concept in the political founding of the United States. Pew argued that the Founding Fathers “gave to us a Declaration of Independence, a Constitution, and a Bill of Rights which virtually said to those who might eventually come into the control of government: ‘We the people, are endowed by God with

²⁵⁶ “Capitalism and Our Culture,” 36.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

certain inalienable rights.”²⁵⁸ For Pew, the founding documents of the United States had at their core the concept of individual rights, which was a product of Christian belief. Opitz even more explicitly argued that “the American dream has at its center the individual person, endowed by God with certain rights which no other individual nor combination of individuals may properly transgress.” So central was this idea of Christian individualism that Opitz, like Pew, saw it at the heart of the political documents upon which the government came into being. For Opitz the “entire political equilibrium [of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution] was balanced on the sovereign individual; the only excuse for government was to secure him in his rights.”²⁵⁹ In other words, “we find that originally the concept [of limited government] stemmed from a spiritual foundation” or the idea of God-given individual rights.²⁶⁰ For FEE and its supporters a belief in the sacredness of the individual naturally led to the belief that government’s only purpose was to secure the individual in his rights, thus the concept of “limited government” was in response to the ethic proscribed by Christian individualism.

Flowing from this belief in the primacy of the individual and his rights was the belief that coercion was contrary to Christianity, particularly if the government, which was supposed to protect individual rights, was the perpetrator. Reverend Francis Mahaffy made just such an argument in an article he submitted to *The Freeman* while he was serving as a missionary in Eritrea. Mahaffy argued “One of the Commandments in God’s moral law states, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ Are we not agreed that this command forbids not only overt acts of murder but all coercion and violence except for the restraint of evil?”²⁶¹ After establishing the anti-Christian, or pagan, nature of coercion, he goes on to contend “the

²⁵⁸ “Governed by God,” 9.

²⁵⁹ Edmund Opitz, “The Religious Foundations of a Free Society,” *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, September 1959 Issue, 13-18, pg. 15.

²⁶⁰ “Capitalism and Our Culture,” 38.

²⁶¹ Francis E. Mahaffy, “A Clergyman’s Security,” *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, February 1957 Issue, 35-38, pg. 36.

government through its social security legislation uses force as a means to its ends.”²⁶² This coercion was therefore “quite opposed to the command that forbids the use of force” and led Mahaffy to urge his fellow pastors to “stay out of this government scheme that is opposed to God’s law.”²⁶³ General Douglas MacArthur made a similar point in an article attacking the coercion behind the income tax by arguing that “The Biblical story of Christ’s repudiation and expulsion of the tax tyrants from the temple is still a warning.”²⁶⁴ For MacArthur, Christ’s driving the moneychangers from the temple was less about profaning God’s temple and more about an oppressive, coercive government-backed practice.

The contention that the coercive nature of government was anti-Christian was simply a reiteration of James Fifiield’s concept of pagan stateism, a concept deeply embedded in FEE’s ideology. Like Fifiield and Spiritual Mobilization, FEE’s ideology contained a dichotomous view of the relationship between God and state. For example, in his article “Our Four Great Faiths,” W. G. Vollmer argued ““This theory of the all-powerful State is now locked in a death struggle with the concept of freedom, justice, and the dignity of man... It is a conflict between human dignity and godless tyranny, between freedom and slavery, between God-given rights and state-granted privileges.”²⁶⁵ Also like Fifiield and his pagan stateism, FEE argued that growing state power was symptomatic of a loss of faith in God. As Opitz argued “In the absence of a proper object of his loyalties – which it is the function of high spiritual faith to supply – [man] is susceptible to mob masters who dragoon him into bending the knee to the mortal god state.” In other words, man filled the emptiness of faithlessness by turning to the idol of state power. “Thus the totalitarian

²⁶² *ibid.*

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁶⁴ Douglas MacArthur, “The Risk Within,” *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, January 1957 Issue, 2-3.

²⁶⁵ W. G. Vollmer, “Our Four Great Faiths,” *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, January 1957 Issue, 34-38, Pg. 34-35.

drift...is the agonized effort of the modern world to fill the void created when [man stopped believing] the traditional faith.”²⁶⁶

FEE authors not only reiterated Fifield’s pagan stateism, they explained in detail the anti-Christian nature of state power. In an article entitled “Good Samaritan Economics,” Constance Burnham argued that the protagonist in the parable of the Good Samaritan’s “sense of duty toward his fellow man had not been dulled by a government bureau; his individual love for humanity remained sharp.” She went on to explain that the Good Samaritan’s sharp love for humanity remained because it “had not been milked dry by taxes for the care of the unfortunate, so that the joy of voluntary service remained in his possession.”²⁶⁷ In other words, Burnham contended that government welfare measures took the responsibility for the poor and unfortunate from the individual and gave it to the state, thus dulling the Christian feeling and responsibility of the individual. Welfare programs dulled Christian virtue and thus growing state intervention literally suppressed proper spiritual development. Much like Hoover argued in his article in *Spiritual Mobilization’s Faith and Freedom*, coerced compassion was no Christian attribute.²⁶⁸

FEE staffer and evangelical Christian Hans Sennholz argued that the state’s pagan nature did not come so much from inhibiting or dulling Christian Charity for the less fortunate as it did from violating God’s command to “love thy neighbor.” In accordance with the concept of Christian individualism Sennholz’s starting premise was that “The Christian law of neighborly love is an unbending rule of individual conduct.” He then claims that ““Acting in political concert we act in a way no conscientious man would dream of acting in

²⁶⁶ Edmund Opitz, “Behind Civilization – A Vision,” *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, January 1958 Issue, 56-59, pg. 58.

²⁶⁷ Constance F. Burnham, “Good Samaritan Economics,” *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, August 1956 Issue, 12.

²⁶⁸ See Chapter One, “Sowing the Seeds of a Movement: Reverend James Fifield’s Spiritual Mobilization, the New Deal and the Rise of International “Stateism,” 29.

direct interhuman relations. We leave no room for God in our political lives.” For Sennholz Americans often act hypocritically because “We condemn a neighbor for deceit, theft, robbery, and other crimes against his fellow men; but we fail to judge ourselves in confiscatory taxation, nationalization, and seizures of private industries by government, our political instrument.” Coercive political action on the part of the state literally undermined faith in God by leaving “no room for God in our political lives” and by violating God’s laws. This led to a schizophrenic condition where “there are two souls in our breasts, one that seeks and fears God, the other that denies the very presence of God.” Thus, “man has paid and is still paying a tremendous price for his rejection of the Christian law of neighborly love in the ever-expanding sphere of political action.” By supposedly violating God’s laws at the political level, man was increasingly restricting the area in his life where God and his laws held sway. Man was literally backing into an anti-Christian state of atheism through increasing government action.

Additionally, FEE carried reprints of several articles published by *Christianity Today*, the leading evangelical magazine in the country, which made similar arguments about the anti-Christian nature of state power and policies. In one such article, entitled “Inflation is a Moral Problem,” the editorial board at *Christianity Today* argued “plainly stated, inflation involves an element of lying, coveting, and stealing” and that “moral deterioration follows the debasement of the dollar.” This moral deterioration came about because “The government’s weakening of faith in honest currency exacts the costly toll of encouraging a wider range of dishonesty in economic affairs. The moral law flouted at one level weakens regard for the moral law at other levels.” The government, through its inflationary policies, was literally leading the nation into sinful behavior by “flouting” God’s laws. Interestingly in this argument individual responsibility falls by the wayside as the state takes the blame for the dishonest actions of its citizens. Even more to the point, the editorial argued, “trusted

money is a critical concern for any nation that marks its currency *in God we trust*. For the distrust of such currency will surely lead to a distrust of God, the end of representative government, and enslavement of people.”²⁶⁹ By following inflationary measures the state was causing distrust in its currency, and because it claimed to trust in God such actions undermined that trust, thus leading people away from God.

Though the state played a detrimental role in America’s spiritual life through its growing, coercive power, FEE staffers and supporters felt that growing state power was more a symptom of the nation losing its faith and religious outlook than a cause. In a 1957 *Freeman* Christmas message, Opitz laid out what he saw as the great faults of the time and how they contributed to growing state power. Opitz argued “the blind denial that things have an aspect which is permanent and eternal... [is one of] the besetting errors of our age. It is in this sense that our age is nonreligious, in its denial of the reality of fixed points.”²⁷⁰ Religion’s purpose was to “delineate the fixed points which act as guideposts,” and when people stopped using those eternal guidelines, they became nonreligious. Ignoring moral absolutes enabled the rise of political, social and economic problems because a lack of faith led to weak individuals and since “the individual is the unit of society; if the unit is weak, the structure cannot be strong.”²⁷¹ Thus political problems, like dictatorships, were “primarily a problem of the diseased mind and soul.”²⁷² For Opitz, this came about because losing faith in God led men to lose their bearings and attack the institutions that made America great. This “mass aggression against our institutions” occurred because of “basic personal insecurity,” an insecurity born from “the lack of a genuine religious outlook.” Simply put “the individual, stripped of his vertical relations, torn from his context, can find no

²⁶⁹ Christianity Today, “Inflation is a Moral Problem,” *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, May 1958 Issue, 23-25, pg. 25.

²⁷⁰ Edmund Opitz, “The Christmas Message,” *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, December 1957 Issue, 3-8. pg. 6.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

foundation upon which he can feel secure.”²⁷³ Losing faith in God led to a loss of perspective that pushed Americans to make political, social and economic decisions, such as looking to the state for “social security,” that ultimately undercut their remaining faith in God and produced seemingly intractable problems.

FEE’s theologically motivated anti-statism, based in a belief in the Christianity of individualism, makes it clear how much the organization and many of its adherents believed in the primacy of moral and spiritual principles. This conviction meant not only that modern problems had a spiritual basis, but a spiritual solution as well. Modern problems, as broadly defined by FEE, sprang from a loss of freedom; the solution was then, quite simply, bringing about greater freedom. This meant that while simply lifting government controls would help America’s problems, it would not solve them. What was needed, rather, was a better understanding of the spiritual basis of freedom. As Pew outlined

Freedom can exist only in a state where the people generally accept honesty, truth, fairness, generosity, justice, and charity as a rule for their conduct. But honesty, truth, fairness, generosity, justice, and charity are the attributes of Christian morality. So if we would have individual freedom, we must first have faith in God²⁷⁴

Opitz even more explicitly argued for the spiritual basis of FEE’s mission by noting that “FEE works within the framework of the spiritual and ethical understanding embodied in the heritage of Western Civilization. Its conviction is that this heritage, in its social aspects spells out the philosophy of limited government and free market economics. Political liberty and economic freedom, in turn, are important in man’s quest for material sufficiency and spiritual growth.”²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Ibid., 8.

²⁷⁴ “Governed by God,” 9-10.

²⁷⁵ Edmund Opitz, “Answering Some Questions about The Remnant,” *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, April 1960 Issue, 28-41, pg. 41. Opitz went on to note that his work with Spiritual Mobilization caught the eye of Read and FEE and since Read already had an understanding of the “ethical and religious dimensions of human

As Opitz's quote highlights, FEE's promotion of "free market economics" is inseparable from its broader ideology. Defending the market was defending Christian civilization because of their shared emphasis on individual choice. As businessman and former admiral Ben Moreel argued, "In short, human liberty, in one of its facets, is consumer choice and direction of productive activity. And individual liberty, in turn, is an important element of our Christian heritage."²⁷⁶ Opitz similarly argued "our common Judeo-Christian heritage paved the way" for capitalism's rise and evolution, making it an outgrowth of the "spiritual foundation" of Christianity.²⁷⁷ W. H. Chamberlin contended for the Christianity of capitalism by arguing that capitalism is simply "economic individualism," and therefore inherently Christian because "The equation, economic individualism equals freedom equals all moral values, has never been proved wrong – least of all in our own time."²⁷⁸ Even more explicitly, Reginald Jen argued that capitalism's underlying principle of private property "is in accordance with the Divine (individualist) order of things" and that "the roots of private property thus lie deep in the soil of Christendom."²⁷⁹ The inter-related nature of capitalism and Christianity was so strong that Charles Wolfe noted, "what is morally sound tends to be economically sound and vice versa" since in the right sort of society "The commandment 'thou shalt not steal,' is remembered and obeyed."²⁸⁰ In essence FEE staff and supporters agreed with Fifield that "freedom," or individual choice, is inseparable from Christianity, thus when freedom is threatened anywhere, like when the government intervenes in the

liberty" it was not at all surprising that Read would hire an ordained minister as a FEE staff member. It is not a coincidence that Read, who largely got his ethical and religious understanding of human liberty from Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization, would hire one of Spiritual Mobilization's outstanding employees into his own organization.

²⁷⁶ Ben Moreel, "A Free Market," *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, June 1956 Issue, 32-33, pg. 32.

²⁷⁷ "Capitalism and Our Culture," 34.

²⁷⁸ W. H. Chamberlin, "The Morality of Capitalism," *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, January 1957 Issue, 24-30, pg. 24, 30.

²⁷⁹ Reginald Jebb, "False Gods," *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, May 1958 Issue, 51-55, pg. 53.

²⁸⁰ Charles Hull Wolfe, "Forgotten Commandment," *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, August 1956 Issue, 2-9, pg. 9. Like many other FEE authors, Wolfe also argued that charity must be voluntary to be truly Christian.

market, it is not only threatened everywhere, but it threatens Christianity, the spiritual foundation from which true freedom springs.

Even within the context of FEE's broader ideology, its focus on libertarian economics may seem unbalanced. If, after all, freedom was under attack from many different sides, why focus so much on economics? For FEE and its supporters the focus on the economy and economic education stemmed from the belief that the economy was foundational to other freedoms. As Opitz explained ""The Market Place is the cornerstone of society"²⁸¹ because ""economic activity is not merely the means to material ends; it is the means to all our ends."²⁸² In other words, ""The guarantee of religious freedom is worth little if the devotees are denied the economic means to build their temples, print their literature, and pay their spiritual guides."²⁸³ Read also often talked of the market and economics in similar language, arguing for the market's ability to free individuals to truly seek higher pursuits such as God and his truth.²⁸⁴ Opitz, Read and other religiously motivated FEE staffers and supporters focused on economics and the economy because, in their view and ideology, a free market was essential to preserve the other freedoms. Though freedom was indivisible, economic freedom ranked first among equals.

Though FEE spent a significant amount of time promoting and attacking specific economic ideas, its focus on "changing the climate" by changing American's underlying beliefs and attitudes was remarkably similar to the mission of the burgeoning evangelical movement. Both groups felt that their mission was to reform American society by focusing on individuals and their beliefs. Evangelicals such as Billy Graham came to prominence

²⁸¹ Edmund Opitz, "Politics in the Market Place," *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, November 1956 Issue, 30-37, pg. 30.

²⁸² "Capitalism and Our Culture," 33.

²⁸³ Edmund Opitz, "Socialism - Substance and Label," *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*, February 1960 Issue, 34-42, pg. 42.

²⁸⁴ See this chapter pg. 7

promoting activities, such as Graham's crusades, that called the individual to repentance and faith in Christ while promising such a turn to God would ultimately solve society's problems.²⁸⁵ Similarly, FEE focused on individual "salvation" as the key to society's problems. As W. H. Chamberlin put it "There can be no good society without good men. The cure for social evils is to train individuals to follow the path of righteousness."²⁸⁶ Chamberlin even used an evangelical flair for interpreting scripture to prove his point, arguing that Christ never used the government to fight the evils of his time. For Chamberlin, Christ's limited references to government and government power was not because "Jesus and Paul were ignorant of or indifferent to abuses of tyranny and slavery; but it was their conviction that the best and surest way to eliminate these abuses was by changing the sinful heart of the individual man."²⁸⁷ For both evangelicals and FEE, individuals were the key to reforming America.

In addition to their shared focus on reforming American society through individual "salvation," both groups foundationally believed and acted upon the belief that a revival or rebirth of the "old time" faith was necessary for the individuals, and eventually society, to change. For evangelicals this meant reviving faith in the theological concept of the divinity of Christ and his substitutionary atonement. FEE and its supporters, however, pushed for a broader idea of what constituted the faith that Americans needed to "return" to. As Opitz, Read and others laid out, the "faith of their fathers" was a faith in limited government and private property that sprang from a belief in God. In FEE's conception, a return to limited government and free market economics would entail, in essence, a return to faith in God and vice-versa. Thus, Opitz argued that FEE was seeking to "rehabilitate" the "religious

²⁸⁵ For more on Evangelicalism's emphasis on spiritual revival as the way to reform society see Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Matthew Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007)

²⁸⁶ "Ethics is Personal," 17.

²⁸⁷ "Ethics is Personal," 21.

factors” of America’s heritage by stressing “the belief that man is not wholly resolvable into a social being, that part of him is inviolable” as a child of God.²⁸⁸ Though FEE did not go so far as to argue for the necessity of embracing the theological conception of the divinity of Christ, that did not preclude evangelicals, such as J. Howard Pew, Frederick Nymeyer, Hans Sennholz and Verne Kaub from conflating FEE’s and evangelical Christianity’s missions. For them, spreading the gospel of economic individualism was spreading the Christian message; one would eventually lead to the other.

Conclusion

The Christian individualist basis of FEE’s ideology made it naturally attractive to many of those, such as evangelical Christians, who believed individual worth and action were at the core of Christ’s message. The natural congruence that many of these religiously-motivated individuals saw between their Christian faith and libertarian economics led them to enthusiastically back FEE, thus personally connecting FEE to the evangelical movement in a myriad of small but meaningful ways. At the organizational level FEE had several connections to the premiere evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* evidenced by using reprints from articles that *Christianity Today* published. Further J. Howard Pew, who served on FEE’s Board of Trustees till his death, not only worked with Billy Graham and Harold Ockenga to get *CT* up and running but also had his own articles published in both magazines. Pew, who also un-coincidentally was part of the National Association of Evangelicals “inner circle”²⁸⁹ and fellow evangelical businessman and FEE Trustee Jasper Crane, provided a direct connection at the highest levels between FEE and evangelicalism. Through connections both big and small FEE, because of its oft-times explicitly Christian individualism, brought libertarian economic theory, policies and ideology to those in the

²⁸⁸ “Declaration Against Itself,” 11.

²⁸⁹ *Bible Belt*, 122.

rapidly growing evangelical movement. These connections were of no small consequence as the evangelical movement grew to become the basis from which the more clearly political Religious Right of the 1970s and beyond drew its members.²⁹⁰

FEE's ability to appeal to both economic and religious conservatives made it a bridge between the two groups. It not only brought libertarian or laissez-faire economics to the religiously motivated, it brought "religion" to those on the economic right. The consistency with which FEE used religious language, imagery and justification in its seminars, talks and most importantly in *The Freeman* exposed those on the economic right to the spiritual principles and ideas of religious conservatives. Men like Ludwig Von Mises, Henry Hazlitt, Freidrich Hayek and others who little concerned themselves with religious questions thus came in contact with the ideology and beliefs that were at the heart of the evangelical movement in the United States. At the shallowest level FEE introduced evangelicals to the issues most pressing to those on the economic right and similarly familiarized those on the economic right to the language and concerns most prevalent among religious conservatives. FEE gave those on the economic right a language or "lingo" to reach the religiously motivated while allowing the religiously motivated to fit libertarian economic positions into their broader ideological vision through the medium of Christian individualism. Additionally, this shared space provided the underpinning for ideological cohesion in the early conservative movement. With men like Lemuel Boulware, Ronald Reagan, William Buckley and Carl Henry all reading, and at times contributing to, the same magazine it is small wonder that they all became part of the same political movement.

²⁹⁰ For more on how evangelical Christianity became the "sea" in which the "fish" of the Religious Right swam, please see Sara Dimond, *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998).

Read and the Foundation for Economic Education successfully propagated an ideology that served as a bridge between the economic and religious (or social) right. Starting from a belief in the Christian origins of individualism and arguing for the morality of the free market and the supremacy of spiritual principles in American life, Read and FEE brought about an ideology powerful enough to lend unity and cohesion to the early conservative movement. Through individual pamphlets, talks, presentations, and people like J. Howard Pew, Hans Sennholz²⁹¹ and Jasper Crane as well as through organization's like Edmund Opitz's *The Remnant*, Verne Kaub's American Council of Christian Laymen and most importantly *The Freeman* Read and FEE effectively disseminated their ideology on both the economic and religious "right." Though much of FEE's ideology sprang from theologically liberal roots, its focus on Christian individualism appealed to those who saw similarity with their own theologically conservative beliefs and emphasis. The bridge that Read and FEE helped build became even more essential when later organizations like the Cato Institute and the Moral Majority found themselves part of the same political movement. Without Read and FEE's pioneering efforts, the bridge that held such an alliance together would surely have crumbled.

²⁹¹ Hans Sennholz's wife, Mary, who shared his evangelical faith was a life-long employee at FEE and wrote what is currently the only biography of Leonard Read, *Leonard Read: Philosopher of Freedom*.

Chapter Four: The Spiritual Mobilization Network

In January 1947 Ohio Senator Robert Taft introduced a bill into the senate, co-sponsored by the entire Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, proposing to send federal tax dollars to state and local public educational institutions to help improve educational facilities across the country, particularly in the South. Specifically Taft's 14-page bill, known as S 472, proposed federal grants-in-aid to states that needed federal help to reach a \$40 per-child minimum in education spending. S 472 was the first time such a sweeping educational aid program had received so much high profile and bipartisan support. Naturally such a bill, which threatened to redefine the Federal government's relationship to education in America, made it a subject of heated debate both within congress and within the country at large. Unsurprisingly, those concerned about the growth and power of the federal government reacted with alarm to the bill. Two men, DuPont Chemical CEO Jasper Crane and Spiritual Mobilization co-founder and President of Carleton College Donald Cowling, embarked on a private campaign against the bill by targeting some of the Senates most influential members including, Alexander Smith (R-NJ), Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI) and Robert Taft (R-OH). Crane and Cowling's ability to coordinate such a high-level lobbying effort sprang from their mutual embrace of Spiritual Mobilization and their positions of influence in American life.

Without James W. Fifiield and his Spiritual Mobilization, Crane and Cowling would likely have never crossed paths. Cowling, like Fifiield an ordained Congregationalist minister, had devoted his career to higher education, serving on a number of national education committees in addition to his presidency of Carleton. While Crane intentionally moved in circles that went well beyond business groups, he had few contacts in higher education outside of those he knew through his alma mater, Princeton. It took Fifiield and Spiritual Mobilization to bring these like-believing men together. Crane had learned of Fifiield and Spiritual Mobilization in the early 1940s and was so enthusiastic about Fifiield and his program that he quickly became a major donor and personal friend of Fifiield, despite living nearly 3,000 miles away. In 1945 Crane wrote Cowling to arrange a

meeting as Fifield had mentioned Spiritual Mobilization's co-founder to Crane "several times."²⁹² Cowling, who was heading out East to take care of some business anyway, accepted Crane's invitation to stay with him. This initial meeting soon blossomed into a firm friendship that lasted until Cowling's death in 1964.

After their 1945 introduction, Cowling and Crane struck up a regular correspondence, comparing notes on everything from government, to corporations to the Federal Council of Churches. Crane encouraged Cowling to attend a Federal Council of Churches (FCC) conference as "some of us are trying, with considerable success, to have sound economics represented there by forceful advocates."²⁹³ Though Cowling was unable to attend, he did agree to address Crane's Union Club on "the necessity of maintaining and increasing private contributions from both individuals and corporations if our free society is to continue to function successfully."²⁹⁴ S 472, however, soon brought Crane and Cowling into much closer collaboration. By February of that year Cowling and Crane began making plans to lobby a number of political actors to persuade them that "there is nothing which will so completely transform our whole American way of life as federal control of education."²⁹⁵

Cowling's visit to Wilmington to address Crane's Union Club provided them with time to do some personal lobbying. First on Cowling and Crane's list were Senator John Bricker (R-OH) and Crane's personal friend John Foster Dulles. While they were able to visit Bricker and found him in agreement with their position, they were unable to meet with Dulles as he was out of the country.

²⁹² Jasper Crane to Donald Cowling, May 8, 1945, JEC Box 6, Cowling 1945-1958 Folder, Hagley Museum and Archives.

²⁹³ Jasper Crane to Donald Cowling, Jan 20, 1947, JEC, Box 6, Cowling Folder.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. Though Cowling was not able to attend the FCC conference, his response to Crane underscores how much their shared Spiritual Mobilization ideology revolved around attacking Social Gospel tenets. Cowling noted that "I have felt in sympathy to the Federal Council since it was first organized but I feel definitely opposed to the assumption which many of its leaders make that the method of accomplishing these socially desirable ends is through more and more concentration of political power in Washington." Donald Cowling to Jasper Crane, Jan 24, 1947, Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Donald Cowling to Jasper Crane, March 21, 1947, Ibid.

Though Cowling had to return to Minnesota, he and Crane did not give up. In April Crane sent a letter from Cowling to one of the bill's sponsors, Senator Alexander Smith, whom Crane also knew personally. This led to a rather lengthy exchange between Crane, Cowling and Smith debating the merits and pitfalls of federal aid to education.²⁹⁶ While Smith seemed unmoved by Crane and Cowling's arguments that such aid equaled federal control of education, he did agree to meet with Cowling to hear his pitch in person.²⁹⁷ Cowling coordinated another lobbying trip out East with Crane that also included meeting with Representative Walter Judd (R-MN), John Brickman (again) and Human Events editor Felix Morley.²⁹⁸ The trip also ended up including a visit with the bill's primary sponsor, Ohio Senator Robert Taft, whose views they felt belied his conservative reputation.²⁹⁹

In addition to Taft, Bricker, Smith and Judd they also reached out to another Crane friend, the powerful Arthur Vandenberg. Crane even enlisted the support of New York Representative Ralph Gwinn, who was a staunch supporter of FEE and good friend to Leonard Read, as well as Norman Vincent Peale's Committee on Constitutional Government. At one point, Crane and Cowling also personally met with former president Herbert Hoover, who gave their enterprise his blessing and suggested Cowling organize college presidents against federal aid to education as well as recruit Father John Cronin who "is not thoroughly sound...but is a leader in the fight against Communism." Demonstrating his full backing of their efforts Hoover even insisted that if they did

²⁹⁶ See JEC, Box 6, Cowling Folder.

²⁹⁷ Jasper Crane to Donald Cowling, July 7, 1947, Ibid. Crane was a little concerned about pushing Smith too hard as he did not want to ruin their friendship. Cowling assured him that he understood the necessity of delicacy and would not press Smith too hard as "Such friendships are among life's most precious experiences." See Donald Cowling to Jasper Crane July 18, 1947, Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Donald Cowling to Jasper Crane, November 28, 1947, JEC, Box 6, Cowling Folder.

²⁹⁹ Donald Cowling to Jasper Crane, December 17, 1947, Ibid. Cowling and Crane carried on about Taft and his "compromising" nature for a number of years. They both felt John Bricker was infinitely preferable to Taft.

get in touch with Cronin, “do not hesitate to use my name.”³⁰⁰ As far as conservatives, Cowling and Crane readily took their lobbying all the way to the top.³⁰¹

Cowling and Crane’s lobbying efforts provide an example of how Spiritual Mobilization proved a catalyst for unifying action on the nascent right. Through his organization and its ideology Fifield brought together men of influence, particularly businessmen, in common cause. These acts of movement building came about spontaneously, and as such are easily overlooked. Indeed, unless seen as part of a larger pattern Cowling and Crane’s friendship and political activism are little more than an interesting historical footnote. A close examination of the men most in agreement with Fifield, Spiritual Mobilization and concepts such as “pagan stateism” and Freedom Under God reveals that what at first appears simply interesting turns out to be essential to understanding how the conservative movement grew and came together. This chapter explores how Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization transformed the lives and relationships of a network of businessmen who played key roles in the formation of the conservative movement.³⁰²

In addition to demonstrating how the network came together and functioned, Crane’s collaboration with Cowling shows how much ideology motivated network members and their actions. As a businessman it is not at all surprising that Crane advocated for libertarian economic principles. Crane’s anti-statism, however, led him to oppose growing state power even in an area,

³⁰⁰ Jasper Crane to Donald Cowling, November 5, 1948, JEC, Box 6, Cowling Folder. Cowling, who lived in Minnesota, also met with Minnesota Governor Harold Stassen to get him to lead the anti-federal aid to education fight. Stassen, who had presidential ambitions, initially agreed, but quickly reversed course, probably to enhance his chances at the Republican nomination. See Nov 18, 1949 and Dec 6, 1949 Cowling to Crane, *Ibid*.

³⁰¹ S 472 did not pass in 1947, nor again in 1948. It did, however, become the basis of the education bill passed in 1949. Interestingly, one of the modifications to the bill’s language from Taft’s original bill prohibited the Federal Government from any “interference in educational administration, personnel, curriculum, instruction or teaching material.” While such language cannot be directly attributed to Crane and Cowling’s efforts, it is not insignificant that their concerns, which they repeatedly expressed to the senators with the most influence over the bill, were at least rhetorically addressed in the bill’s language. For more on the bill being sold as a “states-rights bill” see “School Aid Bills Cleared to Senate” *New York Times*, March 19, 1949, pg. 13.

³⁰² While the network included a broad range of people, many of who receive mention in this chapter, the primary actors I focus on in this chapter, or the core of the network, are B.E. Hutchinson, J. Howard Pew, Jasper Crane and William Mullendore.

education, where he did not have easily identifiable interests. While government intervention in the economy was clearly at the forefront of the network's concerns, the "pagan" nature of growing state power encompassed all areas of American life.

In its broadest sense the Spiritual Mobilization network was made up of individuals, acting in concert, who followed the ideology and *modus operandi* of James Fifeild's Spiritual Mobilization. Motivated by concepts such as "pagan stateism" and Freedom Under God, these men sought to change America's political, social and particularly economic life by focusing on spiritual principles and by seeking to change protestant ministers theology and ideology. In this sense the network encompassed a wide array of conservative actors, including individuals such as Leonard Read, Edmund Opitz and James Ingebretsen as well as organization such as Spiritual Mobilization and the Foundation for Economic Education. However, The defining features of the core of the network consisted of protestant *businessmen* who shared an ideology and approach to American life found in Fifeild's Spiritual Mobilization. The shared vocation, socio-economic status, gender and ideology of this group had profound implications for their worldview. These shared traits brought them into a close fellowship where they acted in concert on a range of issues and in a variety of areas. The social aspects of their relationship, dictated by their commonalities, shaped how they acted and reacted to the world around them. While never formalized in any sense, their network exerted tremendous influence in American life, in large part because of its social aspects. These men were not original thinkers. While they read and discussed broadly, they were men of action who took the ideas and activities of others and connected them with a larger movement. Animated by their Spiritual Mobilization inspired worldview, they sought to fundamentally alter America's political, economic and social life through its spiritual life.

Traditional accounts of conservatism tend to focus on the disparate intellectual, political and grass-roots efforts on the right and note their individual, and seemingly tangentially related

contributions to the conservative movement. Looking at the conservative movement through the high level of politics and intellectuals or more grass-roots activists obscures the networks, such as the Spiritual Mobilization network of businessmen, which were the heart of the movement.

Looking at this network of middlemen, sandwiched between the politicians and intellectuals on one hand and the grass-roots activists on the other, reveals the unifying force behind the conservative movement. These middlemen corresponded with and often funded the intellectuals and the grass-roots activists and provided a real connection between those attempting to steer the movement from above, and those scrambling for political action on specific issues below. In addition to helping integrate the movement from top-to-bottom, they also provided the key connections that brought disparate groups into something of a big tent. Building off the ideological work of men like Fifield, Leonard Read, and Edmund Opitz this network of businessmen, committed to laissez-faire economics and religious concepts such as Christian individualism and Freedom Under God, were ideological disseminators as well as coordinators of political, economic, religious and social action. Their positions of prominence in the religious, economic and political life of the country enabled them to exert influence beyond their limited numbers. Their beliefs, money, time, and efforts are what quietly and almost indiscernibly stitched together individuals and groups who otherwise had no formal contact or coordination. Examining these men, their wide-ranging activities and their voluminous correspondence reveals the heart of a movement.

From Business Network to Spiritual Mobilization Network: NAM and the Christian Capitalists

No group is more readily visible in the literature of economic conservatism in the early postwar period than the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). In the mid-twentieth century NAM was the center of political and ideological opposition to the New Deal among economic conservatives. Under NAM's leadership economic conservatives successfully curtailed many of the gains organized labor made under the New Deal's Wagner Act by passing the hugely influential

Taft-Hartley Act.³⁰³ Culturally, NAM successfully “sold” free enterprise to the American public in the defining decade after World War II by framing the debate over America’s economic system in terms of “The American Way of Life.”³⁰⁴ While its political and cultural achievements are impressive, NAM’s ability to reinvent itself and become a key networking node during the Great Depression left a deeper impression on the economic and political life of the country. In the postwar era, the network of business leaders that NAM enabled became central in the rise of the so-called New Right.

In 1933 the National Association of Manufacturers faced an organizational, cultural and ideological crisis. The Great Depression’s destruction of the public’s confidence in businessmen and corporations extended to businessmen themselves. NAM members were so shaken by their change in fortunes that the once thriving membership list of over 5,000 businesses had shrunk to less than 1500 with resignations averaging 65 a month.³⁰⁵ Into the leadership void created by this crisis of confidence stepped a group of corporate leaders informally known as the “Brass Hats.” As heads of major corporations including NAM president Robert Lund of Lambert Pharmaceutical, Tom Gridler of Republic Steel and Charles Hook of American Rolling Company, the Brass Hats lent NAM a decidedly Big Business flavor.³⁰⁶ Additionally, the majority of the Brass Hats hailed from the steel industry known for its uncompromising stance against organized labor. While NAM had long been known for its anti-labor bent, particularly for its attack on union power in “closed shops,” the Brass Hats brought a higher level of anti-labor focus. Together they implemented hardline anti-labor

³⁰³Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 102, 114-122. Andrew Workman, “Manufacturing Power: The Organizational Revival of the National Association of Manufacturers, 1941-1945” (*Business History Review*; Summer 1998; 72, 2; pgs 279-317).

³⁰⁴ See Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994) and Wendy Wall, *Inventing the “American Way”: The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³⁰⁵ Richard S. Tedlow, “The National Association of Manufacturers and Public Relations during the New Deal” (*The Business History Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Spring, 1976), pp. 25-45), 29.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

initiatives by instituting a strategy of increasing public relations efforts while centralizing power within the corporate dominated NAM Board of Directors.³⁰⁷

The sweeping change in NAM's culture that the Brass Hats' ideological conservatism and organizational retooling facilitated not only laid the foundation for its future legislative success, but attracted business support at an incredible rate. Within two years of Lund and the Brass Hats taking over the organization, its membership list more than doubled to over 3,500. In addition to quantity, the new culture and direction the Brass Hats lent NAM attracted or reactivated such economic and ideological heavy-weights as B.E. Hutchinson of Chrysler, Jasper Crane of DuPont Chemical and J. Howard Pew of Sun Oil. As Christian individualists Hutchinson, Crane, Pew and other new NAM leaders shared the Brass Hats anti-labor proclivities. They saw unions as anti-individualist, or collectivist, and decried union shops for violating individual desires, consciences and contracts. This ideological agreement along with their general economic conservatism led Hutchinson, Crane, Pew and others to readily lend their money, prestige and time to the organization.³⁰⁸

This new band of NAM leaders came together under trying circumstances for economic conservatives. After the collapse of the Liberty League in 1936, NAM became the only organization with any national pull outside of the Republican Party actively opposing the New Deal's labor and economic policies. Under the leadership of the Brass Hats NAM became a refuge of last resort for businessmen opposed to the New Deal. (Re)Born in the depths of the Great Depression, the new NAM became the central node for a network of business leaders that would prove essential to the organizational and ideological formation of the conservative movement.

³⁰⁷ Workman, "Manufacturing Power..." 9-11; Tedlow, "Public Relations..." 31-33.

³⁰⁸ For more on NAM's anti-labor reputation, and particularly for its leadership in the first two "open-shop" movements, see Amy Wallhermfecht, "Shaping the Right to Work: The Cecil B. DeMille Foundation's Role in National and State Right-to-Work Campaigns," (Ph.D., Dissertation, Saint Louis University, 2014).

Foremost in that network was the inescapable John Howard Pew. By the 1930s Pew was one of the most respected businessmen in America. Born in 1882 Howard, as he preferred to be called, became the head of his father's oil business at the young age of 30. He quickly showed a knack for heading a major corporation, improving the company's refining, marketing and distribution systems while expanding its holdings. Even in the Great Depression Pew was able to steer the company to produce a profit. Sun Oil's success gave Pew the financial base and confidence to become one of the most visible and vocal business leaders in the Liberty League, regularly speaking on its behalf and writing pamphlets to support its economic positions.³⁰⁹ After watching the Liberty League's journey to political insignificance, a chastened Pew directed his energy to helping NAM avoid the same fate, vowing to keep his influence in NAM and other political, social and economic organizations as behind the scenes as possible. Though reluctant to play too visible a role in NAM, Pew would serve in a variety of leadership positions from the Board of Directors to heading up NAM's big spending Public Relations Committee in the immediate postwar period.

Similarly B.E. Hutchinson rose to corporate prominence before the Great Depression, serving as what in modern parlance would be the Chief Financial Officer of the Chrysler Corporation from 1921 till his retirement in 1955. Hutchinson, known for his affable personality and people skills, successfully retired Chrysler's long-term debt in the midst of the Great Depression by forcing Chrysler's bankers to give Chrysler new, low-interest loans that he used to pay off the old debt. Like Pew, he became increasingly active in NAM in the 1930s, assuming a leadership position on the Board of Directors as a noted conservative heavyweight.³¹⁰

Crane, a long-time friend and associate of Pew's, in part because of their shared Wilmington address and membership in the Liberty League, followed Pew and Hutchinson's career path. He

³⁰⁹ George Wolfskill, *The Revolt of the Conservatives: A History of the Liberty League 1934-1940* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), 68-69.

³¹⁰ Workman, "Manufacturing Power...", 15. Hutchinson would eventually resign from NAM in 1947 after NAM took what he considered to be too soft of a position on taxes.

achieved prominence at the DuPont chemical company before the Great Depression, eventually heading the company during WW II. Crane, who physically resembled President Truman's Secretary of State Dean Acheson, was noted for his hobby of cultivating rose bushes. Though diplomatic in his approach, Crane espoused economic positions as extreme as any Libertarian. He not only served on NAM's Board of Directors, but he was also the longest serving chairman of NAM's Church-Industry Relations Committee, heading it starting its third year of existence in 1943 until well into the 1950s.

The similar career paths of Pew, Crane and Hutch and their positions of prominence in the country's economic life suggest why they never abandoned their faith in free enterprise. Like Fifield all three men found financial and professional success during the Great Depression, success they ascribed to following proper moral and spiritual principles. While the Depression led them to support or at least tolerate some change in the capitalist base of the country, they never felt the effects of the depression in the same way as most other Americans. While regrettable, the Great Depression was not a transforming experience for them. It did not supersede the periods of prosperity that they felt demonstrated the true potential of "The American Way of Life." Much like Fifield, their individual success convinced them that if they could do it, anyone could do it and thus it was folly to dramatically change government policies based on what they considered an economic aberration. For them the real tragedy of the Great Depression was not in the suffering it caused, but the moral weakness it evoked as evidenced by Americans' acceptance of growing government power. Thus they saw themselves as the keepers of an old, time-tested tradition battling the reactionary forces unleashed by the Great Depression.

The socio-economic and cultural standing of men such as Pew, Hutch, Crane and Mullendore makes their embrace of anti-statism, particularly economic anti-statism, seem motivated by callous self-interest. While their pocketbooks most certainly played a part in their politics, these men

frequently put principle before practicality demonstrating that their core, motivating beliefs were not window dressing for some kind of Marxian false consciousness. As evangelicals all of them agreed on the evils of liquor and supported temperance. Despite their support for temperance they did not go so far as to advocate for using state power to enforce their moral beliefs. Indeed many of them joined or supported the pro-temperance, anti-Prohibition organization The Crusaders. Their distaste for government enforced Prohibition was so strong that when a previous leader in the Prohibition movement sought their support, Crane replied that “your prominence in the Anti-Saloon League might militate against your leadership in the fight for Liberty.” Crane then took him to task for “fighting the dreadful evil of the saloon” by “invoking the power of the state to enforce total abstinence.” Such actions were “contrary to the principle of Liberty and the end did not justify the means.” Even in areas of great moral concern, using the power of the state violated an even greater moral imperative.³¹¹

Though their similar career paths and membership in NAM brought Pew, Crane and Hutch together because of their shared economic opinions, their relationship and network took on a different emphasis after the mutual discovery of Spiritual Mobilization. After James Fifield officially incorporated his free enterprise promoting Spiritual Mobilization in 1942, Pew, who had been aware of Fifield since 1940, quickly increased his support and involvement. Fifield’s concept of pagan stateism and his defense of the Christianity of capitalism appealed to the devout Presbyterian Pew. Pew became an intimate supporter of Spiritual Mobilization and began a friendship with Fifield that would last until his death in 1971. Crane, who like Pew was also a devout Presbyterian, similarly began corresponding with and supporting Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization in 1942, most likely at the behest of Pew. Though Hutchinson, or “Hutch” as his friends called him, was not as immediate in his support as Crane and Fifield, by 1947 the dedicated Episcopalian was an ardent enough supporter of Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization that he accepted an invitation to head its

³¹¹ April 9, 1947 Jasper Crane to William Anderson, JEC, Box 1, Folder A.

businessmen's committee.³¹² Their shared support for Spiritual Mobilization's emphasis on spiritual over economic or political solutions drew them closer together and introduced them to other businessmen with a similar worldview such as former assistant to Herbert Hoover and president of Southern California Edison Co. William Mullendore.³¹³

In addition to their support for Fifield's theological ideology, their association with NAM deepened their interest in Fifield's pastor-targeting Spiritual Mobilization. As Assistant Director of NAM's Public Relations Committee in 1946 and 1947, Pew authorized a number of surveys examining the sources of America's perceived leftward social and economic drift. The surveys concluded that the single greatest influence in America was the clergy, and that the clergy had been "doing more toward promoting Socialism and Communism than any other group."³¹⁴ Such a conclusion was in perfect step with Fifield's own analysis of the situation and bolstered his standing among the group. The surveys became a second witness of sorts to Fifield's program, an independent verification that Fifield was indeed focusing on the problem at its most basic and fundamental level. A fundraising appeal Hutch penned for Spiritual Mobilization in 1946 underscores this point. In it he stated his conviction that the country needed to get its spiritual life straight "has been increasingly confirmed by the discovery that a growing circle of my friends and acquaintances hold a similar view."³¹⁵ From that time forward, Hutch, Pew and their companions placed influencing the clergy of America first in their list of priorities. The mission and purpose of Fifield's Spiritual Mobilization, which they had always supported, became their own.

³¹² "A History of Spiritual Mobilization," pg. 20, Series I, Subseries A, Box 70, Folder 14, James Ingebretsen Papers (JCI), University of Oregon Special Collections.

³¹³ Mullendore was the businessman who "converted" Leonard Read to Libertarian economics and became a life-long mentor to Read and board member to Read's Foundation for Economic Education. For more on Mullendore and Read see Gregory Eow, "Fighting a New Deal: Intellectual Origins of the Reagan Revolution, 1932-1952 (Ph.D., Dissertation, Rice University, 2007), Chapter 3 "Leonard Read and the Foundation for Economic Education."

³¹⁴ J. Howard Pew to Herbert Kohler, September 5, 1961, J. Howard Pew Papers (JHP), Box 184, CFF 1961 Folder, Hagley Museum and Archives.

³¹⁵ "An Appeal to the Religious Forces of America," Sept 1, 1946, Spiritual Mobilization Pamphlet, B.E. Hutchinson Papers (BEH), Hoover Institute, Box 9.

What initially came together through the National Association of Manufacturers as a network of economic conservatives transformed into a religious fellowship dedicated to propagating what they all agreed were essential underlying spiritual and moral considerations to America's economic, social and political life. Within a few years, this network based on shared support for the principles of Spiritual Mobilization rarely exchanged a letter without noting their collective belief in the supremacy of spiritual principles or some restatement of the relationship between Christianity and capitalism. So profound were these convictions that when Pew, inspired by Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization, began the process of setting up what became the Christian Freedom Foundation³¹⁶, he turned to the Spiritual Mobilization network of businessmen for advice, council and contributions. Pew's plans and efforts reinforced the mutuality of the Spiritual Mobilization network's worldview. For example, in one exchange between Pew and Hutch in 1948 Hutch noted that "I fully share what I understand to be your conviction, viz that our country's difficulties – or the whole world's for that matter – have their roots in mankind's spiritual poverty, and that our only real hope for salvation lies in a spiritual regeneration of our society, in a 'revival' if you please."³¹⁷ While they never abandoned NAM's goal of combating New Deal labor and economic policies, their focus shifted to a spiritual solution as a necessary pre-condition to changing America's political and economic life.

Even though the shift in priorities and ideology among those in the Spiritual Mobilization network brought a new level of agreement and coordination, the network was more than a group of businessmen that shared similar economic, political or even spiritual philosophies. At heart its genius and effectiveness was that it became a social network of confidants and friends. There was a remarkable degree of trust and intimacy between those in the network, despite living sometimes thousands of miles apart in an age when the telephone had not fully caught on and mail and

³¹⁶ For more on the Christian Freedom Foundation and its importance to the modern conservative movement, please see Chapter 4.

³¹⁷ B.E. Hutchinson to J. Howard Pew, July 16, 1948, JHP, Box 34, FEE Folder 2.

telegram were the single most important forms of communication. Correspondence and mail exchanges regularly passed from hand to hand. For example, after Jasper Crane began a lively and voluminous correspondence with Libertarian Fury and intellectual Rose Wilder Lane, he passed his exchanges on to Pew who in turn passed them on to Hutch.³¹⁸ Frequently, letters would end with a note to pass it along to another member of the network.³¹⁹ When one network member ran across a pamphlet or book they felt important or enlightening, particularly if it had to do with religion, economics, politics or their relationship, they sent a copy to the others.³²⁰ Those in the network were close enough that they frequently went on vacation together.³²¹ As then Spiritual Mobilization president James Ingebretsen wrote Crane “One of the most rewarding parts of the work to which my life is now committed is the quality of the lasting friendships which grow out of concern for the future of our beloved church and country.” Even more revealing of the cohesive nature of the network and its close association with NAM, Ingebretsen went on to note “I had long visits with Hutch and saw Pew several times between the sessions of the NAM meeting. I was sorry not to see you too.”³²² The fact that Ingebretsen knew to mention Hutch and Pew as well as his surprise at not seeing Crane at the NAM meeting speaks volumes about the relationship between them, and between Spiritual Mobilization and NAM.

The cohesion of the network, their interest in disseminating spiritual principles and their positions in the spiritual, economic and political life of the country made them influential beyond their limited numbers. Given their leadership roles, unsurprisingly, the network exerted the greatest influence over NAM culture and activities. Pew used NAM resources to study the clergy

³¹⁸ See BEH, Box 1. Crane and Lane’s correspondence was later published as a book .

³¹⁹ For example see William Mullendore to Leonard Read April 21, 1952, Leonard Read Papers, William C. Mullendore Folder, Foundation for Economic Education Archives (FEE).

³²⁰ For example Pew sent Crane a copy of Dr. Edward L.R. Elson’s book *America’s Spiritual Recovery*, Elson was President Dwight D Eisenhower’s Pastor. See J. Howard Pew to Jasper Crane October 28, 1954, JHP, Box 37, Folder C.

³²¹ For example Fifield notes that the Pews and the Cranes were headed to Europe together in his July 8, 1957 letter to Pew. James W Fifield to J. Howard Pew, July 8, 1957, JHP, Box 54, Fifield Folder.

³²² James Ingebretsen to Jasper Crane, Dec 15, 1956, JCI, Box 51, Folder 17.

and their role in American Liberalism, while Crane increased the budget for the Church and Industry committee and used the committee to reach both NAM members and clergy with his Spiritual Mobilization inspired message.³²³ Their influence is readily discernable in the speeches and writings of various NAM presidents from Charles Sligh's "Christianity and Business" to William Grede's constant assertion that libertarian economics was simply "getting on with the revolution" in individualism that Christ started, an idea which he credited to Hutch.³²⁴ Similarly, in 1946 Crane teamed up with US Senator Albert Hawkes of New Jersey along with original Brass Hat Charles Hook and fellow NAMer Edward Little to host what was essentially a fundraising dinner for Fifiield and Spiritual Mobilization. The invitation noted that America faced a "grave crisis," and that while "the economic and political aspects" of the crisis are "more clearly visible and better understood," at the dinner Fifiield would outline the more important "moral and spiritual challenge to the nation which lies beneath the surface of these materialistic conflicts."³²⁵ The network regularly hosted such dinners and sent out similar fundraising appeals to a wide-swath of America's business community through their NAM contacts. By the mid-1950s no fewer than 2 NAM presidents and 13 members of the Board of Directors were regularly contributing time, money and occasionally publications to Fifiield's Spiritual Mobilization.³²⁶ Clearly Spiritual Mobilization and its ideology seeped into the core of NAM's culture and beliefs.

³²³ Crane eventually organized regional conferences that brought together clergy and NAM representatives to give them management's side of the story. Crane regularly addressed these conferences on topics such as "God and the Welfare State," which featured attacks on pagan stateism and arguments for libertarian economics as ensuring Freedom Under God. He further oversaw the printing and distribution of a newsletter to both clergy and businessmen entitled "Understanding" that contained similar articles and arguments. For more on Crane and NAM's Committee on Church and Industry see, Box 163, Church and Industry Folder 1941-1955, National Association of Manufacturers Papers (NAM), Hagley Museum and Archives.

³²⁴ For Sligh see Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen's Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 74. For a detailed analysis of Grede, including his support for Spiritual Mobilization, see James McKay "God's Market: Christianity and Capitalism in the Ideology of the Emerging New Right" (MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008).

³²⁵ Albert Hawkes to Jasper Crane September 30, 1946, JEC, Box 41, H 1926-1946 Folder.

³²⁶ William Grede, president of NAM from 1951-1953, and H.W. Prentiss, president of NAM 1940-1942, both sent yearly checks to Spiritual Mobilization with Prentiss contributing quotes and other written works to Spiritual Mobilization's *Faith and Freedom*. Those who served in leadership capacities within NAM and were

Christian Capitalists in America's Economic Life

As their leadership in NAM indicates, network members operated at the center of America's economy and debates about its economic life. Their standing within economic and national life gave them real power and influence, power and influence they consistently leveraged to spread their beliefs and ideology. They had connections with virtually all Right-leaning economic advocacy lobbies and think tanks. These men were literally the "whose who" of economic conservatives and acted the part. In addition to their influence in NAM, network members played key roles in founding and supporting Leonard Read's Foundation for Economic Education, helped found and serve on the board of the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, worked with William "Bill" Baroody and the American Economic Association (now American Economic Institute), and had leadership roles in the Detroit Economic Council as well as numerous smaller advocacy and issue groups.

Through their leadership in NAM and their influence and connections with other institutions of economic conservatism, network members held a place of prominence in the nascent economic right. These connections and this influence among coalescing conservative economic groups strengthened the bridge that Spiritual Mobilization and FEE built between economic and religious conservatives by bringing a unity and coherence to those struggling to build a movement on the right. Network members imparted their worldview to those they came in contact with among both economic and religious conservatives, ensuring a broad dissemination of their beliefs, principles and values.

The presence and leadership of Spiritual Mobilization network members like Pew, Crane, Hutch and Mullendore on the economic right gives insight into the formation of economic and

part of the Spiritual Mobilization network included James Clise, Charles Hook, Charles White, Howard Buffett (Father of Warren Buffet), Donaldson Brown, Pierre Goodrich, Harvey Firestone, Ben Moreel, Noel Sargent and of course Pew, Crane, Hutch and Mullendore.

religious conservatism and the foundations of the modern conservative movement. Network members relationship with the American Economic Foundation (AEF) and the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS) demonstrates how they exerted their influence and helped bring economic and religious conservatism into the same movement. Fred Clark founded the AEF in 1939 when his leadership of the anti-prohibition turned anti-New Deal organization The Crusaders convinced him that Americans were economically illiterate.³²⁷ The AEF's efforts, particularly its pro-free enterprise radio show "Wake Up America!" quickly caught the attention of network members Crane, Pew and Hutch, who began financially backing Clark's foundation.³²⁸ With the solid financial backing of those in the network, among others, Clark was able to make more than 200 radio broadcasts over the six-year period of 1940-1946. Additionally, the AEF's economic primer "How We Live" sold over 3 million copies during the 1940s and 1950s and the AEF sent out a steady stream of pamphlets including a newsletter entitled "The Economic Facts of Life" many of which were used in schools, businesses and clubs across the country.³²⁹

Despite its stated mission to educate Americans about the economy, Clark, Rimanoczy and the AEF soon became firmly part of the Spiritual Mobilization network, working closely with Crane, Hutch and especially Pew. In many ways Clark's AEF took its orders from Pew and the network. Not only did Clark refer to Pew as "Chief" in his letters, he and the AEF frequently carried out

³²⁷ The Crusaders was progressive in the sense that it was for temperance, though it argued for voluntary temperance rather than state-imposed temperance. It spent most of its resources attacking Prohibition as counter-productive and threatening to individual initiative. After the repeal of the 18th amendment, Clark turned the group's focus to various New Deal programs that he thought equally as dangerous to individual action.

³²⁸ Though it is not clear exactly how much money they gave, Crane donated somewhere between \$5000 and \$10,000 to Clark's radio program in one year. See Fred Clark to Jasper Crane, August 26, 1942, JEC, Box 1, American Economic Foundation Folder.

³²⁹ AMERICAN ECONOMIC FOUNDATION - The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History at <http://ech.case.edu/cgi/article.pl?id=AEF> accessed 1-24-2014. Clark continued to run the AEF until his death in 1973. Even after his demise, the AEF limped along, though it mainly confined its activities to keeping up a mailing list of a few thousand members. In the early 90s it sought to reprint "How We Live" in seven languages and sent fellows to post-Soviet Russia to plug free market principles. Clark's impact on the economic right still lingers as the foundation's writings make appearances in the conservative media. For example, conservative columnist and radio host Kevin Price, who served as an AEF fellow in the 90s and traveled to Russia under its aegis, still refers to Clark's writings. See <http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/price/090726>.

investigatory work that Pew and Crane requested.³³⁰ When Pew wanted a close inspection of Fifield's Spiritual Mobilization in 1942, he asked Clark to do it. Clark then dispatched AEF employee Alfred Haake to the West coast to carry out some foundation business and report back on Fifield. Haake came away so impressed with Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization that he eventually joined the organization, and helped convince Pew in the soundness of his "investment." Clark and Richard "Dick" Rimanoczy also took part in Spiritual Mobilization conferences and closely coordinated their efforts with Pew and Howard Kershner's Christian Freedom Foundation. Clark's relationship with the CFF and Kershner grew so close he contributed a number of articles to *Christian Economics* and gave an address at the CFF's 1952 annual meeting, titled "Not by Bread Alone."³³¹ Clark, Rimanoczy and the AEF became such an integral part of the network that they joined in the network's practice of exchanging reading material and worked with network members in their efforts to "educate" leaders of the Federal Council of Churches. In short, on its face the AEF was simply a right-leaning economic advocacy group, behind the curtains, however, it was driven by Spiritual Mobilization's principles and as involved in its mission as it was involved in spreading the "Economic Facts of Life."³³²

The Spiritual Mobilization network's relationship with the Mont Pelerin Society similarly demonstrates how they tried to spread their spiritually based ideology in an organization focused on economics. The network's entry into the MPS came from Leonard Read and FEE's close ties to MPS president Freidrich Hayek. These ties meant FEE and Spiritual Mobilization devotees made up the second largest group of Americans to join the MPS in its early years, trailing only those associated with the University of Chicago.³³³ This group sought not only to join the society, but also

³³⁰ Fred Clark to J Howard Pew, April 12, 1950, JHP, Box 180, CFF Folder.

³³¹ April 24, 1952 CFF Annual meeting agenda, Box 6, FEE Folder, Howard Kershner papers (HK), University of Oregon Special Collections.

³³² Also true to the network's pattern, Clark would frequently travel to NAM events to meet and coordinate with network members. See Fred Clark to Jasper Crane, September 24, 1945, JEC, Box 1, American Economic Foundation Folder.

³³³ "Fighting a New Deal," 158; *Invisible Hands*, 55.

to influence it. Then Spiritual Mobilization vice-president James Ingebretsen was one of the MPS's earliest members, enthusiastically attending meetings for its first decade, in part to scope out the MPS's potential to help in Spiritual Mobilization's mission. Ingebretsen came away impressed with the MPS's potential, so much so that within a few years he was actively lobbying the MPS to explore justifications for neoliberalism on "more than just economic grounds."³³⁴ Read, Crane, Pew and Grede joined him in his efforts. Together they somewhat unconsciously made their big push at the society's first meeting in the US in 1958. The meeting proved ideal to their purposes because of its location and because Hayek heavily relied on their (financial) support.³³⁵ In addition to lobbying Hayek and other society leaders to move the MPS to consider moral and religious grounds, Grede gave an address at the conference on "The Moral Effects of the Welfare State." Even Felix Morley, who knew and corresponded with network members like Crane and Hutch, demonstrated his affinity for their worldview by arguing in his address before that MPS that the society needed to develop a deeper moral philosophy rather than just "harmonize the professional thinking" of "economists of many nationalities."³³⁶

Even after the conference network members continued to press their point. For example, Pew wrote to Hayek giving his opinion of the meeting and noting that he was "a little bit shocked at the discussions on the Welfare State and on Inflation because, according to my book, these are primarily moral problems."³³⁷ Through the instrumentality of Pew, *Christian Economics* editor Howard Kershner joined the society in 1960. In a report to Pew about the MPS's 1961 meeting he noted that "I made a short talk yesterday and another one today, introducing moral and religious

³³⁴ James Ingebretsen to James Fifield, May 17, 1956, JCI, Box 54, Folder 29.

³³⁵ For more on network members' role in the early MPS, particularly its 1958 meeting see *Invisible Hands* 41-51.

³³⁶ Felix Morley, "The Meaning of Freedom," JHP, Box 61, MPS Folder. As Angus Burgin points out, such philosophizing was actively encouraged in the MPS's early years with Hayek himself trying to tie his economics to a social philosophy. In addition to his connection with network members, Morley also had direct ties to Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization as well as to Howard Kershner and *Christian Economics*. See Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets Since the Depression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

³³⁷ J. Howard Pew to Friedrich Hayek, October 17, 1958, JHP, Box 61, MPS Folder.

values into the discussions here...It is very urgent that we bring to the attention of this Society the very great importance of moral values as the only foundation upon which economic problems can be solved satisfactorily.” Kershner finished his report by noting with satisfaction “I think I made a substantial impression on the group as I received a fair amount of applause and the approval of a substantial number of people who spoke to me afterwards.”³³⁸ Though their efforts did not lead to any radical changes in the MPS, the presence of such a large number of men holding to the Spiritual Mobilization line in economics suggests that the MPS’s appeal went beyond economic policy and jargon. Embedded in the premiere transnational Neo-Liberal think-tank was a group of men dedicated to explaining libertarian economics in terms of religious values and beliefs.

Spiritual Mobilization network members were movers and shakers among economic conservatives. Their leadership and connections among America’s business community put them at the center of America’s economic life and gave them outsized influence in debates about the country, and the world’s, economy. They were not the Milton Friedmans and Freidrich Hayeks of their time, but they knew, corresponded with and financially supported such luminaries, connecting them to America’s business community. They also represented American business and American business opinion to such men, giving these intellectuals a Spiritual Mobilization tinted prism through which to gaze at the business community. Their views on the supremacy of moral and spiritual values in affecting and understanding economic outcomes penetrated even the most professional and “secular” economic groups of the day. They were the chords that connected the arguments and advocacy of groups like the Mont Pelerin Society and the National Association of Manufacturers to a broader movement and ideology.

³³⁸ Howard Kershner to J Howard Pew, September 11, 1961, JHP, Box 184, CFF, Folder, JHP.

The Gender of a Network

One striking though not culturally unusual characteristic of the NAM-centered Spiritual Mobilization network was that it was made up of men. Although Pew et al had extended the network beyond their immediate circle by sharing their ideology and coordinating their efforts with men like Edmund Opitz, Leonard Read and Fred Clark, the core of the network remained *businessmen*. In many ways this network was the epitome of a “good old boys” club; wealthy, elite, educated men whose sense of fraternity led them to take every opportunity to help out their “own.” Reading through their correspondence at times feels like sitting in the lounge of a men only country club.

As a group, they had a complicated relationship with gender roles, particularly as it pertained to women in public and professional life. Most of the network members corresponded with and respected women such as Rose Wilder Lane, Isabel Patterson, Lucille Crain and Ayn Rand. The fact of their womanhood did not seem to diminish network member’s respect for their intellect and abilities. Pew respected Lane so much that when she suggested a cause was worthy of support, Pew would unhesitatingly support it. As he wrote to fellow businessmen William Grede “Anything that Mrs. Lane supports is apt to be sound.”³³⁹ Crane shared Pew’s opinion of Lane, as attested to by the voluminous correspondence between them. Crane also encouraged Ayn Rand in her early years, noting with satisfaction her burning zeal for “individualism.”³⁴⁰

There is also some evidence that network members went beyond respecting the intellect of a few women to quietly advocate for a larger role for women in public and professional life. Crane made room in his ideology for the emancipation of both African-Americans from slavery through the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments and the “emancipation” of women through the vote-granting

³³⁹ J Howard Pew to William Grede, May 22, 1959, William Grede Papers, Box 7, Folder 6, Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS).

³⁴⁰ Jasper Crane to Fred Clark, August 29, 1945, Box 1, American Economic Foundation Folder, JEC.

19th amendment.³⁴¹ This is particularly noteworthy as Crane often criticized most of the other constitutional amendments that had been passed since the Bill of Rights, including Prohibition. For Crane, all of these 4 amendments were testament to the progressive march towards Freedom that characterized the United States, at least until the New Deal.

Similarly, Pew quietly promoted women manufacturers within NAM by conspiring with outspoken businesswoman Vivien Kellems to not only bring her into NAM, but also try to get her appointed to NAM's board. Kellems correspondence with Pew and NAM executive committee Chairman F.C. Crawford is quite revealing. When Crawford wrote Kellems to ask her to apply for membership in NAM, she responded "I see no point in my joining the National Association of Manufacturers nor would I ask any of the other women manufacturers in this country to do so until women are accorded a place in your organization." Kellems concluded her letter by noting that "I have discussed this matter with Mr. Howard Pew two or three times and feel sure that he is in accord with my viewpoint."³⁴² Crawford, recognizing Kellem's influence as well as her reference to Pew quickly wrote back to assure her that women were more than welcome in NAM. He argued that women had a place in NAM as evidenced by a Mrs. L. B. Saymen serving on NAM's Home and Industry Committee. He further assured her that "I believe that women can and will make a real contribution to NAM."³⁴³ In her reply accepting Crawford's assurances Kellems noted that "It is easy to see why Mrs. Crawford didn't say 'No.' With your persuasive powers I would not be at all surprised to see every manufacturer in the United States rush into the arms of the [NAM] without delay." Despite starting off with a gendered metaphor that cast her in the womanly role of being wooed, Kellems did sign off by noting, "Women manufacturers are interested not only in Home and Industry, but also such subjects as taxation, reconversion and countless government restrictions."

³⁴¹ Jasper Crane to Donald Cowling, April 16, 1948, Box 6, Cowling 1945-1958 Folder, JEC.

³⁴² Vivien Kellems to F. C. Crawford, June 27, 1945, JHP, Box 7, K Folder.

³⁴³ F. C. Crawford to Vivien Kellems, August 1, 1945, JHP, Box 7, K Folder.

³⁴⁴ As this exchange demonstrates, sexism was still culturally the norm of the time, which is why Crawford felt no embarrassment in sharing that women had a place in NAM, at least on the Home and Industry committee. It also shows that while Pew was not loud or overt about it, he sensed that NAM needed to be more welcoming of women, and thus quietly threw his support behind Kellems. Finally, this exchange is a fascinating study of a proto-feminist walking a careful line between making her case for the advancement of women without coming across as pushy or radical. She intentionally cast herself in a position that culturally resonated as “womanly” while still making clear that women had interests outside of home and family.

Despite aligning themselves with the “emancipation” of women and overturning convention by promoting women in NAM, network members were far from the front lines on women’s issues. Though they corresponded with and respected women like Lane and Rand, such women fell decidedly outside of their fraternal circle of businessmen. Kellems, who shared a similar outlook, ideology and profession, should have fit in perfectly with the network. However, despite some general support for her efforts to promote free enterprise and to see her join NAM, Kellems never got close to any of the network members. Additionally, Pew seemed fine with the occasional exceptional women heading up a company, but he noted in his correspondence with Kellems that “the future of the race is dependent on having one woman in every home” and consequently there are only “41 million people in this country who should be given employment” proving President Truman’s “60 million job program is all bunk.”³⁴⁵ Despite giving lip-service, and the occasional real-service, to women’s issues, no one in the network was even close to questioning let alone defying the gender stereotypes of the day. For men who claimed to be true libertarians committed to the supremacy of individual choice and initiative, their general acceptance of the restrictive gendered norms of the day demonstrates the biased application of their ideology.

³⁴⁴ August 3, 1945 Victoria Kellems to F. C. Crawford, August 3, 1945, JHP, Box 7, K Folder.

³⁴⁵ J. Howard Pew to Victoria Kellems, June 20, 1945, JHP, Box 7, K Folder.

The Spiritual Mobilization Network and American Religious Life

Though Pew, Crane, Hutch, Mullendore and other businessmen had long sought to influence American life, their mutual discovery of Spiritual Mobilization gave their efforts new focus and energy. Prior to their discovery of Spiritual Mobilization Pew and his compatriots had primarily concentrated on changing society through economic and political activities. Thanks largely to the influence of Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization, however, network members began seeing all the tendencies that they found troubling as springing from America's spiritual life. They started identifying what they were fighting against as various parts of the same Social Gospel-inspired whole. Thus in a letter to Pew, Crane could refer to "Social actionists," "Humanists" and "left-wing clergy" interchangeably.³⁴⁶ This left-describing lexicon was, at its root, a way to describe those who differed in how they believed Christianity applied to social, political and particularly economic matters. Embracing Spiritual Mobilization's concept of Social Gospel influence also led them to embrace Spiritual Mobilization's solution of educating the clergy in proper spiritual, political and economic principles, namely pagan stateism and Freedom Under God. Thus, in a lengthy letter to Pew in 1946, Crane detailed his efforts over the years to influence clergy and argued that they needed to expand Spiritual Mobilization's activities because the only hope they had to stem the leftward tide was in properly educating the clergy.³⁴⁷

In their efforts to combat Social Gospel thinking in the Protestant Church, and Protestant America, the Spiritual Mobilization network concentrated on what they considered the center of Social Gospel thinking, the Federal Council (FCC) cum National Council of Churches (NCC). Thanks to the leadership of Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization, network members had been actively trying to influence FCC statements and actions in an ad-hoc manner for some time. For example, Fifield

³⁴⁶ Jasper Crane to J. Howard Pew, June 30, 1954, JHP, Box 37, C Folder. Throughout their correspondence, network members used humanist, left-winger, pagan, social gospeler, social actionist and even communist and socialist interchangeably.

³⁴⁷ See Jasper Crane to J. Howard Pew, November 11, 1946, JHP, Box 13, H MacAllister Griffiths Folder.

successfully modified several pronouncements at the FCC's 1947 conference on the Church and Industry by rallying economic conservatives and attendees such as Hutch and NAM secretary Noel Sargent. Within a year of the FCC conference, network members began coordinating their efforts with the explicit goal of changing and/or undermining the Federal Council's positions on economic issues. When the next FCC/NCC³⁴⁸ conference on Church and Industry came around in 1950, network members sprang into action with a two-pronged attack to nullify any statements that did not accord with their views. Some network members, like Hutch, attempted to undermine the credibility of the conference. Hutch, who sat on the financial board of his Episcopal Diocese, loudly and publicly voted against sending any money to the conference in protest of its very existence.³⁴⁹ The second prong came from within the conference where network members coordinated ahead of time what they needed to do to influence the outcome of the conference, with what they judged to be satisfying results.³⁵⁰

The focus on Social Gospel thinking that Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization inspired led the network to go beyond influencing FCC pronouncements and work with anti-FCC forces as well as share and spread anti-FCC literature. For network members, the FCC was so tainted with Social Gospel thinking that they were torn between trying to reform it and seeking to undermine it. Both Pew and Crane regularly, though quietly, corresponded with the founder of the anti-FCC ecumenical organization the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), Carl McIntire. McIntire, an abrasive and unapologetic fundamentalist, sent drafts of his books to Crane and Pew, including *The Rise of the Tyrant*, which contained a chapter aimed directly at the FCC. Pew and Crane responded favorably and sent him some suggestions on how to improve his books. Pew was so enthusiastic

³⁴⁸ By 1950 the Federal Council of Churches had changed its name to the National Council of Churches.

³⁴⁹ See Correspondence between B.E. Hutchinson and Richard S Emrich, Box 1, BEH.

³⁵⁰ For more on the conference and how network members viewed its outcome see "Some General Notes on the Federal Council of Churches Meeting in Detroit, February 16-19, 1950," NAM, Box 163, Church and Industry 1941-1955 Folder. Sargent notes in his report that "Several of the delegates present...told me that they considered the outcome at Detroit very much better than that at Pittsburgh – and also much better than we had reason to anticipate when the Conference opened."

about *Rise of the Tyrant* that he sent McIntire \$3000 to help boost its circulation.³⁵¹ Pew also regularly read McIntire's often-inflammatory periodical *Christian Beacon*, though his ambivalence about the FCC as well as the lessons learned from his time in the Liberty League led him to publicly stay away from McIntire.³⁵² Similarly, when H. McAllister Griffiths tried to publish his anti-FCC book *Termites in the Cross* in 1946, he found Pew and Crane ready and willing to quietly help.³⁵³ Additionally, members of the network all read and admired evangelical activist Verne Kaub's book *Collectivism Challenges Christianity*, which also contained pointed denunciations of the Federal Council. More importantly, network members shared, spread and supported popular and highly controversial literature such as Kaub's web-spinning McCarthyish tract "How Red is the Federal Council of Churches?" and John T Flynn's *The Road Ahead*. While Kaub's tract accused FCC leaders such as G. Bromley Oxnam of being Communist dupes and/or Communist agents, Flynn's more widespread book accused Protestant leaders of using the FCC to promote Socialism, a charge which resonated strongly with Pew and company given what they regarded as the FCC's too close for comfort association with the Social Gospel.

In spite of their anti-FCC critiques the Spiritual Mobilization network was given an unexpected opportunity to influence the Federal Council of Churches upon its reorganization into the National Council of Churches. Pew, who had all but written off the old Federal Council as a tool of Communists because of its economic, political and social pronouncements, found himself at the center of the new National Council when the General Board asked him to serve as the Chairman of a new Lay Committee. The ecclesiastical leaders of the new Council saw the Lay Committee as a way to expand their influence by getting prominent laypersons lined up in support of their ecumenical efforts. More importantly, having a businessman of the means and stature of Pew lead the

³⁵¹ J. Howard Pew to Carl McIntire, October 4, 1946, JHP, Box 10, M Folder.

³⁵² Pew regularly lamented that while McIntire was sound on theological as well as economic, social and political issues he was "the least competent from the standpoint of sound public relations." See J. Howard Pew to Alfred Haake April 6, 1948, JHP, Box 235, Haake 1946-1949 Folder.

³⁵³ See JHP, Box 13, H McAllister Griffiths Folder.

committee all but guaranteed a steady stream of hefty donations. Pew and his supporters, on the other hand, saw the new Lay Committee as a golden opportunity to lay aside their ambivalence and exorcise the Social Gospel demons from the country's largest ecumenical organization by steering the new National Council in the "Right" direction on political, social and particularly economic issues. Pew especially felt that the Lay Committee had a clear mandate to oversee the pronouncements of the General Board and approve or disapprove any official statements before they were made. Galvanized by this unexpected turn of events, Pew quickly packed the Committee with network members by appointing Hutch a Vice-Chairman and placing Jasper Crane on the 18-person Executive Committee, among others.³⁵⁴

The network's vision of the new National Council and the Lay Committee's role in it soon clashed with the ecclesiastical leadership of the Council. In the first meeting between Lay Committee members and the General Board in 1950, Pew made clear that he envisioned broad oversight powers for the Committee by insisting that it help make policy where its members had "special competency and interest." As Eckvard Toy points out in his article "The National Lay Committee and the National Council of Churches," this set the stage for an ideological struggle between the social-action oriented clergy and the conservative Lay Committee. While Toy correctly notes that the Lay Committee and the General Board were at ideological cross-purposes, he incorrectly argues that the fundamental difference between them was in the clergy's insistence that the church had a moral responsibility to influence the political, social and economic life of the country. For Toy, Pew and his supporters objected to the economic and political pronouncements of the NCC because they believed the church had no right to speak out on "secular" concerns, such as labor laws.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁴ The Lay Committee eventually included roughly 190 members with a large number, unsurprisingly, sharing Pew's ideological and theological proclivities.

³⁵⁵ Eckvard Toy, "The National Lay Committee and the National Council of Churches: A Case Study of Protestants in Conflict" (*American Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No.2, Part 1 (Summer, 1969), pp. 190-209).

Toy's analysis misses the point, at the heart of the ideological difference between the clergy and the Lay Committee was not whether Christians should apply their faith in the "secular" spheres of politics, society and economics, but how. For the clergy, the NCC was a platform that promised to unite American Protestants in shaping and reforming American life. According to their Social Gospel tenets, the best way to do this was by focusing on government legislation and policies. For the Lay Committee, the NCC's purpose was not to focus on the aggregate of society, especially not by lobbying for greater government power, but to focus on the salvation of the individual. The regeneration of individual Christians would naturally lead to the reformation of America, not the other way around. As Hutch argued in a statement that could have come right out of a Spiritual Mobilization pamphlet "[the cure for society's ills] seems to me to lie in the direction of raising the moral tone of the community through the redemption of the individual in a free society rather than in the imposition of successive layers of tyrannies by ever more elaborate forms of statism." Thus what the NCC should focus on was "the evangelical impact of the church upon the community."³⁵⁶ As Hutch's statement attests, the Christian individualism that formed the bridge that Spiritual Mobilization and FEE built between economic and religious conservatives was also the ideological pillar of the Spiritual Mobilization network and the Lay Committee.

With such a difference in opinion in how the church related to society, conflict between Pew's Lay Committee and the General Board of the NCC was inevitable. Within a short time Pew's Lay Committee condemned an NCC study conference criticism of the controversial Bricker Amendment that attempted to boost Congress's foreign policy power at the expense of the Presidency, attacked General Board statements supporting the United Nations, and routinely denounced statement from the NCC's Department of the Church and Economic Life.³⁵⁷ Pew's

³⁵⁶ B. E. Hutchinson to Dr. Theodore E. Matson, October 9, 1957, BEH, Box 29.

³⁵⁷ Toy, "Lay Committee...", 199.

willingness to fight and challenge General Board actions and statements on such a variety of topics did not endear him to the NCC's leadership.³⁵⁸

Typical of Pew's efforts was his attempt to stop a book that the NCC's Department of Church and Economic Life wanted to publish. In 1950, the Rockefeller Foundation gave the NCC \$100,000 to fund a book dealing with the relationship between the Church and economic life. The book, an edited volume containing separate chapters from 15 different individuals including both economists and clergy, went to the printers in 1952. Unsurprisingly, upon receiving an advanced draft of the book Pew found what he deemed serious problems, particularly with the chapters by Union Theological Seminary President John C Bennett and pre-eminent American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. Bennett's embrace of Social Gospel theology at Union Seminary and Niebuhr's past activities as a vocal critic of capitalism made them immediately suspect in Pew's mind, and he quickly focused on their chapters. In a lengthy letter to the head of the Department of Church and Economic Life, Pew detailed his criticisms of the book and of Bennett's and Niebuhr's chapters specifically. In the letter Pew argued that the book advanced the communist agenda because it "advocates measures which would substitute Government control of ownership for private control and ownership of property."³⁵⁹ After detailing what he perceived to be the anti-Christian nature of several of Niebuhr's arguments, including Niebuhr's criticism of "extravagant individualism," Pew concluded that the NCC should not print the book because it is "inspired by the Marxist creed, and Communism is the antithesis of Christianity."³⁶⁰

While Pew found Niebuhr's chapter inspired by Marxism, going so far as to argue that Bennett himself called Niebuhr a "Marxist," he saved special venom for Bennett's chapter. Pew argued that Bennett's ultimate purpose in his chapter "A Theological Conception of Goals for

³⁵⁸ His active use of the Lay Committee to fight General Board actions and statements meant that the pre-eminent religious magazine of the time, *Christian Century*, closely followed both Pew and the Lay Committee. See Toy, "Lay Committee..."

³⁵⁹ J. Howard Pew to Dr. Luther Weigle, October 15, 1952, pg. 2, BEH, Box 1.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., pg. 8.

Economic Life,” was to “discredit the competitive system of enterprise and everything that it stands for.” In his comments on the chapter, Pew immediately got to the heart of his disagreement with Bennett; a belief in the inherent Christianity of individualism. Pew quoted Bennett as arguing, “Christian support cannot be claimed for either a consistent individualism or a consistent collectivism.”³⁶¹ For a Christian individualist like Pew, there was no greater evidence of Bennett’s blasphemy than his disassociation of Christianity and individualism. After highlighting what most offended him, Pew contemptuously went on about Bennett’s “insinuations,” “bunk,” and “intellectual dishonesty.” In one revealing passage Pew notes that Bennett “prates that wealth is not distributed on the basis of equal justice, as though he were competent to judge.” This passage also highlights one of the sore points between business laymen like Pew and their ecclesiastical counterparts. Pew and his associates felt that men like Bennett and Niebuhr lacked the experience and understanding to offer judgments in economic matters, hence the need for a Lay Committee to help formulate policy in areas where its members had “special competency and interest.”³⁶²

Pew did not stop at writing the head of the Department of the Church and Economic Life, he also widely vocalized his distaste for the book and lined up other Lay Committee members behind his efforts. Not surprisingly one of the first people he turned to for help was Hutch. In a series of letters and phone calls, Pew and Hutch strategized on how to stop the NCC from printing the book. Hutch went so far as to suggest that the Bishop of his Episcopal Diocese, Reverend Emrich, look over the draft as he had some influence with various NCC leaders.³⁶³ Pew also took his concerns directly to the Rockefeller Foundation and attempted to convince them to pull the plug on their funding. While his efforts on that front at first appeared promising, Pew noted that they eventually “wash[ed] their hands of the whole situation,” much to Pew’s consternation. What is most revealing

³⁶¹ “Notes on the chapter ‘A Theological...’ pg. 1, BEH, Box 1.

³⁶² Ibid., pgs. 2-5.

³⁶³ Transcript of Telephone Call From J. Howard Pew to B.E. Hutchinson, October 21, 1952, 3:45PM, BEH, Box 1.

about Pew's efforts to stop the book was how he assumed a connection between theological and economic orthodoxy. In his correspondence with Hutch, Pew noted that not only were Bennett and Niebuhr way off on their understanding of economics but unsurprisingly they "do not believe in the deity of Christ."³⁶⁴ Pew and the Lay Committee were thus battling the inter-related liberalism of theology and economics.³⁶⁵ While Pew lost this battle when "Goals of Economic Life" came off the press, in a sense he won as the book barely resonated in American religious, economic or political life.

Pew's constant battles with the General Board renewed his ambivalence towards the NCC, and left him more focused than ever on Social Gospel thinking. Several times he determined to quit the committee in an effort to undercut the NCC's standing, only to be talked back from the ledge by Hutch, Crane and Spiritual Mobilization president James Ingebretsen. Pew's frustration at his inability to either steer the General Board to the right or entirely away from political and economic issues left him searching for answers. Pew, already convinced that Social Gospel thinking was at the root of what he viewed as the problem with the National Council, sought to better understand exactly what he was fighting. At the end of 1952, or what turned out to be roughly halfway through his Chairmanship of the Lay Committee, Pew sent out a letter to those in the Spiritual Mobilization network asking them to define "Social Gospel," and "Welfare State" with the purpose of understanding the relationship between the two. Pew's efforts were more than rewarded as nearly everyone he wrote responded with thoughtful letters and definitions. There were some differences of opinion, from American Economic Foundation president Fred Clark's assertion that "there is no difference between the Social Gospel and the Welfare State," to NCC Associate General Secretary Roy Ross's contention that the Social Gospel predated the Welfare State by more than a

³⁶⁴ J. Howard Pew to B. E. Hutchinson, September 16, 1952, pg. 2, BEH, Box 1.

³⁶⁵ Pew's reservations about liberal theology spread even to James Fifield. In an exchange with Alfred Haake, who was an employee of Fifield's Spiritual Mobilization, Pew noted in confidence that he was "not sure [Fifield's] views on the divinity of Christ are sound." The connection that Pew made between theological, economic and political orthodoxy made him wary of even such a staunch ally as Fifield. See J. Howard Pew to Alfred Haake, April 6, 1948, JHP, Box 235, Haake 1946-1949 Folder.

generation.³⁶⁶ By and large, however, all agreed that the Social Gospel inspired the Welfare State as the Social Gospel was at heart a desire to change the organization of society through government planning and legislation.

These responses to Pew's inquiry crystallized his thinking and his efforts to use the Lay Committee to "correct" the NCC's General Board. Bolstered by the consensus among his respondents, Pew became increasingly strident in asserting the importance of the Lay Committee and battling controversial studies and pronouncements. In 1953 Pew successfully rallied Lay Committee members, including United Mine Workers representative John T Jones, to unanimously reject a statement of economic principles placed before the General Assembly by the Department of Church and Economic Life.³⁶⁷ Finally, in a bid to win the war rather than individual battles, Pew and the Lay Committee wrote a "lay affirmation" that it submitted to the General Board for consideration. The affirmation, if adopted, would have prohibited the NCC from "sitting in judgment on current, secular affairs [by becoming] involved in economic or political controversy... promoting division where unity of purpose should obtain."³⁶⁸ Unsurprisingly, the General Board ignored what they considered Pew's attempt to muzzle their freedom of speech and shortly thereafter sought to dilute the Lay Committee's influence by having members individually join any one of the over 70 other NCC committees. Pew, as intent as ever on maintaining and increasing the Lay Committee's influence, refused to let it simply waste away into insignificance and rejected this proposal out of hand. Pew's certainty in the importance and rightness of the Lay Committee's positions led to a stand-off with the General Board that resulted in the General Board declining to renew the Lay Committee's charter. What had started off with so much hope and optimism on both sides ended in a disillusioned and somewhat bitter parting of ways. Pew and his supporters took comfort in the fact that their intransigence had some pay-off as the committee's rather dramatic

³⁶⁶ For all responses to Pew's inquiry see JHP, Box 40, Social Gospel and Welfare State Folder.

³⁶⁷ "Clergy Outvoted Us, 10 to 1," *U. S. News and World Report*, XL (Feb. 3, 1956), 46.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

stand and end led to a lot of press coverage, including a favorable article in *US News and World Report*.³⁶⁹

The Lay Committee controversy highlights the degree to which Spiritual Mobilization network members actively targeted clergymen in their ideological efforts. It is the most dramatic and public example of network members putting their Spiritual Mobilization-inspired ideology into action. Their efforts, however, went well beyond the Lay Committee as they worked with other religious groups, such as the American Christian Alliance³⁷⁰ and the Circuit Riders.³⁷¹ Despite all of their work with organizations and groups, one of the striking characteristics of the network is the extent to which individual members took the time to cultivate individual pastors and ministers of their acquaintance. In particular they targeted those in positions of ecumenical leadership or holding major theological sway in American Protestantism. Thus Edmund Opitz exchanged letters with eminent theologian Reinhold Niebuhr³⁷² and president of the trend-setting Union Theological Seminary Dr. John C Bennett. Niebuhr's refusal to identify individualism as unqualifiedly Christian, with claims that Christian based political morality made "a purely individualistic

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ The American Christian Alliance was an organization headed by William Anderson, an old Prohibitionist, who sought to influence American politics through a prayer campaign. He felt such a campaign would not only preserve "The Sound Economy Essential to Real Freedom" by "Establishing God's Kingdom in Our Government" to protect "against an Alien-Minded, Materialistic, Ruthless, Anti-God Communism," he believed such a campaign would materially aid the Republican Party. Anderson actually convinced several Republican Party Chairman of the efficacy of his idea for the 1948 election, but failed to attract the necessary funding to go national. Crane and Pew only gave him tepid support as they felt his previous leadership in the Prohibition movement made him susceptible to statism. See ACA facsimile endorsement by Republican Leaders, JEC, Box 1, Folder A, and Jasper Crane to William Anderson, April 9, 1947, JEC, Box 1, Folder A.

³⁷¹ The Circuit Riders, founded in 1951 by M. G. Lowman, sought to ferret out any fellow-travelers in the clergy's ranks, particularly among NCC leaders, by researching clergy connections with what they considered to be Communist Front organizations and then publishing those links. Like network members, Circuit Riders saw a connection between the New Deal and wrong-headed protestant theology and practice, arguing that "Centralized church government such as now common in Protestant denominations and in the National Council of Churches is a partial parallel to centralized government like that of Franklin Roosevelt." Pew and Crane wrote several large checks for the Circuit Riders and Pew, in particular, urged them to investigate NCC leaders. See M. G. Lowman to Jasper Crane, November 10, 1955, pg. 1, JEC, Box 6, Circuit Riders Folder.

³⁷² Opitz took issue with Niebuhr's claim that St. Augustine was a Christian realist, and specifically with a quote Niebuhr cited as coming from St. Augustine's famous "City of God." Niebuhr did not take kindly to the criticism, prompting Opitz to write to Crane and note that "Niebuhr apparently feels that if Augustine was not a Niebuhrean it is high time he was!" See Edmund Opitz to Jasper Crane, October 20, 1953, JEC, Spiritual Mobilization Folder 1953-1962.

ethic...embarrassing," made him a tempting target for a network made up of Christian individualists.³⁷³ In Bennett's case, Opitz coordinated his efforts with Crane, a tag-team effort that the network frequently replicated when it came to more influential ministers.³⁷⁴ Crane did achieve something of a breakthrough with Bennett when Bennett wrote to tell him that Crane's address "The Genius of Big Business," had "actually produced a change in my mind about the corporation. You may be glad to hear this."³⁷⁵ Dr. Ernest Johnson, one of the leaders of the old Federal Council of Churches who played a key part in its transition to the new National Council of Churches received a similar tag-team effort from Crane and American Economic Foundation head Fred Clark. Crane wrote to Clark in December 1946 about the need to meet and educate Johnson; by the middle of January 1947 Clark had not only met with Johnson, but also reported to Crane that he had made substantial progress in "educating" Johnson about economics.³⁷⁶

One of the most striking theological aspects of the Spiritual Mobilization network was how theological liberals, such as Fifield, Read and Opitz, made common cause with theological conservatives such as Pew, Hutch and Crane. Indeed for network members like Pew, political and economic liberalism was a product of theological liberalism. In other words, Fifield, Opitz and Read were economically conservative because of their theological liberalism and Pew, Hutch and Crane drew a similar line between their conservative theology and their politics. The degree to which evangelical businessmen like Pew and Crane embraced the theologically liberal-inspired project of

³⁷³ See Edmund Opitz to Jasper Crane, October 16, 1953, JEC, Box 68, Spiritual Mobilization Folder 1953-1962.

³⁷⁴ Edmund Opitz to Jasper Crane, June 30, 1953, Ibid. Interestingly, Opitz suggested to Bennett that they should convene a conference of the two "sides" including "Bennett and Read, Niebuhr and Von Mises, Tillich and Ingebreetsen, Pope and Harper, Muelder and Chodorov" for the purpose of "getting acquainted, exploring the strengths in the other's position and seeking out weaknesses." Opitz pairing Bennett and Read and Niebuhr and Von Mises is most revealing, demonstrating the centrality of the question of how Christianity related to economics in differentiating what he perceived to be the two "sides."

³⁷⁵ See Jasper Crane to J. Howard Pew February 20, 1953, JHP, Box 33, C Folder, JEC,

³⁷⁶ Jasper Crane to Fred Clark, December 10, 1946 and Fred Clark to Jasper Crane January 16, 1947, Box 1, American Economic Foundation Folder. Clark did not confine his evangelism to ministers. He claimed former Socialist Presidential candidate Norman Thomas as a close friend whom he had played an instrumental part in during into an "effective and courageous anti New Deal voice." See Fred Clark to Jasper Crane March 23, 1945, JEC, Box 1, American Economic Foundation Folder.

Spiritual Mobilization underscores the complicated relationship between theology and politics. Theological principles, such as Christian individualism, pagan stateism and Freedom Under God, shorn of their historical context can find as ready purchase among theological liberals as theological conservatives. Outside of a few central dogmas and ideas, drawing a firm line between theologically liberal and theologically conservative beliefs and concepts is nearly an impossible task.

Whatever the theological motivation, the network's success rate at "converting" those of such standing as Niebuhr, Bennett and Johnson is at best uncertain, though they did have more success with less well known ministers. No relationship better epitomized this successful evangelism than that between B.E. Hutchinson and the Episcopal Bishop of the Michigan Diocese, Richard S Emrich. Hutchinson, a devout Episcopalian, and Emrich first encountered each other when Emrich assumed the position of head of the diocese where Hutchinson lived in 1948. Hutch, who was heavily involved in a variety of lay leadership posts within the diocese, quickly became acquainted with Emrich. Their relationship was soon put to the test when Emrich discovered that Hutch largely agreed with John T. Flynn's criticisms of the Federal Council of Churches, particularly as it related to its economic and political statements. Emrich rose to the defense of the Council, of which the Episcopal Church was a part, and Hutch took the time to painstakingly and rather diplomatically lay out his case against the Council. Unsurprisingly, Hutch's problem with the council echoed the criticism that ecumenical bodies should focus on evangelism and stay away from economic and political pronouncements that he and Pew would level against the NCC during the Lay Committee controversy. More revealing of his Christian individualism and his belief in how Christianity applied to the social, economic and political life of the country was Hutch's assertion that "governments, corporations and the like...have neither souls to lose nor pants to kick! In

themselves they are subject to neither persuasion nor force! It is only through the individuals who compose them that their course of action can be influenced.”³⁷⁷

Successfully saving their relationship after this somewhat heated disagreement, Hutch took it upon himself to properly “educate” Emrich and included him on a list of friends and acquaintances to which he frequently sent literature. Hutch, who was serving on FEE’s Board of Advisors, also wrote F.A. Harper at FEE and asked him to put Bishop Emrich on FEE’s mailing list.³⁷⁸ Over the years Hutch sent Emrich a host of conservative literature including Spiritual Mobilization pamphlets³⁷⁹, books by Gerald Heard and the Capitalist propaganda book *Mainspring*. Hutch wrote to Emrich and explained why he was sending all this literature. Using reasoning that revealed the thinking behind the modus operandi of the Spiritual Mobilization network Hutch explained:

I regard you as a very important person, and as such I deem it no infringement on our friendship if from time to time I bring to your attention points of view, recitations of facts, or evaluations of situations which, in the ordinary course of events, might easily escape your attention; but which, in my opinion at least, do bear importantly on the world to which the Lord has consigned us to work out our immortal destiny³⁸⁰

Such personal and consistent outreach bore real fruit; by the end of the decade Hutch regularly enlisted Bishop Emrich in support of network efforts and Emrich, apparently persuaded by Hutch’s efforts gave a number of addresses right in line with Spiritual Mobilization values such as one entitled “The Spiritual Influence in our American Competitive Enterprise System.”³⁸¹

³⁷⁷ B.E. Hutchinson to Richard Emrich, January 15, 1950, BEH, Box 3.

³⁷⁸ B.E. Hutchinson to F.A. Harper, December 14, 1951, BEH, Box 13.

³⁷⁹ In one letter to Emrich that included a Spiritual Mobilization pamphlet, Hutch noted, “‘Freedom Under God’ should be of interest to everyone, but unfortunately there are so many who have little or no conception of either and even less awareness of the implications of their ignorance.” See B.E. Hutchinson to Richard Emrich May 22, 1956, BEH, Box 1.

³⁸⁰ B.E. Hutchinson to Richard Emrich, April 15, 1954, BEH, Box 3.

³⁸¹ Emrich became well acquainted with the Spiritual Mobilization network. In the late 1950s he and Hutch organized several Spiritual Mobilization conferences at the Episcopal retreat of Parishfield that featured Gerald Heard and brought together network members such as Hutchinson, Mullendore, Pew, Crane and James Ingebretsen.

Despite the successes of their individual outreach efforts, network members defining effort to wrestle control of the mainline protestant ecumenical council from economic and theological liberals through the Lay Committee failed. The promise and failure of the Lay Committee led network members and their allies to largely give up on the NCC and pour their time, effort and money into alternative avenues of influence in America's religious life. It is more than coincidence that within two years of the collapse of the Lay Committee, Hutch, Crane and especially Pew began following and supporting Billy Graham's evangelical crusades. Pew in particular grew close to Graham, helping him start the hugely influential magazine *Christianity Today*. Pew's budding relationship with Graham and his continued support for the Howard Kershner led Christian Freedom Foundation had profound consequences for American religious, social, economic and political life. These efforts and relationships, discussed in the next chapter, came back to James Fifield and his pastor-targeting Spiritual Mobilization. Inspired by Fifield's ideology and his pastor-targeting, social gospel attacking modus operandi, network members' activities and efforts at times quite publicly influenced America's religious life.

The Spiritual Mobilization Network and the Foundations of Political Conservatism

In 1946 Spiritual Mobilization supporter Mark Jones wrote Jasper Crane to propose a "Freedom magazine" as he had recently met with James Fifield and Fifield had stressed "the importance of getting a publication of the kind going at the earliest possible moment."³⁸² Crane quickly agreed with Jones's proposal and set about lining up support for such a venture from his fellow network members. Eventually these efforts played a key role in the formation and publication of the *Freeman* under the editorship of John Chamberlin and Henry Hazlitt. Inspired by Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization, the quest for a "freedom magazine" is a story of network members acting on their shared ideology in the realm of politics. These efforts had important consequences as

³⁸² Mark Jones to Jasper Crane, May 28, 1946, JEC, Freedom Magazine Folder.

network members' involvement put them at the very heart of the conservative intellectual and political movement.

While Mark Jones letter to Crane was the proximate cause that led to years of effort to put together and publish a journal of opinion, it is best understood in the context of the evolution and efforts of the Spiritual Mobilization network. Not long after discovering Spiritual Mobilization, J. Howard Pew and his brother Joseph bought the widely read *Farm Journal* and the less well known small town journal *The Pathfinder* using them to “blanket the countryside with a conservative, pro-Republican message.”³⁸³ While the circulation of these two journals was in the millions they were not opinion journals per se and they did not target intellectuals and thought-molders. Consciously copying the Communist movement, Crane, Pew and other supporters felt the need to “get our ideas out there” and create an “intelligentsia” through a high level journal of opinion.³⁸⁴ Crane quickly became the key coordinator, drawing on Pew and Hutch’s resources and connections in trying to raise money for the magazine from men such as DuPont brother Lamont DuPont, General Motors CEO Alfred Sloan and Monsanto Chemical Company CEO Edgar Queeny.³⁸⁵ Crane also sought to involve other network members, proposing that Fred Clark, Donald Cowling, Norman Vincent Peale and William Mullendore serve on the governing board in addition to himself, Pew and Hutch.³⁸⁶ Additionally, Crane began working closely with Herbert Hoover to find an editor for the new magazine.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ *White Protestant Nation...*, 128. By 1946 Lichtman estimates that these two journals had a circulation of almost 4 million.

³⁸⁴ See James Selvage to H. B. Earhardt Sept 26, 1947, JEC, Freedom Magazine Folder.

³⁸⁵ Lamont was one of the (in)famous DuPont brothers and heirs to the DuPont fortune and business, Alfred Sloan was longtime CEO of General Motors and Edward Queeny was CEO of Monsanto Chemical Corporation and author of the pro-Capitalist book *Mainspring*.

³⁸⁶ Jasper Crane to Mark Jones, Jan 23, 1947, JEC, Freedom Folder.

³⁸⁷ See James Selvage to Jasper Crane, Sept 24, 1947, *Ibid*. In the letter Selvage also notes that Crane first mentioned the magazine to him at a Spiritual Mobilization luncheon again underscoring the role of Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization in these efforts.

Crane and his compatriots viewed the proposed magazine as a way to bring their spiritual principles into political and economic life. One of the earliest proposal drafts called for the magazine to focus on “devotion to Liberty and the sanctity of personality as the cardinal principle of human life” as well as “recognition at all times of the ultimate spiritual ends of human life, even though emphasis is primarily on the economic aspects thereof.”³⁸⁸ In a similar statement that underscores how much a Spiritual Mobilization ideology was driving their efforts, Pew responded to Homer Rogers, who also wanted to start a journal of opinion, insisting “no publication such as the one you have in mind can be successful unless the spiritual factors are stressed.”³⁸⁹ Network members saw the proposed journal of opinion as a way to inject their Spiritual Mobilization ideology into the intellectual life of the country by applying their principles to political and economic issues.

Over four years Crane and Pew met with businessmen, pastors and conservative intellectuals, trying to refine their prospectus and build support from potential contributors and funders. Though frustrated in their initial efforts they eventually teamed up with journalists and writers John Chamberlin and Henry Hazlitt, resulting in the founding of the most influential intellectual conservative publication prior to *National Review*, *The Freeman*. Though Chamberlin and Hazlitt became the guiding stars of the magazine in its early years, Pew extracted from them a promise that “they would carry one article designed primarily with the purpose of tying Christianity in with Freedom in each issue.”³⁹⁰ Though Pew felt that Chamberlin and Hazlitt could have done a better job living up to their promise, *The Freeman* did solicit articles from the likes of Howard Kershner, editor of *Christian Economics*, and carry articles such as Stewart Robinson’s social gospel attacking “Clergymen and Socialism.” Crane and Pew’s central position in financing

³⁸⁸ 10-page Proposal, JEC, Freedom Magazine Folder.

³⁸⁹ J. Howard Pew to Homer Rogers, Nov 6, 1946, JEC, Freedom Magazine Folder.

³⁹⁰ See J. Howard Pew to Howard Kershner, September 4, 1951, JHP, Box 81, 1951 CFF Folder.

the magazine allowed them to play a key role in facilitating Leonard Read and FEE's purchase of the influential conservative publication in 1954 after Hazlitt walked away from it.³⁹¹

Crane and other network members' involvement in *The Freeman* made them central players in the early conservative intellectual and political landscape. For example conservative intellectual Felix Morley first connected with network members over the proposed magazine, expressing interest as early as 1946.³⁹² Morley soon found himself among friends, striking up a correspondence with Hutch, joining the Mont Pelerin Society with Crane and expressing his agreement with the correlation between laissez-faire economics and Christianity by arguing that "the essence of Christianity is that it emphasizes the values of internal as opposed to external (government) compulsion."³⁹³ Morley eventually joined the Christian Freedom Foundation's board in the 1950s.³⁹⁴ Similarly Ludwig Von Mises also joined in the efforts for the "Freedom Magazine," helping to draft a proposal in 1947, bringing him even closer to the network.³⁹⁵

Network member's forays into the world of publishing also brought them into contact with DeWitt Wallace and his *Reader's Digest*. Wallace soon became fast friends with Pew, Crane and Hutch as well as connecting with other network members. As early as 1948 Wallace and Fred Clark attempted to collaborate on a story about the economic illiteracy of ministers.³⁹⁶ Though nothing came of this first collaboration, Wallace financially supported Leonard Read's Foundation for Economic Education, held fundraisers for the Christian Freedom Foundation and liberally reprinted articles from *The Freeman* and *Christian Economics* in *Reader's Digest*. Wallace's principal editor

³⁹¹ For more on *The Freeman* and its importance to the conservative movement see Paul Milazzo's forthcoming biography on Henry Hazlitt, Chapter Three, "The Story of *The Freeman*."

³⁹² See Mark Jones to Jasper Crane July 17, 1946, JEC, Box 37, Freedom Magazine Folder. Morley was one of the founding editors of another consequential (and still running) conservative publication, *Human Events*.

³⁹³ Felix Morley to Loren Miller, July 9, 1947, JEC, Box 37, Freedom Magazine Folder.

³⁹⁴ Interestingly, Morley would eventually have a sharp break with Howard Kershner over Kershner's support for the Vietnam War. Morley wrote Kershner in 1966. See April 16, 1966, Felix Morley to Howard Kershner, Box 12, Mor Folder, Howard Kershner Papers, University of Oregon Special Collections.

³⁹⁵ See Lammont DuPont to Jasper Crane, Jan 17, 1947, JEC, Box 37, Freedom Magazine Folder.

³⁹⁶ Fred Fred Clark to Jasper Crane, August 13, 1948, JEC, Box 1, American Economic Foundation Folder.

and brother-in-law, Barclay Acheson, even offered support and encouragement to Hutch and Pew during the Lay Committee fight stating that the Lay Committee would help counter-balance “the ecclesiastical mind” that sprang from “disillusionments of the career of an ordained minister” which led them to a “prima donna psychology.”³⁹⁷ While not of the intellectual caliber of *The Freeman* and *Human Events*, Wallace and *Reader’s Digest* provided a more “middlebrow” avenue for network members to not only disseminate their ideology, but also receive financial and moral support.

Network member’s connection and involvement in the conservative intellectual and political scene brought them into contact with William Buckley. Buckley’s publication of *God and Man at Yale* first brought him to the attention of the Spiritual Mobilization network. Before moving to FEE, Edmund Opitz arranged for Buckley to speak at a Spiritual Mobilization conference along with Ludwig Von Mises. When Buckley decided to start a journal of opinion of his own, he first attempted to buy *The Freeman* and use that as his publishing base. When this fell through, he used Spiritual Mobilization President James Ingebretsen to re-route tax exempt donations from his Foundation for Social Research into *National Review’s* coffers. Buckley also made it clear to Ingebretsen that he read and appreciated Spiritual Mobilization’s *Faith and Freedom*.³⁹⁸ Buckley, understanding the place of his new magazine in the context of other conservative publications of the time, reached out to Pew and Howard Kershner because of their positions in the conservative publishing world.³⁹⁹ Network members for their part quickly got on board with Buckley’s *National Review*, drumming up support for the magazine by writing, as in the case of Hutch, people of influence like General Electric president Ralph Cordiner.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ Barclay Acheson to B. E. Hutchinson, July 17, 1956, BEH, Box 2.

³⁹⁸ *White Protestant*, 210. Buckley also purchased thousands of copies of network-supported economist Orvall Watts “Away from Freedom” for distribution by the ISI. In his purchasing request Buckley notes that he thinks the book is “an extremely important purchase,” JCI, Series 1, Subseries A, Box 6, Folder 16.

³⁹⁹ November 1955 exchange, JHP, Box 44, N Folder.

⁴⁰⁰ B. E. Hutchinson to Ralph Cordiner July 19, 1961, BEH, Box 21, General Correspondence Folder.

Another conservative intellectual star that network members' connected with and influenced was Russell Kirk. Not long after publishing his seminal work *The Conservative Mind* Kirk began a correspondence with Hutch, based in part on the close physical proximity of the two Michigan residents. What began as a fairly formal exchange soon turned into a warm personal friendship with constant invitations to visit and stay (both in Mecosta and Detroit) and inquiries after the health and well-being of various family members and friends. Beyond warm feelings, Kirk obviously respected Hutch's opinion and ideas, reading suggested literature and accepting criticisms of his writing. In one exchange Hutch roundly criticized Kirk for arguing against communism and socialism on grounds of their inefficiency rather than their moral degradation. Reflecting his Spiritual Mobilization ideology Hutch pointed out to Kirk "that to establish and maintain a good society the imperative demand for a sound, moral and ethical foundation must always be recognized as first priority. Lacking that firm foundation, all else fails." Consequently Kirk's article did "not sufficiently recognize the implicit evil always found in masters of a total state," evil that resulted from "the moral and spiritual disintegration of those particular individuals" in power.⁴⁰¹ Clearly Hutch had every intention of doing what he could to encourage Kirk in the "correct" ideological orientation.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the occasional critiques, Kirk and Hutch grew closer together. By 1956 Hutch was inviting Kirk to Spiritual Mobilization sponsored conferences featuring Gerald Heard. Kirk accepted the invitation to attend one such gathering, organized by none other than Hutch's Episcopal Bishop Richard Emrich who used the Diocese's official retreat center at Parishfield to host his guests. In preparation for the conference, Kirk ordered and read all of Heard's books.⁴⁰² Hutch's relationship with Kirk also proved beneficial to Henry Regnery, whose press published Kirk's book. Hutch not only advised Regnery, but in true network fashion

⁴⁰¹ B. E. Hutchinson to Russell Kirk, July 27, 1954, BEH, Box 3.

⁴⁰² Russell Kirk to B. E. Hutchinson, April 20, 1956, BEH, Box 2, Parishfield Conference Folder.

introduced him to Pew, an introduction for which Hutch received meaningful thanks.⁴⁰³ While never as close as with Hutch, Kirk became known to all the network members, with Pew and Mullendore sending him money. Pew, who did not write checks lightly, felt Kirk was a kindred spirit who saw the implicit Christianity of the network's anti-state advocacy and referred to him as a fellow "libertarian."⁴⁰⁴ Indeed, the ideological similarity between Kirk and the network, a similarity enhanced no doubt in part by Hutch's mentorship, led Kirk to put Hutch on the steering committee for his publication *Modern Age*. Additionally, Kirk's ties to the network and its ideology grew as he served both as a Trustee of FEE and as unofficial chairman of the attempted reorganization of Spiritual Mobilization in 1960.⁴⁰⁵

As their work and connections demonstrate, network members, their contacts and their publications provided a ready foundation for Buckley and other conservative leaders to build on when he started *National Review*. Thanks to their financial support and their unifying ideology, network members had already begun building a religious, intellectual and political base for the conservative movement. Their active participation in getting the conservative intellectual movement up and running through their efforts to publish a "freedom magazine" and through their financial support for publications like *Human Events*, *Christianity Today*, *Modern Age* and *Faith and Freedom* was catalytic in the early conservative movement. Buckley did not produce the conservative movement *ex nihilo*, nor did he single-handedly bring together the disparate strands of conservatism into a single movement. As network members efforts ideology and influence show, the essential strands of conservatism were already coalescing long before Buckley came on the scene. While Buckley's place in conservative lore is appropriately large, he was not some monolithic, far-seeing mage who rounded up a bunch of fractious groups, individuals and

⁴⁰³ Henry Regnery to B. E. Hutchinson, July 1, 1954, BEH, Box 3.

⁴⁰⁴ J Howard Pew to Howard Kershner, November 4, 1957, JHP, Box 182, CFF 1957 Folder.

⁴⁰⁵ Kirk played a pivotal role in the reorganization of Spiritual Mobilization, an organization that he obviously felt accorded with his own ideology. In addition to chairing the meeting, he helped draft Spiritual Mobilization's "Message to Fellow Christians" that spurred donations and became the basis for Spiritual Mobilization's aborted makeover.

ideological strands and fused them into a politically powerful movement. The enduring ideological base of the modern American conservative movement has a longer-running and more complex story, a story in which the Spiritual Mobilization network played leading roles.

Perhaps the most telling and complicated relationship that network members had was with conservative organizer and activist Robert Welch and his John Birch Society. As Jonathon Schoenwald notes, Robert Welch was one of the most respected conservatives throughout the course of the 1950s, and as such had connections with almost everyone of importance on the right.⁴⁰⁶ Unsurprisingly, given their shared NAM leadership, Welch was a personal friend with all the network members. Welch's *One Man's Opinion*, which turned into *American Opinion*, received praise and contributions from Hutch, Crane, Mullendore and Pew. Welch was also fairly intimate with Read and his FEE and in fact collaborated with Read and Pew at one point to broaden the circulation of Read's libertarian tract "Government, an Ideal Concept."⁴⁰⁷ Welch was so close to network members that he invited Hutch, Pew and William Grede to what turned out to be the founding meeting of the John Birch Society, though only Grede was able to make it.⁴⁰⁸ While their shared NAM background and support for groups like FEE suggested that network members would readily support Welch and his JBS, Welch's penchant for extreme statements prompted the network to keep Welch at arm's length. As Crane expressed in a letter to Cowling about the 1962 California election that saw JBS candidates go down in flames "Mr. Welch was inept and tactless...I feared from the beginning of his effort that it might boomerang but who was I to tell him so?"⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ Jonathon Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴⁰⁷ Robert Welch to J. Howard Pew, April 12, 1955, JHP.

⁴⁰⁸ Robert Welch to J. Howard Pew, October 21, 1958, JHP.

⁴⁰⁹ Jasper Crane to Donald Cowling, November 12, 1962, JEC, Box 6, Cowling 1959-1964 Folder.

Additionally, Pew and Howard Kershner of the Christian Freedom Foundation were hesitant to support the JBS because Welch was “a little shaky on the importance of Christianity.”⁴¹⁰

Despite declining to fully support Welch and the JBS, network members still offered him some quiet, private support. Welch continued his correspondence with Pew and Hutch, until Hutch’s unexpected passing in 1961. Welch regularly asked Pew for guidance and advice and even helped raise money for his Christian Freedom Foundation. In return, Pew sent Welch a few sizable checks, at least initially, before slowly letting the friendship and correspondence wither.⁴¹¹

Publicly, of course, Pew refused to endorse Welch and made sure that any organization in which he held sway remained similarly muted. In a slight bit of revisionism, Pew even claimed in private correspondence that he never had any association with Welch outside of helping him with *American Opinion* before his notoriety exceeded his fame.⁴¹² Even this public distance led to some ambivalence. As Howard Kershner of the CFF put it in a letter to Pew “Regarding the JBS, I think our course [of non-support] is correct, but I admit I am often tempted to make a full-scale defense of it...something might be said for presenting a united front to the enemy.”⁴¹³ As network members relationship with the JBS and other “ultra conservatives” such as Carl McIntire and Dan Smoot demonstrates, the distance between respectable and ultra conservative was more one of rhetoric and political expediency than any sharp ideological differences. Ideological similarity and social familiarity made it easier to pass concepts back and forth from the center to the fringes of the right.

⁴¹⁰ Howard Kershner to J. Howard Pew, May 5, 1959, JHP, Box 183, 1959 CFF Folder. Secondary network member William Grede was one of the founding members of the John Birch Society and remained a high profile member and supporter until his death in the 1970s. Grede’s support for Welch and the JBS, however, did not mean he agreed with all of Welch’s statements. In fact, Grede supported the JBS in spite of Welch’s penchant for extremism rather than because of it. Grede’s presence and prominence in the JBS lends caution to historically casting aspersions on all JBS supporters as unqualified extremists. For more on the relationship between Welch, Grede and the JBS, in particular Welch’s unpublished attack on President Eisenhower as a “Conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy, please see James McKay, “God’s Market: Christianity and Capitalism in the Ideology of the Emerging New Right,” (MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2010), Chapter Two “William J. Grede: Apostle of the Gospel of Free Enterprise.”

⁴¹¹ J. Howard Pew to Robert Welch, March 15, 1960, JHP.

⁴¹² J. Howard Pew to Robert Barker, July 12, 1965, JHP, Box 185, CFF 1965 Folder.

⁴¹³ Howard Kershner to J Howard Pew, May 11, 1961, JHP, Box 184, 1961 CFF Folder.

While network members were not ready to countenance accusing Eisenhower of being a “conscious agent of the Communist Conspiracy” they by and large felt Eisenhower was pursuing pagan stateism to the moral, political and economic cost of the country. Thus, core concepts associated with the fringes of the right found ready acceptance among more mainstream conservatives, even if the way they packaged those concepts took away their perceived bite.

In addition to Welch, network members had numerous connections and relationships with conservative politicians and conservative causes. Hutch was personal friends with Arthur Vandenberg and Robert Taft and even served as an informal campaign adviser during Taft’s 1952 presidential run. Taft returned the favor by recommending Hutch for Secretary of Defense.⁴¹⁴ Pew exerted a lot of influence in the Republican Party through his brother Joseph and tried to use his financial donations to make changes in the Republican platform.⁴¹⁵ Crane was personal friends with Dulles and tried to convince Dulles of the efficacy of his libertarian ideology. When Crane showed Leonard Read a letter he was writing Dulles, Read noted “it is good that someone like yourself has influence in these places.”⁴¹⁶ In addition to their political friendships, Pew, Crane and Hutch supported such conservative causes as the Bricker Amendment, Eisenhower’s reorganization of the Department of Defense and the Hoover Commission Report on reorganizing the executive branch.

Access to those at the political center of the conservative movement was a hallmark of the network and again underscores the nature of the relationship between mainstream conservatives and the “ultra-conservatives.” While men like John Foster Dulles and Russell Kirk would never associate with Robert Welch or the John Birch Society, network members who supported many of his ideas, like Jasper Crane and B.E. Hutchinson, were personal friends. If, as Johnathon Schoenwald

⁴¹⁴ See B. E. Hutchinson to Robert Taft November 21, 1952 and Robert Taft to B. E. Hutchinson, November 28, 1952, BEH, Box 3, Folder 1.

⁴¹⁵ For more on J. Howard and Joseph Pew’s relationship to Republican politics, see *White Protestant...*, 73-75.

⁴¹⁶ Leonard Read to Jasper Crane, July 16, 1948, JEC, Box 34, FEE Folder 2.

argues, the conservative movement “grew up” and kicked Welch and other “Ultra-Conservatives” out⁴¹⁷, they were disassociating themselves with the style, not the substance. Networks, such as the Spiritual Mobilization network, maintained ties between the center and the fringes, ensuring strands of continuity even where outside observers saw stark differences. Like sinew, network members connected the political muscle and activism of grass-roots groups like the JBS to the bone of the mainstream movement.

Conclusion

Through all their political, economic and religious connections the network became a node of conservative economic, social and political action, often, as in the case of Crane and Cowling, bringing together people who otherwise would not have joined efforts. The network both gathered and disseminated. It gathered information on a host of activities and organizations on the right and disseminated that information, often by soliciting support from friends and acquaintances for those activities and organizations. Such dissemination and solicitation led individuals and groups to support causes they may otherwise have not supported, or even discovered. As they spread information and coordinated various activities and organizations network members also spread their ideology. In a letter to CEO James Doolittle, Hutch explained the necessity of conservative political action by asserting “I am a true revolutionist in our best American tradition. I believe in freedom. I believe in the individual’s responsibility for improving his own lot. I believe in private property. I do not believe that the state can be substituted for God as the benefactor of mankind.”⁴¹⁸ Thus through countless letters and private conversations, concepts such as Christian individualism, pagan stateism and Freedom Under God spread to a wider audience.

Cowling and Crane’s final exchange further illustrates the unifying effect of the network. In a letter written shortly before Cowling’s death, Crane not only reminisced about their shared fight

⁴¹⁷ Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing...*

⁴¹⁸ B. E. Hutchinson to James Doolittle, October 16, 1957, pg. 2, BEH, Box 21, D Folder.

against federal aid to education but asked Cowling's opinion of a revealing list of organizations and groups that Crane supported. Among those that Crane asked about were Robert LeFevre's Libertarian Freedom School⁴¹⁹, Fred Schwarz's Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, the Mont Pelerin Society and the ministry of Billy Graham.⁴²⁰ These four groups, all of which played critical roles in America's rightward turn, had no formal ties.⁴²¹ Network members support and solicitations on their behalf, however, brought them together in a way that was both meaningful and not readily apparent. Predating much of the political coordination that most people associate with the New Right, the Spiritual Mobilization network brought together economic, religious and politically conservative groups and actors under a shared ideology in the early postwar period.

In a quiet, consistent way the Spiritual Mobilization network brought focus, cohesion and ideological consistency to the beginnings of a movement that attracted economic libertarians like Leonard Read and religious traditionalists like Russell Kirk. While William Buckley, Frank Meyer and their "fusionism" brought together libertarian, anti-communist and conservative intellectuals and their ideas at a later date, Pew, Crane, Hutch, Mullendore and their broader network of businessmen, pastors, lay groups and intellectuals brought about a "fusion" in much more real and

⁴¹⁹ LeFevre and his Freedom School are a rather odd historical episode. LeFevre, who was an atheist, was an ardent Libertarian who founded his Freedom School in Colorado to help those who wanted to be educated in "freedom." LeFevre's school initially attracted immense support from network members and organizations such as Pew, Crane, Grede and FEE. LeFevre's more extreme Libertarianism, which bordered on Anarchy, coupled with his atheism eventually led to a break. As with Rand and Frank Chodorov, network members initially supported LeFevre because they felt the individualism that they taught was Christian in origin, even if Rand, Chodorov and LeFevre disagreed. Indeed in one revealing exchange a religious student of the Freedom School wrote a long report to Crane on how LeFevre's teaching presupposed a Supreme Being and noted that "All members of the class [which included Catholics, Protestants and Jews], upon completion of the course, agreed that there was nothing in Bob's philosophy which would infringe upon their religious beliefs." Ned Kimball to Jasper Crane, Jan 31, 1964, JEC, Box 38, Freedom School 62-64 Folder. For more on LeFevre and his Freedom School see Brian Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling History of the Modern American Libertarian Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007).

⁴²⁰ Donald Cowling to Jasper Crane, March 24, 1964, pg. 3, JEC, Box 6, Cowling 1959-1964 Folder.

⁴²¹ For more on Schwarz and the CACC's role in the growth of the conservative movement see Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). For more on the Mont Pelerin Society's role see Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets Since the Depression* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012) and for more on Billy Graham's role see Steven P Miller *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

more practical terms. Through their position in the religious, economic and political life of the country, and through their shared commitment to Spiritual Mobilization-inspired ideology, they laid the seeds for both the economic, and as underscored in the next chapter, the Religious Right. What they conceived as natural parts of the same ideology and worldview grew into a movement that did indeed change the economic, religious and political life of the country.

Chapter Five: Bridging the Gap from Spiritual Mobilization to *Christianity Today*

In 1950 a group of ministers headed by Norman Vincent Peale founded the Christian Freedom Foundation for the purpose of educating ministers “so that they may distinguish between right and wrong in the fields of politics, economics and sociology.”⁴²² While the groups seem unrelated on the surface, the Christian Freedom Foundation was in reality an extension of Spiritual Mobilization and from its inception had strong ties to the Foundation for Economic Education and the Spiritual Mobilization Network. In many senses the CFF became the culmination of what James Fifiield had started a decade and a half earlier with Spiritual Mobilization. Fifiield’s dream of sparking change in the political, economic and social life of the country by spreading a religiously based defense of the free market reached unprecedented fulfillment through the CFF and its flagship publication, *Christian Economics*.

Like its predecessors, the Christian Freedom Foundation became a node in the conservative movement that spread a spiritually inspired ideology. Specifically, the CFF spread the idea of Christian Capitalism or Christian economics; that the market worked best when bounded by Christian beliefs, virtues and behaviors rather than government regulation. The ideological ideas and theological arguments the CFF employed in disseminating Christian Capitalism resonated throughout the conservative movement. In particular, Howard Kershner and his *Christian Economics* magazine reached deep into the intellectual and theological mainspring of the evangelical movement through Billy Graham’s *Christianity Today*. In a surprising twist of intellectual influence, the Liberal theology of James Fifiield largely sparked the formation of the CFF, which in turn connected with conservative evangelicalism through *Christianity Today* and its editor Carl Henry. The postwar evangelical movement absorbed what started as a theologically liberal political project into its intellectual and theological center.

⁴²² Christian Freedom Foundation 1950 Memo, JHP, Box 180, CFF Folder.

Spiritual Mobilization and the Founding of the Christian Freedom Foundation

By the end of 1947, James Fifield was preparing to step down from his leadership position in Spiritual Mobilization. It had been a rough year for Fifield. In addition to the enormous amount of time and energy he had expended building up the vast First Congregationalist Church of Los Angeles and his parachurch organization Spiritual Mobilization, Fifield had been in and out of the hospital.⁴²³ Fifield's many projects, as well as his health concerns, led him to contemplate how to unburden himself from the leadership and fundraising for Spiritual Mobilization. Just as Fifield was beginning to look seriously into passing the Spiritual Mobilization torch, J. Howard Pew and the Reverend Norman Vincent Peale began making plans of their own. For some time, Pew and Peale had been looking independently for another organization to complement Spiritual Mobilization's efforts to reach the clergy with an economically and socially conservative message. While they felt that Spiritual Mobilization was doing important work, they wanted to extrapolate and magnify its efforts among protestant ministers. After a shared vacation in Hot Spring, GA, Peale and Pew began coordinating their efforts.

Pew and Peale's timing could not have been better. In addition to Fifield's desire to give up leading Spiritual Mobilization, Pew, along with Crane, had just agreed to form a businessman's committee to take all the fundraising for Spiritual Mobilization out of the hands of Fifield. Given this impetus, it was logical to discuss Peale taking the place of Fifield as head of Spiritual Mobilization.⁴²⁴ Instead of continuing Spiritual Mobilization as it was, however, they also agreed that it would be best to start a new organization. As Fifield put it to Peale "A fresh team is needed in this game. Spiritual Mobilization has backed the line without any compromise for more than 14 years. The crowd that have stood back of it and me are anathema in some quarters and a fresh

⁴²³ James Fifield to J. Howard Pew April 15, 1947, JHP, Box 14, Spiritual Mobilization Folder. In addition to surgery to repair a hernia, Fifield also spent some time in the hospital for a black widow spider bite he got while traveling back to California after an East coast swing for Spiritual Mobilization.

⁴²⁴ J. Howard Pew to Alfred Haake, April 16, 1948, JHP, Box 235, Haake 1946-1949 Folder.

team will score some immediate gains by reason of being a fresh team.”⁴²⁵ With this in mind, Fifield proposed to “turn over the whole country and all our contacts to your group” while Spiritual Mobilization would scale back to just the Los Angeles area and produce a journal of opinion.⁴²⁶ Fifield took concrete steps to carry this out, going so far as to send Spiritual Mobilization staff members to New York for Peale to interview.⁴²⁷

While the serendipitous timing of Fifield’s desire to retire coinciding with Peale and Pew’s desire to start a new organization ensured careful cooperation, the final product did not match what the three had initially envisioned. For three reasons, the Christian Freedom Foundation did not become a Peale-led organization nor did it replace Spiritual Mobilization. First, Peale was a reluctant leader. From the beginning he only agreed to assume the position provided Pew took responsibility for funding the organization. Even after agreeing to this, Fifield still had to write Peale and convince him that he could “handle this Spiritual Mobilization deal.” Ironically, given Peale’s future nationwide fame for his books and lectures, Fifield wrote that “this could be one of the big things of your life, and you could have a nationwide influence through it.”⁴²⁸ Second, Peale’s reluctance coupled with his growing fame led him to move slowly in gaining the ministerial support needed to give the organization enough influence to make a difference. Moreover, while Peale found plenty of sympathetic clergymen, initially he found few who were willing to give their names

⁴²⁵ March 21, 1949 James Fifield to Norman Vincent Peale, JHP, Box 23, P Folder.

⁴²⁶ Ibid. The journal of opinion Fifield referenced became *Faith and Freedom*.

⁴²⁷ See James Fifield to J. Howard Pew, February 10, 1949, Ibid. Fifield notes in the letter that Peale has already interviewed several Spiritual Mobilization employees. Additionally, Fifield wrote several letters to Pew and Peale asking their plans for Spiritual Mobilization employees. Fifield wanted to make sure he could tell those who worked for him what their future held.

⁴²⁸ James Fifield to Norman Vincent Peale, April 26, 1948, JHP, Box 19, Spiritual Mobilization Folder. Peale wrote a memo detailing what he considered his relationship to be to the future organization, a relationship that spelled out Peale’s unwillingness to be the driving force. He saw himself as playing more of an advisory role, with someone else overseeing most of the logistics of running the organization. He was unwilling to cut back his other commitments, except his lecture series. See September 23, 1948 Peale memo, JHP, Box 18, Peale Folder.

to the organization.⁴²⁹ Such delays led Fifield to repeatedly readjust his timeline and continue Spiritual Mobilization's operations in a stopgap manner.⁴³⁰ Third and finally, Fifield found that when the time came, he was not ready to step away from Spiritual Mobilization. Spiritual Mobilization's growing success proved too strong of a magnet for a minister who actively sought nationwide influence. Fifield indefinitely postponed any plans to step down when a General Motors-conducted study of Spiritual Mobilization's effectiveness led the corporation not only to give the maximum donation, but to encourage other corporations to follow suit. As part of the campaign GM insisted that Fifield continue to lead the organization, a demand that occurred almost immediately after Fifield realized that Peale's group would not be ready by the initial hand-off date.⁴³¹

With Fifield continuing Spiritual Mobilization and with Peale's hesitancy, the leadership of what became the Christian Freedom Foundation passed to Howard Kershner. By 1950, Kershner had built up an impressive resume. Born in 1891 in Tescott, Kansas, the life-long Quaker had a varied career. He graduated from the Quaker-run Friends' University before setting off to Harvard to study economics. Though he never officially finished a degree at Harvard, studying in Boston provided his first job opportunity; working in a Boston real estate office during the early years of World War I. By 1917, he was editing and publishing the Dodge City Daily Journal back in Kansas before joining the newspaper section of the War Industries Board the following year. After the war, Kershner got back into real estate, serving as a real estate operator in Boston, Kansas and Florida, fortuitously leaving the profession not long before the real estate bubble burst. In 1927, he moved to New York to serve as a publisher for the National American Society, holding the position for a

⁴²⁹ See for example Norman Vincent Peale to J. Howard Pew, November 15, 1948, Ibid. Peale reports that "The consensus seems to be that the swing to the left among ministers is too wide to be easily counteracted, and the conversations usually ends up by saying 'I don't want to get mixed up in it.'" Peale's letter underscores how much CFF, like Spiritual Mobilization, was a reaction to the perceived leftward trend among protestant ministers.

⁴³⁰ James Fifield to Norman Vincent Peale, March 21, 1949, JHP, Box 23, P Folder.

⁴³¹ See James Fifield to Norman Vincent Peale, May 10, 1949, Ibid.

little over a decade. It was in New York that Kershner published his first and only political book, *The Menace of Roosevelt and His Policies* (1936), which placed him firmly in the anti-New Deal camp.⁴³² After his retirement Kershner followed his Quaker beliefs to become a leading advocate for children during wartime. He personally founded or led, Feeding Spanish Refugees in France Committee (1939-1942); The International Committee for Child Refugees (1939-1952); Temporary Council on Food for European Children (1943-1945); and the Diplomatic Mission to South America on behalf of the United Nation's International Children's Fund. Additionally, Kershner served on the Executive Committee of Herbert Hoover's National Committee on Food for Small Democracies and as Vice Chairman of the Save the Children Foundation (1943-1945). With such a gleaming humanitarian record, no one could accuse Kershner of indifference to the world's underprivileged.

Kershner's work with Hoover's committee ended up paying dividends, as it was Hoover who introduced Kershner to the Spiritual Mobilization network.⁴³³ Peale, Pew and Fifield quickly discovered Kershner's background in economics, publishing and religious affairs, not to mention his shared belief in the Christianity of free enterprise, ideally suiting him for the new organization. Pew, Peale and Fifield first met Kershner in April of 1949 and by summer Pew and Peale had asked Kershner to head their still nameless new organization, to which he readily assented. By August, Fifield had moved his coordination efforts from Peale to Kershner. This initial coordination, however, proved short-lived as the Peale, Pew, Kershner group was far enough away from coming about that Kershner told Fifield to "operate as if we do not exist."⁴³⁴ Consequently, Fifield did his

⁴³² In all Kershner authored four books; a biography of leading Progressive and former Iowa Senator *William Squire Kenyon* (1931), the Quaker sounding *One Humanity* (1943) and the sectarian *Quaker Service in Modern War* (1950) in addition to his book on FDR.

⁴³³ See James Fifield to Howard Kershner, May 19, 1966, Box 6, Fifield Folder, Howard Kershner Papers, University of Oregon Special Collections.

⁴³⁴ James Fifield to Norman Vincent Peale Aug 9, 1949, JHP, Box 23, P Folder.

best to raise funds from Pew and other East coast supporters, particularly with the advent of *Faith and Freedom* in December 1949, despite their pending commitments to the new organization.⁴³⁵

In the end, though Spiritual Mobilization and the Christian Freedom Foundation largely operated independently from each other, their shared history, personnel and supporters, as well as ideology ensured no dramatic break in mission or purpose between them. Especially in its early years, Pew would often write or telephone Fifield and consult with him on various aspects of the Christian Freedom Foundation and *Christian Economics*.⁴³⁶ Kershner also struck up a somewhat erratic correspondence with Fifield, James Ingebretsen and *Faith and Freedom* editor Bill Johnson. Both organizations kept close tabs on the other, reading each other's periodicals and pamphlets and sometimes adjusting plans so as not to conflict or duplicate each other's efforts. For example, while preparing to send out a pamphlet that he and Pew thought of highly, Kershner learned that Fifield had already sent it out through Spiritual Mobilization and dropped the project.⁴³⁷

Over the ten years of their shared existence, both organizations shared authors, reprinted each other's articles and shared personnel. For example, economist Orvall Watts, who got his start addressing religious audiences through Spiritual Mobilization, wrote a fortnightly article for *Christian Economics*. Similarly Alfred Haake, who left his position at the American Economic Foundation to enthusiastically head Spiritual Mobilization's Chicago office until 1953, was one of *Christian Economics'* most frequent contributors. Much like Edmund Opitz to FEE, the Reverend Irving Howard got his start organizing conferences for Spiritual Mobilization only to jump to the CFF essentially doing the same thing. The two groups also shared supporters, with some of

⁴³⁵ In one such exchange Pew wrote to Fifield that he could not send him any money until the new organization was up and running as he [Pew] would not know "what my financial responsibilities are" until then. See J. Howard Pew to James Fifield, April 5, 1950, JHP, Box 27, S Folder.

⁴³⁶ For example, Pew wrote Fifield in December of 1950 to report on a recent CFF meeting and arrange a meeting so that they could discuss the organization of the CFF as well as some Spiritual Mobilization matters that Fifield wanted to bring to Pew's attention. See J. Howard Pew to James Fifield Dec. 12, 1950, Ibid.

⁴³⁷ December 31, 1951 Howard Kershner to J. Howard Pew, December 31, 1951, JHP, Box 181, 1951 CFF Folder.

Spiritual Mobilization's greatest followers among the clergy also serving on the Christian Freedom Foundation's Board of Directors.⁴³⁸ Additionally, while Peale and Pew did not end up hiring any Spiritual Mobilization employees directly, they did interview many of them and seriously considered hiring the Reverend Irving Merchant because of his contacts in Black Protestantism.⁴³⁹ The story of its founding and its relationship to James Fifield make it impossible to remove the Christian Freedom Foundation from the context of Spiritual Mobilization and its network.

The Theology and Thought of Howard Kershner

When he assumed the leadership of the Christian Freedom Foundation, Howard Kershner had formulated a way of thinking derived from his theology that bore remarkable similarities to James Fifield's. Like Fifield, Kershner embraced aspects of Liberal Protestantism, most pointedly the incorporation of evolution into Christian belief. Throughout his writings Kershner referred to evolution as "the creative process" and argued God's guiding hand was unmistakable in the course of man's evolution from formless single-celled organisms to increasingly distinct individuals, "creating something which might be said to be in His own image."⁴⁴⁰ While Kershner accepted a version of evolutionary theory, unlike Fifield he did not reject a conservative interpretation of the Bible and particularly of the events and purpose of Christ's life, including his redeeming sacrifice. Kershner repeatedly stressed what he viewed as the unalterable laws of God, coming across in his sermons and writings more like a fundamentalist preacher than a seeking Quaker. Kershner's incorporation of the evolutionary tenets of liberal theology into his own worldview demonstrates how much theological Liberalism had penetrated even among those who thought themselves propagating "old time religion."

⁴³⁸ The most obvious example of this is Norman Vincent Peale, but Reverends Norman Ream and Samuel Shoemaker, both long and enthusiastic supporters of Spiritual Mobilization, were early and prominent members of the CFF Board.

⁴³⁹ See for example J. Howard Pew to Howard Kershner, January 27, 1950, JHP, Box 180, CFF Folder.

⁴⁴⁰ Howard Kershner, *God, Gold and Government: The Interrelationship of Christianity, Freedom, Self-Government and Economic Well-Being* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1957), 133.

While evolution and a commitment to most traditional Christian doctrines come through most clearly in Kershner's thought and theology, his Quaker background did shine through at times. Kershner's emphasis on individualism, or the individual's relationship with God, is easily traceable to his Quaker roots. The Quaker tradition of individual seeking fit well with Fifield's own individualist theological emphasis and made the two ready theological and ideological allies. Kershner's Quakerism also came through in his distaste for religious hierarchy. Within the religious realm Kershner repeatedly and explicitly attacked ecumenical organizations such as the National Council of Churches as well as the movement to merge protestant churches.

Kershner fused his theology, which was a mix of mostly conservative with some liberal doctrines, with his view on economics. Showing his fundamentalist streak Kershner often declared thoughts such as "When it becomes clear to us that God's moral laws and his Economic laws are one and the same, we stop thinking in terms of left, right, middle and begin to think in terms of right and wrong."⁴⁴¹ Such simplistic, black and white views extended into his economics where his rigid thinking led him to statements such as "if you double capital investment you will automatically double production and thus automatically increase the standard of living."⁴⁴² For Kershner, putting his faith in such seemingly simple economic truisms echoed his faith in what he considered religious truisms, such as the Ten Commandments. In this worldview, religious faith and economic faith were one and the same.

Given his beliefs and economics, it is little surprise that Kershner reacted strongly to FDR's New Deal programs. In particular, FDR's decision to take the US off of the Gold Standard struck Kershner as a blatant violation of a basic economic, and religious, law. In his mind, going off the Gold Standard debased the US dollar, led to moral disintegration and eventually resulted in economic collapse. As he argued "Fiat money, printing-press money, or money without intrinsic

⁴⁴¹ *God, Gold and Government*, 49-50.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.* 79.

value is dishonest money, and, the moral law having been violated, moral degradation is inevitable. No one can escape the penalty of violating the moral law.” More importantly, going off the Gold Standard meant that Americans would lose faith in the future worth of the US dollar, cease saving and spend their money as fast as they could leading to an inflationary spiral that would look something like Weimar Germany in the late 1920s. This law was so exact and immutable that Kershner boldly prophesied that by the 1970s the US dollar would be worthless.⁴⁴³

In addition to FDR’s decision to leave the Gold Standard, Kershner saw increased income and corporate tax rates and the increased spending on social welfare programs as inimical to economic and moral law. Kershner argued that one of the most basic human rights was “the right to enjoy the fruits of one’s efforts.” Concurrently Kershner saw human progress as resting on mankind’s ability to save and invest in capital equipment and improvements, investment that taxes directly undercut. Turning those taxes over to social welfare programs meant people not only lost their right to the “fruits of their efforts,” but also encouraged debilitating dependence on the state and “in the last analysis, state aid involves state control.” The Welfare State thus became the road to total state control, and with total state control came conformity and the loss of individual personality. If all men received an education from the state, worked at jobs supplied by the state, lived in houses built by the state, subsisted on the same quotas, retired on the same social security, and were buried at government expense “how long could individuality persist under such circumstances?” The end result of such policies would be loss of “differentiation” and “uniqueness” as state control would “iron down flat” everyone’s personality.⁴⁴⁴

While the loss of individuality was horrifying on its own, Kershner saw the conformity of state control as something more sinister. For Kershner the evolutionary sweep of history had taken man from a single celled organism and had eventually endowed him with greater and greater

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 133-134.

individuality and uniqueness. Progress was the continued evolution of man into “something which might be said to be in [God’s] own image.” State control was thus “a reversal of God’s design” because it would “begin the process of reducing individuals to the level of a common denominator. It would force them into a common mold and destroy individuality.”⁴⁴⁵ New Deal policies were thus retrogressive, working against God’s design as evidenced by the march of history.

Howard Kershner did not confine himself to opposing the New Deal on account of his theologically infused economics, he also put forth a positive vision. He argued that human progress, most clearly manifest in the United States, resulted from “God-worshipping” and obeying the Ten Commandments, an “honest gold-standard currency system,” strictly limited government and what he called Christian Capitalism or Christian economics. Drawing a parallel between economic law and God’s law as found in the Old Testament, Kershner argued that just as Christ transformed the law of the Old Testament into the New Testament, the economic law of the “free market system” needed to be Christianized. In its simplest form Christian economics meant applying “the love which Jesus taught” to “free-market economics.” Such a Christianization of the economic order “produces what I call Christian economics – the best hope of conquering poverty and making material and spiritual wellbeing available to all.”⁴⁴⁶ In other words the necessary regulation of the market best occurred through individual acceptance of Christ and his teachings, not by materialistic government laws.

In Kershner’s worldview converted Christians naturally operated in the free market the way God intended. Christian virtues, such as self-denial through saving capital, would bring about greater efficiency and universal prosperity. Charity would keep men from exploiting the freedom of the market and lead them to voluntarily assist those in less fortunate circumstances. Mutually living the Ten Commandments would ensure that men could trust each other, leading them to enter

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 53.

contracts with full confidence in the other party. Inventions and the creation of wealth would be as much a product of a desire to serve each other as a desire to earn money. Christian Capitalists would literally usher in the Kingdom of God.

As his worldview attests, Kershner embraced a post-millennial theological view of ushering in the Kingdom of God by perfecting society. In this sense Kershner and his theology was just as much a product of Progressivism as the Social Gospel. Where Kershner differed from those who embraced the Social Gospel was his contention that progress, or Progressivism, was inseparably tied to limited government. For Kershner the perfection of society would come about because of decreasing government power and increasing religious freedom. Other Progressives, like social gospelers, saw government as necessary for perfecting society. Such dependence on state power led Kershner to argue that the Social Gospel sought to rely on the “arm of the flesh” rather than trust the grace of God. For Kershner God would bring about the perfection of society through his natural evolutionary process. The freedom of the market was God’s mechanism for perfecting society, a mechanism that worked in proportion to mankind’s embrace of Christianity. God’s purposes would come to pass, unless a turning away from the market to state power smothered God’s chosen instrument for the progress of humanity. Only pagan stateism could thwart God’s design.

While certainly bold and with some consistent internal logic of its own, Kershner’s worldview contained several notable blind spots. Perhaps Kershner’s greatest blind spot was his failure to recognize that even converted Christians could unintentionally exploit or injure. He himself noted that good intentions were not enough, but he gave a pass to converted Christians operating in a “free” society. Additionally, Kershner thought private charity in a Christianized order would meet the needs of the poor. He did not see how imperfect Christians could arbitrarily designate some as “worthy poor” and provide them with charity while others, for reasons of race,

religion, gender or some other indicator of otherness could receive designation as “unworthy” and thus lose out on needed assistance. Even more pointedly, Kershner saw poverty as the product of poor moral character and government intervention, denying the economic impact of societal structures and biases such as Jim Crow and racism that grew within a Capitalist system. Indeed, Kershner’s own thought is rife with the racial thinking of his time, for example arguing that Native Americans were representative of “Mass-man,” and in comparison with varied and individualistic white European settlers, further down the evolutionary ladder and thus further from God.⁴⁴⁷

Kershner’s economic thinking included similar blind spots and contradictions. When analyzing the Great Depression, Kershner completely ignored the international aspects of that financial crisis. Instead he compared it with the postwar recession in 1920, arguing that the United States could have avoided the depression of the 1930s if the US had stuck to the Gold Standard, retired its debt and not protected workers’ wages, policies all followed in 1920. Interestingly, Kershner argued that low interest rates led to the Great Depression by encouraging borrowing and speculation. In other words, an overabundance of capital led to specious speculation resulting in the crash. This is a stunning admission for someone who argued that capital accumulation was “the best hope of conquering poverty and making material and spiritual wellbeing available to all.” While Kershner could have argued that such an overabundance of capital would not have led to irresponsible speculation in a Christianized capitalist order, it is telling that he instead places the blame on government rather than calling for the conversion of capitalist speculators.

Undeniably biased, inconsistent and at times contradictory, Kershner’s theology and thought still had enough substance to make a mark in the marketplace of ideas. While interesting in its own right, Kershner’s thought and worldview become much more important in the context of the Christian Freedom Foundation. Like James Fifield and Leonard Read, Howard Kershner had an

⁴⁴⁷ *God, Gold and Government* 131-132.

organization and platform to disperse his thought and magnify his influence. Using the megaphone of the CFF, Kershner found that his ability to tie economics and theology together in such stark terms resonated with many Americans. Going forward, he embedded his theological ideology in the CFF and joined his predecessors in building a movement.

Spiritual Mobilization, the Foundation for Economic Education and the Ideology of the Christian Freedom Foundation

The Christian Freedom Foundation's organizational focus, chief backers and its ideology clearly demonstrate how much it followed in the footsteps of Spiritual Mobilization as well as Leonard Read's Foundation for Economic Education. In many ways the CFF was the offspring of Spiritual Mobilization and FEE, inheriting key traits directly from one or both of its predecessors. Like Spiritual Mobilization, it was an explicitly religious organization that directly targeted the clergy with its message. From FEE, it inherited its focus on economic education. Thus one of its earliest pamphlets blended the two missions by calling on ministers to pledge themselves to "restore integrity through the Christian religion and promote widespread economic education in the hope of preserving our free, western Christian civilization."⁴⁴⁸ This blending is not at all surprising given that Spiritual Mobilization network members like Pew and Crane were as instrumental in getting the CFF up and running as they were FEE. The Christian Freedom Foundation was the natural product of a group of men inspired by Spiritual Mobilization and dedicated to FEE's economic evangelism.

While the organizational mission of the Christian Freedom Foundation clearly exhibits the mixed traits of its parentage, its ideology demonstrates just how much the CFF sprang from Spiritual Mobilization and FEE. Through its magazine, *Christian Economics*, which Howard Kershner edited, the Christian Freedom Foundation targeted ministers with its concepts, beliefs and worldview just as Spiritual Mobilization did. Unlike Spiritual Mobilization's *Faith and Freedom*,

⁴⁴⁸ Liberty's Minutemen Pamphlet, Ibid.

whose circulation hovered between 20 and 30 thousand, *Christian Economics* reached a much larger percentage of ministers, hitting 90,000 in its first year and eventually peaking at a circulation of nearly 300,000. An examination of *Christian Economics* demonstrates how much its ideology built on Spiritual Mobilization's core principles and absorbed FEE's economic ideas while adding some contributions of its own.

Like its predecessors, the core idea or belief behind the Christian Freedom Foundation was Christian Individualism. Agreeing with Fifield and Leonard Read, the CFF and its supporters argued that the Declaration of Independence was an affirmation that "the individual as a child of God receives from God certain inalienable rights." In other words, individualism was Christian because God individually endowed men with certain rights and thus individualism, or individual rights, naturally sprang from a [Christian] belief in God. Furthermore, because this Christian individualism was enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, it proved that America's greatness came from this "great Christian philosophy which is the very foundation stone" on which America, and its prominence, rested.⁴⁴⁹

In addition to the natural rights argument about the Christianity of individualism, CFF and its supporters also believed that Christ's message was for society through the individual. As Howard Kershner reasoned "Jesus emphasized individual regeneration as the way to salvation for humanity." Christ and his message aimed at changing society through the individual, consequently Jesus "relied entirely on the regeneration of individuals to solve" problems of human want and need such as unemployment and poverty.⁴⁵⁰ CFF employee Irving Howard further clarified this point by arguing that Jesus's "focal point was always upon the individual rather than the group." Consequently when Jesus told the rich young ruler to go and sell all that he had and give it to the poor, Jesus's concern was not with "the welfare of the poor but [with] the welfare of the Rich Young

⁴⁴⁹ Francis Corkey, "The Soul and Spirit of America," *Christian Economics*, Sept 17, 1956, pg. 4.

⁴⁵⁰ "Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me," *Christian Economics*, September 26, 1950, pg. 5.

Ruler's soul."⁴⁵¹ Howard similarly argued that the parables of the Talents and the Good Samaritan are more about individual motivations and desires than a concern with socially desirable outcomes.

This theologically based individualism led CFF supporters to assert, "Jesus was the supreme individualist of history" because he "showed an extreme regard for the value of the individual."⁴⁵² Even more to the economic point, Alfred Haake argued against state-intervention in the economy because it sought "to solve the problems of mankind by changing economic systems" without following Christ's method of "changing [individual] men and women."⁴⁵³ Consequently, New Deal programs were not just morally wrong, but doomed to failure as well because "the answer is not in economics, or politics, but in religion." So, as one *Christian Economics* headline argued America's "Hope in Individuals, not Parties."⁴⁵⁴ Along similar lines Irving Howard aimed his article "What Did Jesus Believe About Wealth" at the "many who are honestly convinced that...a welfare state is nearer to the ethic of Jesus than so-called 'rugged individualism.'"⁴⁵⁵ Thus the starting point of the CFF's theology was a belief in the inherent Christianity of individualism.

As with Spiritual Mobilization and the Foundation for Economic Education, the CFF's conception of Christian Individualism led it to argue that state-power was anti-Christian or pagan. Individual rights, in their belief, came from God. The state interfered with those natural, God-given rights when it tried to mandate and protect other rights such as freedom from want. Like its predecessors, the CFF saw a natural conflict between God's power and state power. As American Economic Foundation president Fred Clark argued in the pages of *CE*, "practicing Christians would rather die on their feet as God's children than live on their knees as wards of the state." For Clark, the central issue was a choice between "security through obedience to the State" or "security

⁴⁵¹ "What Did Jesus Believe About Wealth," *Christian Economics*, May 3, 1955, pg. 4.

⁴⁵² "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing" *Christian Economics*, Sept 26, 1950, pg. 2.

⁴⁵³ Alfred Haake "We Need a Revolution," *Christian Economics*, October 10, 1950, pg. 4.

⁴⁵⁴ "Hope in Individuals, not Parties," *Christian Economics*, Sept 6, 1955, pg. 1.

⁴⁵⁵ "What Did Jesus...", pg. 1.

through obedience to the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule.” Sadly, Clark concluded, increasing state power was “evidence that our trust in God is on the wane.”⁴⁵⁶

Howard Kershner and the CFF not only incorporated pagan stateism into their ideology, they built on and clarified Fifield’s concept. In an editorial entitled “God or the Devil,” Kershner unpacked pagan stateism’s God v. State dichotomy. He argued, “Men cannot live in a vacuum. If they are not conscious of the directing sustaining power of God, they will seek direction and support from the state.”⁴⁵⁷ When men sought support from the state they became wards or slaves to the state as “the state cannot supply economic planning and sustenance for the people without controlling their thinking demanding their loyalty and enforcing obedience by propaganda and coercion.” In this worldview, there were no other possibilities, or shades of gray; men either became servants of God or slaves of the state. Kershner, however, did not stop there. He posited, “the choice before us is one we always have faced and always will face—God or the devil.” From this widely accepted Christian dichotomy, Kershner then built his case for pagan stateism by arguing “How did the devil become the devil anyway? Because he sought to supplant God. When an individual or combination of individuals, such as the state, endeavors to do that, the result is the same.”⁴⁵⁸ For Kershner and the CFF, the state was pagan because it was a man-made entity that sought through its actions to supplant loyalty to God as the supreme ruler, and benefactor, in men’s lives. In this view the state was literally satanic.

Like Fifield and Read, Kershner and the CFF used the God vs. State dichotomy at the heart of pagan stateism to draw a contrast with Freedom Under God. If, as they argued, state power turns men to slaves, then obedience to God and his laws gives men freedom. Alfred Haake contended that freedom comes from “on high” through “self-discipline and self-reliance under the Ten

⁴⁵⁶ “Why Communists Hate Christ,” *Christian Economics*, Sept 26, 1950, pg. 4.

⁴⁵⁷ “God or the Devil,” *Christian Economics*, August 1, 1954, pg. 1.

⁴⁵⁸ “Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods Before Me,” *Christian Economics*, Sept 26, 1950, pg. 4.

Commandments and the Two Great Laws of Jesus.”⁴⁵⁹ If men have the faith to follow God’s laws they will resist Communist and “totalitarian” efforts to enslave them because the will to resist growing state power “is weak among men who only place their faith in other men, but the Christian will to resist is staunch and stubborn.” This resistance naturally sprang from a belief “that God is the source of man’s natural right to liberty” and consequently “man’s faith in God” leads him to “exercise that right.” For the CFF and its supporters, without faith in God, men cannot understand the nature of freedom and are thus likely to lose it. Those with such faith, however, secure their freedom by resisting the enslaving siren song of state security.

Underlying the God v. State dichotomy was a perceived conflict between Marxian inspired materialism and Godly spirituality. When Haake contended that men with faith in God resisted growing state power he was making an argument about the relationship between men’s material condition and their spiritual faith. For Haake, those who advocated for expanding the state’s role played on people’s economic fears, their material condition, to get them to accept state power. Such fears, he argued, focused only on the material, debasing men and women by denying the spiritual plane of existence reached by people of faith⁴⁶⁰. Those who advocated for state power viewed men as “brutes” who can “only progress as far as an Omnipotent Government improves their environment.” This “materialistic, mechanistic view of man” showed “the essential evil” of communism and “Welfare Statism.” In contrast, the CFF offered a vision of men as children of God who through faith develop a “source of strength and courage that overcomes panic and despair.” Such men “do not fear temporary [economic] suffering” because they see a larger purpose to life and trust God, and Christian Charity, to bring about that purpose.⁴⁶¹ In essence the CFF argued that those who look only at people’s immediate economic conditions failed to see the far more

⁴⁵⁹ “We Need a Revolution....” pg. 4.

⁴⁶⁰ “Why Communists Hate Christ,” *Christian Economics*, Dec 5, 1950, Pg. 4.

⁴⁶¹ “Why Communists in Government?,” *Christian Economics*, Feb 26, 1952, pg. 4.

important spiritual principles at work in men's economic lives. Those absorbed in the material failed to understand that "It is the Spirit that Quickeneth; the Flesh Profiteth Nothing."⁴⁶²

Like Spiritual Mobilization, the Christian Freedom Foundation's concepts of Christian Individualism, pagan stateism and the supremacy of spiritual principles came together in a focused attack on the Social Gospel. As with Spiritual Mobilization and its publications, the CFF attempted to lump all of its critics and enemies, such as the National Council of Churches, under the banner of the Social Gospel. Also like Spiritual Mobilization, and to a lesser extent FEE, the CFF defined the Social Gospel in terms of state power. As Howard Kershner argued in one of several editorials aimed at the Social Gospel "'the social gospel' has come to mean government action looking toward a redistribution of wealth."⁴⁶³ This association of the Social Gospel with government programs, particularly with economic regulation and welfare, enabled the CFF to attack it as anti-individualist and thus anti-Christian. For example, Irving Howard charged, "under its moralizing cloak the 'Social Gospel' is a justification for political coercion that implicitly denies the sanctity of the individual will." Furthermore, Howard asserted, "because of its acceptance of environmentalism, it held a low view of the dignity of human personality. Man in its opinion is a mud puddle, the aggregate of whatever man's surrounding put into him, rather than a soul coming from God 'trailing clouds of glory.'"⁴⁶⁴ For Howard, the Social Gospel's cardinal sin was not simply its reliance on political coercion to achieve its ends, but rather that its emphasis on society led it to lose sight of the heritage and potential of the individual.

Howard's attack on the Social Gospel also underlines another reason why the CFF, and other Spiritual Mobilization inspired groups, focused so much time and energy refuting its alleged arguments; the Social Gospel emphasized the material at the expense of the spiritual. Howard's

⁴⁶² "Spirit Quickenth..."

⁴⁶³ "The Social Gospel," *Christian Economics*, Nov 25, 1952, pg. 1.

⁴⁶⁴ "God, Man and History," *Christian Economics*, Dec 29, 1954, Pg. 4.

assertion that the Social Gospel had accepted “environmentalism” was really an accusation that it had traded its spiritual birthright for a mess of materialistic pottage. Thus the Social Gospel had lost its Christianity and had so perverted the Gospel that it apostatized from “the spiritual to the secular.” Additionally, its calls for state action showed that its proponents had “lost faith in the redeeming power of the Gospel of Christ not only to save men from their sins” but to “transform society” as well. Such “appeals to the state” showed that they “have more faith in the power of the policeman than in the power of their ministry” and thus “whether they realize it or not, they are praying to the State rather than God.” As the CFF’s concept of pagan stateism implied, this apparent loss of faith and “statolatry” was the result of the devil assuming “the seductive attire of the ‘social gospel’ or the welfare state” in an attempt “again to supplant God.” In its perversion the Social Gospel was leading to an apostasy “from repentance and salvation to redemption by physical means,” or from spirituality to materialism, and was consequently “anti-christ.”⁴⁶⁵ Much like McCarthyism’s charge that left leaning politicians and groups were dangerous because they were being “duped” by communists, the CFF charged left leaning clergymen were dangerous because they were being “duped” by the devil inspired social gospel.

While the CFF’s attacks on left-leaning “social gospellers” sprang from its shared ideology with Spiritual Mobilization and FEE, its pervasive moral jeremiads condemning American culture and politics echoed similar denunciations from postwar evangelicalism. While “neo-evangelicalism’s” cultural critiques only occasionally crossed over into economics, the CFF explicitly tied its moral jeremiads to economic issues. Most common was the CFF’s link between moral degeneracy and inflation. As Howard Kershner argued “Disintegration of moral standards has always accompanied the abandonment of money of intrinsic value.”⁴⁶⁶ Even more to the point Irving Howard argued that inflation was “the most obvious symptom of moral irresponsibility” as it

⁴⁶⁵ “The Social Gospel...”

⁴⁶⁶ “The Cause of American Prosperity,” *Christian Economics*, Dec 2, 1952, pg. 1.

was the product of “the demand of a citizenry trained to expect something for nothing from its bureaucrats.” This demand, naturally, was the product of the United States abandoning the gold standard.⁴⁶⁷

While the CFF frequently blamed America’s economic problems on the moral degeneracy of the American people, it also argued that its economic successes were the product of righteous living. As Kershner argued in his editorial “The Cause of American Prosperity,” America had risen to economic prominence because “The founding fathers believed in God. They worshiped him...they respected virtue and integrity. They practiced honesty and truthfulness. They were self-reliant, thrifty and frugal. These qualities beget prosperity.”⁴⁶⁸ Even the theologically liberal Harry Emerson Fosdick conceded in the pages of *Christian Economics* “It took character, personal and public integrity to build this nation. And without such character our people...will disgrace their past heritage.”⁴⁶⁹ Such bromides, however essential, were not enough. As Kershner pointed out at the end of his editorial, American prosperity came from Christian morals and virtues coupled with “the right to own private property, sound money of intrinsic value, free market economics and limited government,” or what he termed Christian economics.⁴⁷⁰

Kershner’s assertion that Christian morals and virtues were not enough highlights that like Read and FEE, the CFF did not see the free market, or Capitalism, as necessarily inherently moral or Christian. In his article “The Spirit Quickeneth...” R. J. Van Pelt noted, “no economic system is Christian in and of itself.”⁴⁷¹ Similarly Kershner argued that “Free-market capitalism, as such, is neither Christian nor anti-Christian: it is non-Christian.” Like Leonard Read and his concern for the “moral market,” Kershner went on to argue “There is a great difference between free-market capitalism by immoral, non-Christian men and free-market capitalism conducted by moral or

⁴⁶⁷ “Where Are We Going?” *Christian Economics*, July 3, 1959, pg. 4.

⁴⁶⁸ “Cause of American Prosperity...”

⁴⁶⁹ “God and Liberty,” *Christian Economics*, Dec 2, 1952, pg. 1.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ “The Spirit Quickeneth...”

Christian men.” Not unsurprisingly, for Kershner moral was the equivalent of Christian in this context. The distinction that Kershner and the CFF drew between Capitalism and Christian Capitalism allowed it to argue, “such faults as have developed in [capitalism] are due to the personal factors involved – to the capitalists rather than capitalism.” In addition to allowing Kershner and the CFF to whitewash the failures of Capitalism, this differentiation between Christianity and the market allowed them to take the position that their version of economics was not reactionary or regressive but progressive. They conceded that Capitalism had not always delivered what it promised, not because the system had any real faults, but because the men running the system had faults. Changing men, not the system, was the real solution to America’s economic troubles. Thus what they were proposing was something new, something never before fully tried, the free market bounded not by government regulation, but by the Christian morals and ethics of those participating in it.

The CFF’s argument that what they were proposing had never been fully tried allowed them to argue that they were as concerned, if not more concerned, about America’s poor as those who backed state-run welfare. To Kershner’s credit, he did not dismiss the economic struggles of the less fortunate in America. In the inaugural issue of *Christian Economics* Kershner’s lead editorial noted “Although we are the richest nation in the world, there is still much bitter poverty and suffering in our country. One has only to look around him in the cities, the small villages and even in the rural districts to see the evidences of undernourishment, lack of medical care, discouragement and look of hopelessness in the faces of large numbers of people. We are very far from having solved our economic problems.” From this premise, however, Kershner argued that true Christians should support “the economic system that will bring the greatest degree of well-being to the greatest number of people,” or Capitalism. For Kershner such support meant living a Christian life in the free market as “Christian character [is] the starting point for the application of sound economics.” In other words, America’s current economic problems, most pointedly poverty,

stemmed not from Capitalism but a lack of Christianity. Kershner and the CFF's stated goal was to relieve poverty in America through Christianizing the most efficient economic system available.⁴⁷²

Though differentiating between Christianity and the Market, Kershner and the CFF made it quite clear that the difference between the two was almost inconsequential when compared to the alternatives. Not only was the coercion of a state planned economy anti-Christian, any attempts to Christianize it would inevitably fail because, like inflation, it naturally produced moral degeneracy. Capitalism, on the other hand, had much greater promise of "attaining the desirable goals of better living from both the material and spiritual standpoints than any other system."⁴⁷³ Indeed, Kershner argued that "the best service that one can render is to work hard, save money, build up capital goods and find more efficient means of producing wealth." Capitalism, when practiced correctly and seen in the proper light, not only lifted people "out of suffering and degradation" it was "a Christian service which has brought hope to a wretched world."⁴⁷⁴ Even more to the point, CFF employee Percy Greaves argued that Jesus's commandment to "love others as we love ourselves" is perfectly embodied in a free market system where "each person helps himself [i.e. makes money] as he helps others [i.e. produces more and cheaper goods more efficiently]." Abandoning Capitalism would make "us sink to the level of those whose low material standards are primarily due to the fact that they do not understand the true significance of the mutual benefits that flow from the perfect practice of the second Great Commandment."⁴⁷⁵ Christianity and Capitalism went together so well because Capitalism, when properly understood and applied, actually encouraged Christian values.

Taken all together, the ideology of the CFF sought to link Capitalism and Christianity as the only workable, and moral, economic path for the country. This emphasis on what they perceived as

⁴⁷² "We Believe," *Christian Economics*, Sept 26, 1950, pg.1.

⁴⁷³ "Christian Capitalism," *Christian Economics*, Oct 29, 1957, pg. 1.

⁴⁷⁴ "Jesus and the Profit System," *Christian Economics*, Sept 26, 1950, pg. 1.

⁴⁷⁵ "Equation of Love," *Christian Economics*, Jan 24, 1956, Pg. 1.

practicality led them to repeatedly blast their opponents as starry-eyed dreamers unaware of the devastating contradictions in their economic ideology. Ironically, the CFF's solution to the country's economic problems was as utopian as their opponents. In essence the CFF argued that Capitalism would only work to everyone's benefit when those engaged in the market practiced self-regulation through Christian character. In other words, all those practicing free enterprise needed to be Christian, or at least embrace Christian morals and virtues, to make the system work. Given their Christian belief in the fallen state of mankind, hope that such a system was possible and sustainable was as much of a pipe-dream as any Socialist Utopian novel of the late 19th century. One side argued that changing the economic system would lead to a utopian society, the other that only changed or converted men and women would actually bring about such a society. This was an argument over means, not ends.

In their clearer moments, those who supported the CFF noted that theirs was a daunting task. For example, Percy Greaves noted, "that we never tried free enterprise any more than we tried Christianity. It's an ideal for which we struggle, but its attachment with mortal man is extremely difficult and probably will not be accomplished until we have a truly Christian world."⁴⁷⁶ As Greaves's quote illustrates, they recognized how much their economic ideology depended on the spread of Christian morals, and thus they emphasized evangelism as much as libertarian economics. *Christian Economics* ran articles written by Austrian economist Ludwig Von Mises side-by-side with calls to "Evangelize America Now."⁴⁷⁷ In his editorials, Howard Kershner would alternate between extolling the Christian virtues of the profit motive and other pillars of capitalist economics with calls to "Evangelism and Bible-study" as "essential to preserving our free way of life."⁴⁷⁸ Seen in this light, *CE's* moral jeremiads were as essential to promoting economic well being as private property and government deregulation. Like *Fifield* and *Spiritual Mobilization*, the CFF and its supporters

⁴⁷⁶ "Freedom Never Failed" Pamphlet by Percy Greaves, JHP, Box 181, 1952 CFF Folder.

⁴⁷⁷ "Evangelize America Now," *Christian Economics*, Aug 1, 1954, pg. 4.

⁴⁷⁸ "God or the Devil..."

were economic anti-Gnostics claiming there was no possible way to completely separate the economic laws of this life from eternal salvation in the next. America's economic problems would disappear proportionally to Americans' embrace of Christianity, and rejection of the pagan state. Such an economic ideology demanded a rigorous faith.

This blending of religious and economic "truths" not only highlighted the CFF's ideological appeal, but also underscored its blind spots. For Christian individualists who saw personal and economic salvation as one and the same, systemic or societal explanations of economic and other ills were simply inconceivable. Unsurprisingly, they argued that poverty stemmed from moral failings and not from systemic injustice. In an article that called into question how much the CFF empathized with America's poor, *Christian Economics* argued that "the blame for the distress of most low income families cannot be placed primarily on our economic system, but is due to the breakdown of human relations (broken homes) and to acts of God (death and disability)."⁴⁷⁹ Similarly, this atomistic view of humans and society meant that those who supported the CFF were blind to systemic racial and gender injustices. In their minds, racial, gender and other biases did not exist outside the individual. It was unimaginable that a society made up of Christians could unfairly advantage some at the expense of others. Individuals could always sin, but their sins were individual and thus incapable of being magnified at the level of society. The only way society as whole could sin was through the state. Thus the CFF never spoke out in support of Civil Rights, even though it did not consciously embrace a white supremacist worldview. Like many in the broader evangelical movement, they did not see the need for Civil Rights legislation even while considering racism a sin.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ "U.S. Low Income Families not so many or So Low," *Christian Economics*, Sept 26, 1950, pg. 6.

⁴⁸⁰ For more on evangelicals and Civil Rights See Alex Schafer, *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicalism from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011).

The Christian Freedom Foundation and the Continuity of Economic Ideology from Spiritual Mobilization to Christianity Today

Even after helping found the Christian Freedom Foundation, J. Howard Pew remained unsatisfied. Though pleased with the work that the CFF, and to a lesser extent, Spiritual Mobilization were doing in reaching ministers across the country, he felt that more needed doing. As he explained to fellow industrialist John Young, "it is just as important to have conservatism in theology as it is to have conservatism in economics and sociology."⁴⁸¹ While the CFF and Spiritual Mobilization were doing a good job of propagating Christian based economic conservatism, in Pew's opinion, neither had much to say on theological issues. In other words, while reaching ministers with an economically and socially conservative message was all well and good, unless backed up by proper theological understanding, it was insufficient. Pew, who believed that theological liberalism, namely the social gospel, was the root of social and economic liberalism, also believed that theological conservatism went hand-in-hand with social and economic conservatism. As he argued in another letter "ministers who [are] conservative in their theology [are] also conservative in their economic and social philosophy."⁴⁸² Thus, Pew saw the lack of a major religious publication standing for traditional Christian doctrines such as the divinity of Christ and the sinfulness of man as a serious problem.

⁴⁸¹ J. Howard Pew to Joseph Young, June 18, 1957, JHP Box 53, Christianity Today Folder.

⁴⁸² J. Howard Pew to Jeremiah Milbank, June 20, 1957, Ibid.. This may seem like a surprising contention given Pew was well aware that Fifiield's own theological liberalism had not kept him from supporting economic and social conservatism. It appears that Pew thought of Fifiield as something of an exception to the rule. It also shows the bias of his conviction. It was not all that shocking that a theological liberal could be economically and socially conservative, but to Pew's mind no theological conservative could in good conscience support economic and social liberalism. Truth only flowed in one direction.

Pew was not the only one who saw the need for a theologically conservative publication. Billy Graham, whom Pew met and started corresponding with in 1954, shared Pew's conviction that ministers needed a theologically conservative magazine. While Graham thought of the magazine primarily in terms of a theological follow-up to his crusades, he shared Pew's belief in the relationship between theology, economics and social philosophy. As Graham had written to Pew from his highly successful Crusade in Scotland, the conservative theological revival he was orchestrating "also affects the political and social outlook tremendously." Indeed, the economic and social subtext of Billy Graham's crusades was often hard to ignore. While preparing for his 1954 Crusade to England, the Billy Graham Evangelical Association put together a mock-up of a poster that asserted England had lost its historic Christian faith during and after WW II. The text of the poster drew a firm line between England's loss of faith and its current political, social and economic policies, noting, "And when the war ended a sense of frustration and disillusionment gripped England and what Hitler's bombs could not do, Socialism with its accompanying evils shortly accomplished."⁴⁸³ While not as outspoken as Pew, Graham shared his conviction that theological conservatism would push people's political and social views in the Right direction.

Graham and Pew soon joined forces with Harold Ockenga and Graham's father-in-law Nelson Bell to found what has become the premiere evangelical magazine of the past 60 years, *Christianity Today*. While not the driving force for the magazine, Pew, through his friendship with Graham and Ockenga, was intimately involved in getting *Christianity Today* up and running. He almost single-handedly kept the magazine financially afloat during its early years, underwriting its cost entirely for its first year of publication. Pew's role extended beyond financial angel, however, as he brought aboard associate editor Dr. Marcellus Kik and guaranteed everyone associated with the magazine shared his beliefs as well as his political, economic and social views. Pew ensured

⁴⁸³ William C. Martin, *A Prophet With Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991), 175.

that, in the words of Harold Ockenga, “we publishers of this magazine ...are at considerable liberty to express ourselves...especially to counteract some of the left-wing philosophy of the Christian Century and kindred magazines.”⁴⁸⁴ Like with Billy Graham’s Crusade in England, there was a political, economic and social subtext to *Christianity Today*.

One of the earliest indications of which way the magazine leaned was in a Declaration of Principles circulated among the founders of *Christianity Today*. Unsurprisingly, the Declaration started off with a number of traditional evangelical doctrinal points; a belief in God, the Bible and Christ as divine mediator. What is unique about the Declaration is that under each stated and numbered point is a definition of what the statement is not. A belief in God, as opposed to atheism, naturalism and positivism; a belief in the Bible as opposed to the relative authority of other ethical systems; a belief in Christ as Mediator as opposed to Christ as only a good man, example or teacher. Mixed in with traditional evangelical doctrines, however, are several principles with decided political, economic and social implications. Thus, in a clear shot at the National Council of Churches, point five states, “We believe in the church as essentially spiritual... vs. All conceptions and uses of the church for political propaganda, or of social lobbying, or of class interests.” Similarly, point six so embodied the Christian libertarian position it sounds like Howard Kershner or James Fifield wrote it. It asserts, “We believe that society is most Christian in which free, moral men rule themselves according to the laws of God and nature vs. all resort to legislative direction of work, income, speech, ballot, property and worship.”⁴⁸⁵ Thus, from its founding *Christianity Today*’s political, economic and social subtext leaned to the right.

Pew’s involvement with *Christianity Today* ensured that the Christian and libertarian organizations he supported found ready access to the publishers, editors and pages of *Christianity Today*. Within months of its first issue, *Christianity Today* and *Christian Economics* put each other

⁴⁸⁴ Harold Ockenga to J. Howard Pew, September 14, 1955, JHP, Box 44, O Folder.

⁴⁸⁵ Declaration of Principles, JHP, Box 53, Christianity Today Folder.

on their exchange lists, sending a free copy of every issue to the other publication.⁴⁸⁶ The level of cooperation between the two magazines, however, went well beyond a mutual exchange of ideas. As editor of *Christianity Today*, Carl Henry frequently corresponded with both Pew and Howard Kershner on articles he was thinking of publishing that contained economic content. Thus, when former union leader Kermit Eby wrote an article critical of modern unionism, Henry sent it to both Kershner and Pew for approval. Kershner responded with lukewarm support as he felt that Eby's critique of unions did not fall within the proper Christian libertarian framework. In a somewhat conspiratorial sounding letter that underscores the political and economic subtext of *Christianity Today*, Pew wrote Kershner at Henry's behest to ask him to set aside his reservations, as not running the article would deprive *Christianity Today* "of a critique of organized labor from within labor and be driven to a criticism wholly from the outside."⁴⁸⁷ In other words, while *Christianity Today* and *Christian Economics* both sought to attack and undermine labor, Pew and Henry felt that the appearance of balance was more important to *Christianity Today*'s efforts than putting the critique in a more libertarian context.

Exchanges like the one between Henry, Pew and Kershner about Eby's article demonstrate how much Pew and those who agreed with him saw *Christianity Today* and *Christian Economics* working toward the same general ends. So close was this association that Pew, who occasionally wrote pieces published in both magazines, often felt the need to justify why he chose one magazine for his article over the other. Thus Pew wrote Kershner that his decision to publish one of his articles in *Christianity Today* over *Christian Economics* came down to the fact that "CT represents the theological field and comes more nearly [to] expressing how the church should conduct itself than *Christian Economics*."⁴⁸⁸ In his private correspondence and in fundraising appeals, Pew often

⁴⁸⁶ Howard Kershner to Carl Henry, Dec. 13, 1956, JHP, Box 182, 1956 CFF Folder.

⁴⁸⁷ See J. Howard Pew to Howard Kershner, Oct 11, 1956, JHP, Box 182, 1956 CFF Folder, and Dec 13, 1956 Howard Kershner to Carl Henry, Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ J. Howard Pew to Howard Kershner, June 18, 1964, JHP, Box 184, 1964 CFF Folder.

referred to the two magazines in the same breath maintaining that they were his “pet projects” and that “most of the money they get for operations comes from me.”⁴⁸⁹ He even wrote Mont Pelerin Society President and Austrian economist Freidrich Hayek to tell him of the overlapping nature of the two magazines, in particular pointing him to four articles printed in *Christianity Today* that had been made into pamphlets, including one on inflation.⁴⁹⁰ Additionally, Pew saw no issue with using the magazines to try to indirectly influence elections. For example, Pew wrote Henry in 1960 urging him to print an article written by J. Edgar Hoover detailing how “coexistence is impossible” because “if we could get a few of these articles out before election, I think it would by indirection help a good cause.”⁴⁹¹ Henry ran “The Communist Menace” by J. Edgar Hoover as the lead guest article on October 10, 1960.

While Pew’s influence and connection with other libertarian organizations undoubtedly influenced the editorial opinion of *Christianity Today*, a careful reading of its pages demonstrates just how much the principles, beliefs and ideas of Spiritual Mobilization, The Foundation for Economic Education and the Christian Freedom Foundation had resonance in the flagship publication of American evangelicalism. Though *Christianity Today*’s focus was promulgating conservative evangelical theology for the purpose of convincing Christian ministers of all denominations to teach that theology and promote a national and worldwide evangelical revival, it often drew a line connecting its theology with conservative politics. While never endorsing a specific candidate nor party, *Christianity Today* made its political, economic and social thinking clear.

⁴⁸⁹ J. Howard Pew to Jasper Crane, Oct 4, 1962, JEC, Box 68, J. Howard Pew Folder #2.

⁴⁹⁰ J. Howard Pew to Freidrich Hayek, October 17, 1958, JHP, Box 61, Mont Pelerin Society Folder.

⁴⁹¹ J. Howard Pew to Carl Henry, July 18, 1960, JHP, Box 67, Christianity Today Folder.

Like Spiritual Mobilization, FEE and the CFF, *Christianity Today's* foundational principle for evangelical and political action was Christian individualism. Throughout its pages, CT stressed the Christian nature of individual choice and individual salvation. As Russell Kirk argued in its pages

perhaps the most important aspect of the genius of Christianity is its account of human personality: the doctrine of the immortal soul, the belief in the unique character of every human person, the concept of human dignity, the sanction for rights and duties, the obligation to exercise Christian charity, the insistence upon private responsibility. Both European and American civilization have been erected upon the foundation of the dignity of man – upon the assumption that man is made for eternity, and that he possesses dignity because he has some share in an order more than temporal and more than human⁴⁹²

Even more to the doctrinal point, CT repeatedly argued for the importance of individual conversion in terms such as “there is no such thing as corporate salvation other than in and through personal, individual salvation.”⁴⁹³

While the repeated call for personal conversion and salvation was predominant in the magazine, CT frequently took the time to unpack what that meant as far as the Gospel's political, economic and social implications. Like Spiritual Mobilization and the CFF, this frequently led CT to focus on and attack perceived social gospel theology. Sometimes CT attacked the social gospel's theological priorities. In an article entitled “The Church and the Social Problem,” H. Van Reissen argued, “The Bible does not view social injustice by itself but as the consequence of a greater evil, the source of all evil, namely, that men do not fear God and do not keep His commandments but bow down to idols.” In other words, the problem with the Social Gospel was its focus as “the whole social problem is absolutely of no importance when compared with the command to fear the Lord.”⁴⁹⁴

In other articles CT attacked what it considered the social gospel's perverted theology. G. Brillemburg Wurth argued “The social gospel limited itself to social programs

⁴⁹² Russell Kirk, “The Common Heritage of Europe and America,” *Christianity Today*, Jan 4, 1960, pg. 3.

⁴⁹³ Carl Henry, “What is the Way to a New Society?,” *Christianity Today*, Nov 26, 1956, pg. 23.

⁴⁹⁴ H. Van Reissen, “The Church and the Social Problem,” *Christianity Today*, July 22, 1957, pg. 4.

and high-sounding social slogans, but it scarcely disturbed the actual life of society.” Wurth saw the social gospel’s lack of effectiveness stemming from its rejection of mankind’s sinfulness, or as he put it, “Its perfectionism, its new faith in human perfectibility, did not take into account the deeply rooted power of sin in human nature.”⁴⁹⁵ Indeed the social gospel’s focus on society militated against its effectiveness. As Carl Henry argued, “the solution to... the social problems of the world is to be found in the redeeming and transforming work of the Son of God... that which Christ has done for individual souls,” not in legislation aimed at society writ large.⁴⁹⁶ The social gospel’s theological naivety not only focused on the symptom rather than the problem of man’s sinful nature, its focus on society was politically dangerous. As Paul Denlinger argued, “Liberal Christianity and the social gospel have shared so many of Marxism’s suppositions and taken it so seriously as a religion that one must criticize them together in the same terms.” Even more appallingly, the social gospel’s collectivistic tendencies made it “a virtual ‘tutor unto communism.’”⁴⁹⁷

Much of *Christianity Today*’s vitriol against the Social Gospel came from what it viewed as the social gospel’s focus on changing man’s material condition instead of his heart and spirit. Like Spiritual Mobilization and The Christian Freedom Foundation, *Christianity Today* felt that the solution to the country and the world’s social, economic and political problems was spiritual, not material. In its inaugural issue, CT stated that its purpose was to “apply the biblical revelation to the contemporary social crises, by pressing the implications of the total Gospel message for every area of life” because, as many were

⁴⁹⁵ G. Brillenburg Wurth, “Theological Climate in America,” *Christianity Today* Feb 18, 1957, pg. 13.

⁴⁹⁶ Carl Henry, “What is the Way to a New Society?,” *Christianity Today*, Nov. 26, 1956, pg. 24.

⁴⁹⁷ Paul Denlinger, “The Bleak Harvest of the Liberal Protestant World Thrust,” *Christianity Today*, March 4, 1960, 3-5.

becoming aware, “the answer to the many problems of political, industrial, and social life is a theological one.”⁴⁹⁸

The social gospel’s materialistic approach stood in stark contrast to the spiritual solution that CT advocated. As Associate Editor J. Marcellus Kik (whom Pew had personally selected for the magazine) argued, the problem with the social gospel and organizations that supported its tenets, like the National Council of Churches, was their rejection of spiritual means. In effect, social gospel supporters believed “the Church must resort to legalism” or “an attempt to reform life by legislative acts.” This meant that those who supported the social gospel believed that “No longer the power of the Holy Spirit but state power is to be the instrument of the Church. No longer Christian charity but the welfare state is the answer. No longer the persuasive power of the Gospel but the coercive power of the State is the instrument of Christian responsibility.”⁴⁹⁹ As Kik’s argument shows, pagan stateism was a concept that evangelicals could just as readily embrace as Fifield’s Spiritual Mobilization.

Kik’s attack on Liberal Protestantism and the social gospel also underscores that *Christianity Today* shared Spiritual Mobilization, FEE, and the CFF’s belief in the anti-Christian nature of state coercion. Christian individualism dictated that individual choice should be paramount in human experience. While recognizing the need for some state coercion, CFF employee Irving Howard argued in the pages of CT that “In its degenerate form Christianity has called upon government to use coercion.” Advocating for state power was, at best, “an admission that the church has failed in its prime task,” an admission epitomized “in American Protestantism [by] the social gospel.” Underscoring the pagan or anti-Christian nature of the social gospel, Howard went on to insist that “any Christian

⁴⁹⁸ “Why ‘Christianity Today,’” *Christianity Today*, October 15, 1956, 20.

⁴⁹⁹ J. Marcellus Kik, “Church and State,” *Christianity Today*, April 26, 1963, 20.

approach to economics, if it is to follow the example of the Bible, must insist upon voluntarism and limit government to a police function.”⁵⁰⁰

Christianity Today did not restrict itself to theoretical, theological and ideological discussions, but repeatedly left the realm of theory to comment on specific economic, political and social issues. Labor unions in particular were the subject of CT articles. In its first 8 years of publication *Christianity Today* devoted nearly half a dozen articles to unions, a significant number for a magazine dedicated to theological issues. With titles such as “Labor Needs a Conscience,” “Labor Racketeering and the American Worker,” and “Christian Criticism of Labor’s Big Stick,” these articles were ideologically in line with organizations such as FEE and the National Association of Manufacturers.⁵⁰¹ CT’s anti-labor stance bled through even in articles focused on other topics. Thus in an article Harold Ockenga wrote about choosing a profession or vocation he argued, “We are witnessing a tendency to deny this right to work in present society. Here a fundamental liberty is being taken away by force. Each man must possess the basic right of selling his labor power which is his own commodity. Once the laborer could be shut out from a shop; today unionized labor demands the closed shop. Tyranny can come from one end of the economic spectrum as well as from the other.”⁵⁰²

Ockenga’s implicit critique of 19th century capitalism highlights another characteristic of *Christianity Today*’s discussion of economics; talk of capitalism or free enterprise’s evils was exclusively theoretical or historical. In his article attacking the social gospel, H. Van Reissen started off by alluding to the “excesses” of 19th century industrialization without defining those excesses. Similarly Norman C. Hunt, in his article

⁵⁰⁰ Irving Howard, “Christian Approach to Economics,” *Christianity Today*, August 18, 1958, pg. 8.

⁵⁰¹ “Christian Criticism of Labor’s Big Stick,” *Christianity Today*, December 10, 1956, pg. 10; “Labor Racketeering and the American Worker,” *Christianity Today*, April 1, 1957, pg. 23; George Stob, “Labor Needs a Conscience,” *Christianity Today*, September 2, 1957, pg. 17).

⁵⁰² Harold John Ockenga, “Laborers With God,” *Christianity Today*, August 18, 1958, pg. 10.

“Christians and the Economic Order,” gave a mild rebuke to those who “give uncritical support to free enterprise capitalism without challenging its imperfections and injustices.”⁵⁰³ Even Samuel Shoemaker conceded that “selfish men [can] be selfish in their exploitation of our capitalistic system,” though he gave no examples. This mild criticism and theoretical discussion stands in stark contrast to the detailed condemnation of union practices. Capitalism’s evils received a passing reference, but Labor’s “sins” warranted detailed treatment such as Irving Howard’s blunt assertion that “No labor union has the moral right to deny a man the right to work. This is an infringement upon man’s God-given right to make his own choices.”⁵⁰⁴

Furthermore, even when free enterprise or capitalism received a mild rebuke, there was an immediate pro-capitalism follow-up. In the strongest attack on free enterprise or capitalism in the magazine’s first eight years, Paul Peachey charged “Classical economics” with taking economics from the realm of morals to nature and thus “weaken[ing] the moral sensibility of its agents.” Peachey, however, was quick to add, “This admission does not entail a denial of free enterprise as a superior economic system.”⁵⁰⁵ Similarly, Norman Hunt followed up his rebuke of those who give “uncritical support to free enterprise” with “that is not to say that capitalism is inconsistent with Christianity.” To make clear his point Hunt then emphasized, “That charge can rather be leveled against collectivism which in all its forms does violence to individual liberty and is unbiblical in its attitude to human sin and self-interest.”⁵⁰⁶ The problems of capitalism were minor peccadilloes, especially when compared to the intrinsic sinfulness of “collectivism.”

⁵⁰³ Norman C Hunt, “Christians and the Economic Order,” *Christianity Today*, September 2, 1957, pg. 6.

⁵⁰⁴ “Christian Approach...,” 8.

⁵⁰⁵ Paul Peachey, “Beyond Christian-Communist Strife,” *Christianity Today*, October 27, 1958, pg. 17.

⁵⁰⁶ “Christians and the Economic...,” 7.

Though *Christianity Today* drew on several authors in its discussions of economics and state power, the influence of the CFF and *Christian Economics* is unmistakable. The two articles written by Irving Howard, an assistant editor for *Christian Economics*, are particularly specific in their assertions. His first article “Christ and the Libertarians” explored the relationship between Christianity and libertarian ideology. While differentiating between Christianity and Libertarianism, Howard argued that the two movements could learn a lot from each other. He declared, “libertarian exploration of freedom has posed some questions evangelicals should consider.” Those questions included “Is the purpose of freedom the pleasure of man or the glory of God?” and “Is statism evil because it generates poverty or because it enslaves man and inevitably becomes idolatry?” The second question, which is the equivalent of asking a neighbor down the street when he is going to stop beating his wife, is particularly notable for how much it drew on Fifield’s “pagan stateism.”

After laying out what the two movements could learn from each other, Howard’s treatise then went on to demonstrate how Christian individualism bled into libertarian ideology. He asserted, “evangelicals know that there is but one solution to the problem of sin – the Saviourhood and Lordship of Jesus Christ.” Because of this belief in Christ “evangelicals know that [social problems] can be remedied only on an individualistic basis,” thus Christians and libertarians agreed that “individuals cannot be changed by changing society, but society can be changed by changing the hearts of individuals.” Howard then rather astutely noted, “In their individualism, evangelicals and libertarians are in agreement. It does not take much imagination to see the possibility of that agreement widening to include many other fronts as libertarians become conscious of the terrible lostness of modern society, and as evangelicals become aware of the political implications of

their gospel.”⁵⁰⁷ Evangelicals could thus witness to libertarians why individualism was the answer to society’s problems and libertarians could lead the way in fostering evangelical political activity.

In his second article, “A Christian Approach to Economics,” Howard returned to the theme of what evangelicals have to offer libertarians. He argued that classical economists like William Graham Sumner had the right idea, particularly when compared to socialists and “welfare staters,” but divorcing their economics from Christianity led them to think that “might meant right.” Evangelicals, however, could place economic individualism in its proper Christian context and tame “the law of the Jungle.” Thus, while Sumner and other classical economists found inequality natural, Howard argued that it was Christian too because “the problem of inequality is immediately solved...by the fact of divine providence.” Howard softened Sumner and others’ harsh contention that inequality was Social Darwinism in action by asserting, “inequality of talent, resulting in inequality of wealth, is in the plan of God. Justice does not demand absolute equality for God does not demand it.” In other words, equality was not part of God’s plan; and further, God’s reality meant that he, not the state, would provide for those at the lower end of the economic spectrum. Further unpacking the concept of pagan stateism, Howard argued, “The quest for security, which has become the hallmark of modern youth, springs from a lost faith in the providence of God.” Presumably foolish youth and others did not realize that “there is no security apart from the providence of God” and that those who “seek security in pensions and in government” have surely lost their faith in God. Such faithless souls “are candidates for a prison state.”⁵⁰⁸

While the pages of *Christianity Today* show an unmistakable affinity for the ideology propounded by groups such as Spiritual Mobilization, FEE and the CFF, the strength of these

⁵⁰⁷ Irving Howard, “Christ and the Libertarians,” *Christianity Today*, March 17, 1958, pgs. 8-10.

⁵⁰⁸ “Christian Approach...,” 8.

groups' influence is even more apparent in the lead editorials written by *Christianity Today's* editor Carl Henry. While Billy Graham and Harold Ockenga are known for their leadership and push for evangelical revival, Carl Henry was the most respected evangelical theologian of the 20th century. He was not a dynamic speaker, but what he lacked in charisma he made up for in theological depth. It was largely due to his reputation and editorial skill that *Christianity Today* thrived and became the premiere Christian magazine of the century. Reading through Henry's editorials makes it apparent just how much he agreed with Spiritual Mobilization, FEE and the CFF.

Outside of the ubiquitous references to individual salvation and regeneration to solve social problems, the most visible similarity between Henry's thought as expressed in his editorials and Spiritual Mobilization, FEE and the CFF is a consistent focus and critique of the social gospel. Henry's focus on the social gospel was intense enough that he devoted two entire editorials to refuting and attacking the social gospel on theological, economic, social and political grounds. In his first editorial on the subject, Henry argued "the social gospel became an alternative to the Gospel of supernatural grace and redemption," and that it led ministers to fashion new views and ideas based on "evolutionary theory rather than...from biblical sources of revealed religion."⁵⁰⁹ In his second editorial, Henry went further and argued that if "one materialistic demon were specially assigned to our world and charged to subvert the Christian churches," that materialistic demon would come up with the social gospel as the best way to accomplish his purposes.⁵¹⁰ Also in line with Spiritual Mobilization and the CFF, Henry frequently targeted the National Council of

⁵⁰⁹ Carl Henry, "Perspective for Social Action Part I," *Christianity Today*, January 19, 1959, pgs. 9-11.

⁵¹⁰ Carl Henry, "Has Anybody Seen Erape?," *Christianity Today*, January 4, 1960, pgs. 13-15, 23.

Churches and other large ecumenical groups because of their supposed embrace of social gospel ideas and programs.⁵¹¹

In another sign of ideological similarity, if not ideological influence, Henry, like Fifield and to a lesser extent Kershner, frequently attacked “wants” as extraneous to government’s, or the church’s, function. Henry contended that the problem was that “modern welfare programs extend far beyond the area of human needs...into the area of human wants.”⁵¹² This led to “an unspiritual philosophy of possessions” that “arouse man’s desire for material possessions” and makes men believe “true happiness lies in a stipulated quantity of things.”⁵¹³ In another editorial, Henry tied his assault on “wants” with his ideological agreement with Fifield, Kershner, Pew and others of the indivisible nature of freedom. In a not too subtle shot at FDR and his Four Freedoms, which echoed Fifield’s own attack, Henry declared, “Freedom is indivisible, it is not ‘four freedoms’ nor five.” Like Pew, Henry argued, “where freedom disappears, the propagation of Christianity is jeopardized.”⁵¹⁴

Henry also subscribed to the concept of pagan stateism. Although Henry’s anti-statism is evident in almost all his editorials dealing with social, economic or political problems, how much he viewed state-power as antithetical to God’s power and purposes comes through most clearly in his editorial “America’s Future: Can We Salvage the Republic?” In this editorial, Henry argued that the Soviet conception of the state “forces modern culture to choose between supernaturalism and naturalism; human dignity and human degradation; absolute truth and values and state-determined and imposed opinion and ideals.” Such dichotomies should concern Christians, as “The book of Revelation warns

⁵¹¹ For example, see Carl Henry, “Why is the Prestige of the NCC Sagging?,” *Christianity Today*, February 2, 1959, pgs. 5-8.

⁵¹² Carl Henry, “State in Welfare Work,” *Christianity Today*, January 18, 1960, pgs. 20-23, 21.

⁵¹³ “Erape...,” 23.

⁵¹⁴ Carl Henry, “Perspective for Social Action Part II,” *Christianity Today*, February 2, 1959, pg. 15.

that government most readily becomes a Beast-state when it thinks itself the God-state.” Such attempts at omnipotence naturally lead the state to “arrogate to itself the right to control every phrase of human experience and to require the worship of itself.” While such “statolatry” perfectly fits Fifield, Opitz, Read and Kershner’s pagan stateism, Henry also argued the state was idolatrous because “a controlled economy leads to the worship of mammon.” In other words, Communism (or Socialism or Welfare Statism) led to materialism, which aroused Americans material appetites at the expense of the spiritual.⁵¹⁵ State purposes and priorities competed with and consumed God’s.

While Henry’s ideology and concepts of state-power drew from and expanded on the organizations of the Spiritual Mobilization network, he frequently left ideological abstraction to plainly state his support for free enterprise and his opposition to “collectivism.” Henry explicitly denounced “the soaring costs of government...inflation as a way of life....national prosperity geared to the federal budget...punitive taxation (the income tax).”⁵¹⁶ He argued that “the neglect of the larger facets of freedom...have indirectly aided the socialistic and totalitarian assault on free enterprise, private property and the profit motive.” Indeed, Henry argued, “revealed religion” or evangelicalism “proclaims the threat to freedom latent in collectivistic social planning and in big government.”⁵¹⁷ Even more explicitly Henry argued, “it is high time Christian clergy and laymen consider the premise that state welfare programs are inherently anti-Christian.”

While the similarities in Henry’s thinking suggests the influence of Christian libertarians like Fifield, Opitz, Read and Kershner, this suggestion reaches the level of certainty when examining Henry’s intellectual debts. In his editorials Henry explicitly cited

⁵¹⁵ See Carl Henry, “Can we Salvage the Republic?,” *Christianity Today*, March 3, 1958, pgs. 3-7.

⁵¹⁶ “Salvage...,” 3.

⁵¹⁷ “Perspective II...,” 15.

Frank Chodorov, Felix Morley, Russell Kirk, J. Howard Pew and Leonard Read. Only reading some combination of *The Freeman*, *Faith and Freedom* and/or *Christian Economics* would have exposed Henry to all these intellectuals of the conservative movement. Henry's friendship with Pew and Ockenga undoubtedly played a role in introducing him to such thinkers, though his membership in Edmund Opitz's *The Remnant* and his affiliation with the Christian Freedom Foundation suggest a longer and deeper intellectual engagement.⁵¹⁸ While a cursory examination of *Christianity Today* might suggest that Henry published articles by men like Pew and Irving Howard to allow for multiple views in the magazine, his own editorials and intellectual influences suggest he had a stronger commitment to *laissez-faire* than mere intellectual assent. Henry may have been more diplomatic in his language than his peers, but his commitment to key principles such as pagan stateism and the application of Christian individualism to economics made him a somewhat aloof member of the group.

While the parallels between Henry's thought and Spiritual Mobilization network members show a line of influence, they do not mean that Henry simply absorbed and then propagated their thinking like some kind of ideological disciple. Henry's beliefs and arguments did not fit into a neat Christian libertarian box on these subjects. For example, Henry believed in the sacrosanct nature of private property, but he was much more critical of wealth than men like Opitz, Read, Fifield, Kershner and Pew. Whereas these men at least partially bought into the Weberian idea of wealth as an indicator of personal righteousness, Henry saw no divine meaning in either wealth or poverty. As Henry noted "no era has held poverty in more contempt than ours...having discarded the decency and respectability of

⁵¹⁸ Two of Henry's editorials "Perspective for Social Action" Parts II and I are from his address at a Christian Freedom Foundation sponsored conference in Buck Hills, Pennsylvania.

poverty, [we] have sought to abolish it.”⁵¹⁹ For Henry, wealth was no virtue and poverty was no vice.

While maintaining intellectual independence and frequently re-couching libertarian arguments in evangelical language and theology, Henry’s editorials and other articles in *Christianity Today* clearly link the magazine with the Christian libertarianism of its predecessors. Though it is unlikely that Carl Henry ever met James Fifiield, Henry’s *Christianity Today* bears an unmistakable debt to Fifiield and his *Spiritual Mobilization*. Fifiield’s role in bringing together a network of Christian libertarians and inspiring them with his pastor-targeting *Spiritual Mobilization* profoundly influenced the formation and ideological make-up of *Christianity Today*. While the line is more zigzag than straight and more dotted than direct, it is difficult to understand the social, economic and political subtext of *Christianity Today* apart from the broader history started by Fifiield and his *Spiritual Mobilization*. The ripple effect of Fifiield, *Spiritual Mobilization* and *Faith and Freedom* splashed over into the pages of *Christianity Today*.

⁵¹⁹ “Erape...,” 23.

Chapter Six: The Christian Freedom Foundation, Evangelical Christianity and Modern Conservatism

After Ronald Reagan's landslide victory in the California gubernatorial election in 1966, James Fifield wrote to his good friend Howard Kershner "You must be very pleased with the results of the Election, as am I. I thought about you as I listened to the returns. The air will breathe better. I feel this could be a very significant turn in a long road we have been following down hill."⁵²⁰ While Fifield had expressed similar sentiments to friends after the Republican congressional sweep in 1946 and Eisenhower's victory in 1952, this time around Fifield's forecast was not so far off. Ronald Reagan's upstart victory in California was the first significant conservative electoral victory in what became a string of such results.⁵²¹ After decades of frustrating electoral outcomes, James Fifield and Howard Kershner finally had something to celebrate.

As Fifield's letter to Kershner demonstrates, the ultimate measuring stick for their efforts and organizations was in the field of political economy. While officially non-partisan, Spiritual Mobilization, the Foundation for Economic Education, and eventually the Christian Freedom Foundation all sought to advance conservative politics within the Republican Party. While all three found a level of success, Howard Kershner's Christian Freedom Foundation outpaced its progenitors. The CFF's ties to evangelical Christianity magnified its influence. Its links to both economic conservatism and preeminent evangelical actors and institutions, such as Carl Henry and his *Christianity Today*, made it uniquely able to mix conservative, libertarian, and evangelical voices and ideology. Along with its fellow organizations, the CFF helped integrate disparate strands of conservative thought into an integrated ideological movement.

⁵²⁰ James Fifield to Howard Kershner, November 10, 1966, Box 6, Fifield Folder, Howard Kershner Papers, University of Oregon Special Collections.

⁵²¹ For more on the importance of Ronald Reagan's gubernatorial victory to the conservative movement see Jonathon Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

Traditionally, historians of Conservatism have explained the presence of evangelicals in the political coalition through a “backlash” thesis. This thesis argues that evangelicals’ politicization occurred in response to issues such as gay rights, the rejection of traditional morality by the counter-culture and the “lawlessness” of the later Civil Rights movement.⁵²² More recently scholars have taken a broader view in understanding why evangelicals have such a visible presence on the political Right. These more nuanced analyses focus on longer social and demographic changes, such as suburbanization, postwar prosperity and Cold War culture in explaining the political shape of evangelicalism.⁵²³ While social and demographic changes in postwar American life directly contributed to bringing many evangelicals into the conservative movement, looking at the CFF, and its relationship to evangelicalism, demonstrates the role of ideas, ideology and even theology in that journey. Tracing the intellectual influence of Spiritual Mobilization through the CFF and into *Christianity Today* and the larger evangelical movement shows how libertarian economic ideas found and resonated with many evangelicals. More importantly, the CFF reveals the long-running institutional relationship between Conservatism and evangelicalism. This relationship epitomizes the mechanism that brought laissez-faire economics to evangelicals and other religiously motivated Americans.

From its inception, those behind the CFF fashioned it as a tool to bring together complementary if still somewhat distant parts of the conservative movement. Former Spiritual Mobilization staffer and CFF employee, the Reverend Irving Howard, argued that the CFF’s foremost contribution to the conservative movement was bringing religious fervor to economic conservatism. In Howard’s words the necessity of such a fusion was self-evident as “Only Evangelism can add to the libertarian movement, the force and drive necessary to make it

⁵²² For good examples of the backlash thesis please see Robert C. Liebman, Robert Luthnow, James Guth *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation* (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine Publishing Co., 1983); Steve Bruce *Conservative Protestant Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵²³ For example see Alex Schafer *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicalism from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011); Steven Miller *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

something more than an academic discussion of economic theories.”⁵²⁴ In other words, the CFF brought soul to the abstract economics of free market thinkers and in the process finished tying the ideological knot that would help hold and mold the conservative movement into a potent force in American political, economic, social and religious life.

The Christian Freedom Foundation

Though *Christian Economics*’ ideological and theological influence was impressive, the Christian Freedom Foundation was much more than its fortnightly publication. Like Spiritual Mobilization, the Christian Freedom Foundation sponsored conferences across the country, inviting clergymen to listen to their message. These conferences typically consisted of a few addresses given by CFF board members and time for discussion and questions and answers afterward. Though Kershner and his office staff typically made the arrangements for these conferences at first, by the middle of the 1950s he had hired Irving Howard, who had got his start organizing conferences for Spiritual Mobilization, to organize the CFF’s ministerial conferences. In a typical year Howard would organize between 15 and 20 such conferences, averaging just over 40 attendees per conference for a rough total of 600 or so clergymen attending a CFF conference in any given year. The CFF carefully tracked the effectiveness of these conferences, using a survey to measure attending clergy’s attitudes towards specific economic and ideological issues before and after the conference. For example, a survey taken at the Buck Hills conference in 1957, which included J. Howard Pew, Kershner, and evangelical theologian Carl Henry on the program, showed the attendees leaving after the conference had favorably modified their opinions on issues such as the trustworthiness of “big business” and the immorality of the income tax.⁵²⁵

⁵²⁴ Howard Kershner to J. Howard Pew, June 17, 1954, JHP, Box 182, 1954 CFF Folder.

⁵²⁵ Memo on Buck Hills Conference, JHP, Box 183, 1959 CFF Folder. Probably because of the presence of someone as esteemed as Carl Henry, the Buck Hills conference was the CFF’s largest conference that year, attracting 96 ministers.

Unlike James Fifield, Howard Kershner did not have a parish to attend to, allowing him to pursue a more time-intensive ministry of personal outreach and propagation. Kershner was a one man speaking tour, addressing Rotary clubs, minister's meetings, college campuses, seminaries, and frequently preaching guest sermons at various churches. In a typical year he preached at denominations ranging from Presbyterian to Congregationalist to Quaker, gave lectures at colleges such as William Penn and Belhaven, addressed civic clubs such as the Los Angeles Breakfast Club and the San Francisco Commonwealth Club, and addressed Fuller Theological Seminary as well as other meetings of ministers including a group of Evangelical ministers in Denver, Colorado.⁵²⁶ He intentionally sought out hostile or indifferent audiences, recording with particular pleasure a lecture he gave at the theologically and politically liberal Union Theological Seminary that attracted over 150 students and faculty and ending with a question and answer period that lasted nearly two hours.⁵²⁷

Kershner's appearances before theological centers such as Fuller and Union were part of the CFF's efforts to target seminary students and ministers in training. From its inception the CFF attempted to systematically collect the mailing address of as many theology students as possible and send them *Christian Economics* for free.⁵²⁸ Kershner's addresses were intentional follow-ups to the CFF's literature distribution. This pastor-in-training targeting was such a priority that Kershner made board members from 11 different denominations promise to get him invited to address their denominational seminary.⁵²⁹ Along similar lines, Kershner and the CFF actively helped seminaries and Bible colleges set up courses on economics for their students. They even partnered with Fuller Seminary and Winona Bible College to offer a Master of Social Ethics to prepare professors to fill the

⁵²⁶ See "President's Report 1957," pg. 2, JHP, Box 182, CFF 1957 Folder.

⁵²⁷ See "President's Report April 1951," pg. 3, JHP, Box 181, 1951 CFF.

⁵²⁸ Kershner reported that in 1952 alone, the CFF had contacted 170 seminaries with 28 sending back their student's mailing addresses. Obviously this was before FERPA rights had any legal standing. See "Meeting of the Executive Committee Oct 16, 1952," JHP, Box 181, 1952 CFF Folder.

⁵²⁹ See Howard Kershner to J. Howard Pew, Oct 13, 1950, JHP, Box 180, 1950 CFF Folder.

slots they were creating.⁵³⁰ Where Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization largely cast their bread upon the waters, Kershner and the CFF came up with and executed specific plans to influence the economic and theological thinking of ministers, particularly among the rising generation.

While the majority of the Christian Freedom Foundation's budget targeted pastors with literature such as pamphlets and *Christian Economics* as well as conferences, Kershner soon expanded the CFF's audience through his radio show, Howard Kershner's "Commentary on the News." Kershner did not start "Commentary" until the late 1950s, but he was soon on over 300 stations across the country. His blunt anti-communist analysis of the news and his explanation of economic principles provoked enough interest that by the mid-1960s, Kershner received over 200 letters a day from listeners across the country. One letter in particular that cheered Pew and Kershner was from a business owner in the Midwest who distributed *Christian Economics* to all his employees and offered cash prizes to any employee, or employee relative, who wrote the best essay on a topic covered in the most recent issue of *Christian Economics*.⁵³¹ With such enthusiastic lay interest, Kershner and the CFF seriously considered starting a laymen's version of *Christian Economics*. In the end, they simply sent *CE* to interested laymen as well as providing schools, colleges and libraries with as much literature as possible. Through its radio programs and literature campaign, the CFF's influence extended well into the laymen's realm.⁵³²

Perhaps the Christian Freedom Foundation's most important networking and ideological work occurred during its Annual meetings. The Annual meetings brought together many of the

⁵³⁰ Huffman Report to Howard Kershner, pg. 9, JHP, Box 184, 1963 CFF Folder. The final in Kershner's Seminar in Christian Economics was an open book 13 question final that included questions such as "Discuss the nature, morality and function of profit," "What is the relationship between honest money that will not depreciate and moral progress?," "Define Socialism and Communism and state what, in your opinion, is the difference, if any," and "Explain in one paragraph the three main reasons for the development of freedom, self-government, and marvelous prosperity in our country." See 565 Seminar in Christian Economics Open Book Exam, JHP, Box 184, 1962 CFF Folder.

⁵³¹ J. Howard Pew to Hermine Girouard, Dec 15, 1959, JHP, Box 183, 1959 CFF Folder.

⁵³² At one point, Kershner even had a half-hour segment on a local Philadelphia TV station, but decided to eventually stop the segment as it reached such a small audience.

constitutive parts of the conservative movement, most notably economic and religious conservatives. For the first half decade of its existence, the Annual Meetings contained a heavy emphasis on economic matter. Von Misesian economist Percy Greaves and Howard Kershner, always gave at least one talk to the assembled ministers. By 1953, Senior Staff members of the Foundation for Economic Education began to appear regularly on the CFF's programs, including Edmund Opitz, Rev. Russell Clinchy and Ivan Bierly. The 1959 program included University of Chicago economist John Nef, former *Human Events* editor Felix Morley, and leading conservative intellectual, Russell Kirk.⁵³³ The next year the program included Clarence Manion, Catholic laymen and founder of the free-enterprise promoting radio show *The Manion Forum*. Following Manion on the program was none other than founder of the Austrian school of economics Ludwig Von Mises.⁵³⁴ While not known for his religiosity, Von Mises printed several articles in *Christian Economics* and attended a number of the CFF's Annual Meetings. After Von Mises's address in 1960, future programs included J. Howard Pew, longtime Mont Pelerin Society Secretary Albert Hunold, Senator Strom Thurmond, and appropriately the Reverend James Fifiield. These notable addresses coupled with those by evangelicals such as Harold Ockenga and Daniel Poling illustrate just how readily evangelical, conservative, and libertarian voices mixed in the CFF.

Senator Strom Thurmond's address to the Christian Freedom Foundation attacking the Civil Rights Act of 1965 gives insight into how the CFF's religiously-based defense of free enterprise and individualism interfaced with Southern conservatives more racially motivated ideology. As Matthew Lassiter and more particularly Kevin Kruse have argued, Southern white reaction to the Civil Rights Movement sparked a resurgence of free market thought, particularly the libertarian-

⁵³³ "1959 Annual Meeting Program," JHP, Box 183, 1959 CFF Folder.

⁵³⁴ "1960 Annual Meeting Program" and Howard Kershner notes, JHP, Box 183, 1960 CFF Folder.

sounding freedom of association embedded in the free market.⁵³⁵ Though undoubtedly important, such a strictly race-based interpretation obscures the origin of free market ideological acceptance among many of the evangelicals that Kruse and Lassiter identify in their analyses. As ideological heir to Fifiield and Spiritual Mobilization, Howard Kershner and the CFF came from a long line of actors and organizations that argued for free market principles and “rugged individualism” from a religious context long predating the Civil Rights Movement. The CFF’s reach and influence among evangelicals suggests race was not the only factor in the popularity of laissez-faire economics among Southern, nor Northern or Western conservatives.

Identifying the mixed motivations for embracing laissez-faire principles also uncovers the strength and importance of Northern and Midwestern conservatives, as opposed to their more lauded Western and Southern comrades, in making and cultivating the conservative movement. None of the main organizations and actors in the Spiritual Mobilization network had extensive Southern ties. Indeed, their places of origin consisted of places like Kansas, Illinois, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, while their intellectual maturity took place at institutions like Oberlin College in Ohio (Fifiield), Princeton University in New Jersey (Crane), MIT in Boston (Hutchinson), University of Wisconsin-Madison (Haake) and Grove City College in Pennsylvania (Pew). Much like the origins of modern evangelicalism, which came largely from the North, such as Harold Ockenga’s Massachusetts-based church, the Eastern and Midwestern origins of modern Conservatism are counter-intuitive.⁵³⁶ Perhaps the great untold story of the modern conservative movement is how primarily racially motivated Southern conservatives joined with their Northern and Midwestern ideological cousins for whom race was not as often of primary concern. Strom Thurmond’s attack

⁵³⁵ Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁵³⁶ For the Northern origins of modern evangelicalism see Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

on Civil Rights legislation, however, does provide one clue to how differing, regionally based ideological motivations mixed seamlessly from a rhetorical standpoint.

The Annual Meetings did more than symbolically bring together differing ideological motivations they also harmonized the ideology of economic, religious and anti-communist conservatism. Following Spiritual Mobilization and FEE's lead, the CFF stressed the individualism common to all the threads of conservatism with addresses such as "The Protestant Basis of Individualism" and "Individual Initiative and Effort in Our American Way of Life." Explicitly anti-Communist messages made frequent appearances with Department of Defense officials and even a Major General, giving a speech titled "The Solution to the Vietnam Dilemma" before CFF members and supporters.⁵³⁷ Regularly interspersed with individualism, anti-Communism, and Christian morality were addresses dealing with the CFF's concepts of pagan stateism and Freedom Under God such as "Apostasy From God to the State," "The Bible and The Welfare State," and "Christianity: The True Bulwark of Freedom." Of course most frequent and conspicuous were the economic addresses such as "Biblical Attitudes towards Wealth and Property," "The Relationship of Sound Money to Freedom," "A Free Market: The Basis of a Free Society," and "The Economics of Christian Freedom." Such explicit ideological fusion brought evangelicals, anti-communists, traditionalists and libertarians under a common ideological umbrella, laying the foundation for the formation of a more formal political coalition in later years.⁵³⁸

The frequent appearance of Vietnam in CFF meetings and publications may appear somewhat contradictory. On the surface it seems almost cynical to see a Christian libertarian

⁵³⁷ "1967 Annual Meeting Program," JHP, Box 185, 1967 CFF Folder. Major General Thomas Lane and John Broger from the Department Of Defense also spoke.

⁵³⁸ In addition to *Christian Economics*, its pamphlet campaign, conferences, Kershner's speaking tours, creating Christian economic positions in seminaries and Bible colleges, Howard Kershner's Commentary on the News and the Annual Meetings, the CFF also published a weekly syndicated column titled "Its Up to You" that reached 10 Million readers in various newspapers, sent out recordings of Kershner and other CFF Board member addresses to churches, schools and civic groups, as well as sent out a weekly sermonette that literally thousands of pastors used in their services.

organization founded on its opposition to growing state power support a conflict that ballooned the federal budget and dramatically increased the power of government. Given that Howard Kershner and the CFF had come out against Universal Military Training in 1952 on the premise that it would dangerously extend the power of the state, its uncompromising support for the war in Vietnam seems even more hypocritical. A closer look, however, reveals one of the limits of Kershner and the CFF's ideology, a fault-line where principle gave way to Cold War concerns. In a revealing letter to Pew in 1960 about the US tariff, Kershner noted that ideologically he opposed tariffs. However, he then goes on to speculate that "we have been told that it is none of our business if other countries want to practice Marxism, but in the end I think we shall find that Marxism anywhere in the world tends to destroy freedom everywhere. Must we therefore conclude that an increasing amount of government intervention is necessary, including the tariff, in order to live in a world increasingly government interventionist?"⁵³⁹ On issues such as the tariff and Vietnam Kershner and the CFF were ready to concede that sometimes principles got in the way of practicality. While hardly alone in sacrificing principle to practicality among the ideologically motivated, practicality won out on issues of trade and war, not poverty and social welfare.⁵⁴⁰

Despite occasional ideological inconsistency, the Christian Freedom Foundation continued to exert impressive influence. Though difficult to fully quantify, there is some evidence that the CFF successfully reached and influenced a significant percentage of Protestant ministers. In 1957 J. Howard Pew funded a study by the Opinion Research Corporation to examine the impact of *Christianity Today* and *Christian Economics*. The study, based on interviews with over 500 clergymen drawn from the mailing lists of *CT* and *CE* showed that *Christian Economics* was widely

⁵³⁹ Howard Kershner to J. Howard Pew, December 13, 1960, JHP, Box 183, CFF 1960 Folder.

⁵⁴⁰ The CFF's uncompromising stand on Vietnam did not sit well with all of its supporters. Long time board member Felix Morley wrote Kershner to withdraw his support over the CFF's stand on the war. This brought on a heated, and lengthy, exchange between the two men resulting in bitter recriminations and a permanent break between the longtime associates.

read.⁵⁴¹ Of those surveyed 52% reported receiving *Christian Economics*, trailing only *Christianity Today* in this regard (83%) and leading notable magazines such as *Christian Century* (35%), *The Christian Herald* (24%) and Reinhold Niebuhr's *Christianity and Crisis* (7%).⁵⁴² Even more encouragingly, of those who reported receiving *Christian Economics*, over half of them (51%) claimed to "generally agree" with *CE*'s point of view.⁵⁴³ *Christian Economics*' fan mail largely substantiated this claim, with Kershner reporting that roughly half of all mail received was favorable.⁵⁴⁴ Those favorable letters also demonstrated how *CE* influenced ministers. For example, a typical letter would resemble something like this letter from a Reverend Victor Charles Detty with Detty reporting "I clip it [*CE*] quite often and use items from it [for sermons]. I don't always agree with it 100% but I find myself in agreement with it a good part of the time."⁵⁴⁵ By 1959, Kershner proudly reported to William Buckley that he had received 25,000 such letters from ministers over the past decade, or nearly 1 in 10 Protestant clergymen.⁵⁴⁶

Another measure of the Christian Freedom Foundation's impact was the number of high profile attacks. Not long after its inception, Reinhold Niebuhr's *Christianity and Crisis* felt that *Christian Economics* was noteworthy enough to attack. In a stinging article, Robert Brown attacked the Christian Freedom Foundation and *CE* as little more than a paid shill for big business and a defender of the economic status quo. Brown was so enraged by the CFF that he mailed copies of *Christianity and Crisis* with his attack piece to all of the CFF's Board of Directors asking how they

⁵⁴¹ *Christianity Today* and *Christian Economics* were sent out to ministers for free. In other words, those receiving the magazines quite often did not subscribe or request them. Both *CT* and *CE* did their best to identify and mail their magazine out to every protestant clergyman in America. Thus a survey based on their mailing list is not as biased as it sounds.

⁵⁴² Spiritual Mobilization's *Faith and Freedom* checked in at 11%. "Opinion Research Corporation Survey," pg. 7., JHP, Box 181, CFF 1953 Folder.

⁵⁴³ Ibid. pg. 8.

⁵⁴⁴ Howard Kershner Report on Second Annual Meeting, pg. 4, JHP, Box 181, 1951 CFF Folder.

⁵⁴⁵ "Clergymen Appraise 'Christian Economics'," pg. 5, JHP, Box 181, 1953 CFF Folder.

⁵⁴⁶ Howard Kershner to William Buckley, August 6, 1959, Box 3, Buckley Folder, Howard Kershner Papers (HK), University of Oregon Special Collections.

could associate themselves with such a magazine and program.⁵⁴⁷ Within a couple of years Reinhold Niebuhr himself took up the pen against the CFF and Pew, pillorying the CFF's unsophisticated ideological linking of the laws of God and the laws of Nature. Pew took the attack as something of a compliment as he felt Niebuhr wrote the article to take Pew to "task for upsetting his well-laid plans on socialization." Even more damning was that Niebuhr "frankly discusses the social gospel" as a philosophy in line with his thinking. Anything that made Niebuhr that unhappy must have been working in Pew's book.⁵⁴⁸

While high profile critics like Niebuhr openly attacked the Christian Freedom Foundation, the CFF continued to spread its influence throughout the country and the world. Every year in his President's report, Kershner noted that *CE* was being widely reprinted in mostly business and religious presses. On average, Kershner reported that three or four requests for reprints arrived every two weeks and that "we are widely reprinted by a great variety of publications that do not trouble themselves to ask for the privilege" because they have "no doubt learned that it [reprinting request] is always granted."⁵⁴⁹ *CE* also made it into popular presses, Libertarian R.C. Hoiles reported that he reprinted "90-95%" of *CE* in all of his numerous Southern California newspapers. *CE* was also read by a variety of influential people including *Reader's Digest* editor DeWitt Wallace, *Wall Street Journal* editor William Grimes, a host of business leaders, including Fred Koch (father of the current Tea Party darlings) as well as the man everybody knew, Bruce Barton. *Christian Economics* even received a favorable mention in an Arthur Krock *New York Times* editorial, while New York Representative Ralph Gwinn inserted several of its articles in the "Congressional Record."⁵⁵⁰ Additionally, the CFF had international appeal. Groups as far away as Japan and Taiwan

⁵⁴⁷ See CFF to Board of Directors, December 20, 1950, JHP, Box 181, 1950 CFF Folder.

⁵⁴⁸ See J. Howard Pew to Howard Kershner, February 11, 1952, JHP, Box 181, 1952 CFF Folder.

⁵⁴⁹ President's Report, 1959, pg. 2, JHP, Box 183, 1959 CFF Folder.

⁵⁵⁰ See Howard Irving to J. Howard Pew January 3, 1964, JHP, Box 184, 1964 CFF Folder, and Edward Rumely to Kershner March 29, 1955, JHP, Box 182, 1955 CFF Folder.

requested additional materials.⁵⁵¹ The CFF's appeal in Great Britain was so strong that Clergyman there started their own British Christian Freedom Foundation and *Christian Economics*, sent out to 30,000 British clergymen for two years until the new organization faded.

While indisputably influential, part of the difficulty in assessing the CFF's influence sprang from how much its influence spread through the Spiritual Mobilization network and from differentiating between Howard Kershner's influence and that of the Foundation. For example, *The Reader's Digest* ran an article by Norman Vincent Peale in September 1950 titled "Let the Church Speak Up for Capitalism," which effectively presented the CFF's ideology.⁵⁵² The CFF even put the article in pamphlet form and distributed it widely. Similarly, in 1966 *The Reader's Digest* ran an article written by Pew attacking the National Council of Churches for neglecting individual salvation that, like Peale's piece, essentially spread the CFF's principles.⁵⁵³ While the Christian Freedom Foundation's name did not appear in either article, the principles it championed clearly enunciated in both, making it difficult to identify the nature of its influence precisely. Howard Kershner's numerous articles in a variety of magazines further muddied the waters as he was better known and sought after than the Foundation he led. Without the CFF, however, it is unlikely that these influential men, while sharing many similar principles, would have thought so long, deeply and harmoniously about how their political and economic principles related to their religious beliefs. In other words, Pew and especially Peale might not have written their articles without the focusing presence of the CFF.

The CFF's multitudinous efforts did not go unnoticed. Conservative and evangelical leaders across the country reached out to Kershner and the CFF to express agreement and support. For example, Hyman Appelman, an evangelical leader who won Billy Graham's public endorsement,

⁵⁵¹ Taiwan Evangelical Fellowship to Howard Kershner, April 6, 1961, JHP, Box 184, 1961 CFF Folder.

⁵⁵² "Let the Church Speak up for Capitalism," *Reader's Digest*, September 1950, pg. 46.

⁵⁵³ "Should the Church Meddle in Civil Affairs?," *Reader's Digest*, May 1966, pg. 49.

wrote to Kershner to express his gratitude for *Christian Economics* by noting that he received “more than 200 different magazines a month” and that “I get as much information, inspiration, material from your four pages of *Christian Economics* as I do from any half-dozen others.”⁵⁵⁴ He added that Kershner should not hesitate to ask if there was anything he could do for him or the Foundation. Even the circumspect Harold Ockenga told Kershner that “I have to take my hat off to you for your courageous leadership in a cause and for winning your way through. No one can ever measure the extent of your influence. May God bless you in these fruitful years.”⁵⁵⁵ As Appleman and Ockenga’s letters demonstrate, Kershner and the CFF had found a ready audience among some of evangelical Christianity’s best-known leaders. Kershner, the CFF and *Christian Economics*’ influence among evangelicals was not coincidental and soon spread to the heart of the movement.

The Christian Freedom Foundation, Postwar Evangelicalism and the Conservative Movement

While the Christian Freedom Foundation’s connections and influence with *Christianity Today* are important and unmistakable, *Christianity Today* was not its only connection to evangelicalism. The CFF’s broad reach and connections with other iconic institutions of the budding neo-evangelist movement positioned it to reach a level of influence FEE and Spiritual Mobilization could not. From its earliest days the CFF cultivated a connection to evangelical Christianity that would prove vital to introducing evangelical Christians to libertarian economic ideas and ideals. From small, almost incidental beginnings, this connection eventually blossomed into a partnership of significance as both the evangelical and conservative movements grew in influence and importance. Sitting astride and firmly committed to both movements, the Christian Freedom Foundation was a key organizational bridge that sought to bring libertarian economics to evangelicalism and evangelical fervor to Conservatism.

⁵⁵⁴ Hyman Appelmann to Howard Kershner, May 27, 1960, JHP, Box 183, 1960 CFF Folder.

⁵⁵⁵ Harold Ockenga to Howard Kershner, Dec 23, 1961, JHP, Box 184, 1961 CFF Folder.

When J. Howard Pew, Jasper Crane, and other network members first became aware of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), they immediately thought of Spiritual Mobilization. Pew, being the most active in evangelical circles, first came in contact with various NAE leaders in late 1947 and early 1948 including NAE Secretary J. Elwin Wright and then-president R. L. Decker. Wright in particular had reached out to Pew over their common contempt for the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) and sought his support for the NAE.⁵⁵⁶ Pew, ever on the lookout for allies, discussed the NAE with his fellow network members Crane and Haake. In his letter to Haake, Pew asked Haake's opinion of the NAE. While sharing some concern about the NAE's efforts to compete with rather than reform the FCC, Pew noted that "it does occur to me that we might join forces with them and carry our work along very much as the work is being carried on now by Spiritual Mobilization."⁵⁵⁷ In an effort to bring about some collaboration, Pew wrote both Wright and Norman Vincent Peale to suggest they attempt "some kind of a consolidation or arrangement" between the NAE and the committee of ministers Peale was putting together for the CFF.⁵⁵⁸

In December of 1948, Wright again wrote to Pew, urging him to bring together a group of ministers and laymen to discuss "this whole question of how to combat the left-wing influence of the church."⁵⁵⁹ Pew was a little reticent at that point since he wanted Peale's group a little further along organizationally before calling any high profile meetings. In a reminder of the humble beginnings of the NAE, Crane also pushed back on the proposed collaboration, writing "I doubt that it is worthwhile having a conference with men of this group as they are representative of such a small minority of our Protestant church members."⁵⁶⁰ While the timing did not work out, Wright provided Pew with several names of ministers he wanted to join the conversation including NAE's

⁵⁵⁶ See JHP, Box 18, Peale Folder.

⁵⁵⁷ J. Howard Pew to Alfred Haake April 6, 1948, JHP, Box 235, Alfred Haake 1946-1948 Folder.

⁵⁵⁸ J Howard Pew to Norman Vincent Peale, May 3, 1948, JHP, Box 18, Peale folder.

⁵⁵⁹ J. Howard Pew to Norman Vincnet Peale, December 31, 1948, Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ Jasper Crane to J. Howard Pew, December 24, 1948, JHP, Box 16, C Folder.

first president and arguably most iconic leader Harold Ockenga and fellow NAE leader John Richardson.⁵⁶¹ Pew passed those names on to Peale who filed them away for future reference.

Two years later, the new president of the recently organized Christian Freedom Foundation, Howard Kershner, wrote to Harold Ockenga. In his letter, Kershner invited Ockenga to join the CFF and noted then NAE President Frederick Fowler was already a Board Member.⁵⁶² Ockenga cordially replied that, while he sympathized with the CFF, he felt he could not join the board as he made it a policy not to join any board in which he did not have a controlling interest. Despite turning Kershner down, Ockenga's letter indicated that there was already a close relationship between the CFF and neo-evangelism noting, "most of the VPs you have in your organization are very well known to me. I wish you well in what you are doing."⁵⁶³ While Kershner's initial effort to enlist Ockenga did not bear immediate fruit, it did begin a correspondence between the two. Over the next five years Kershner and Ockenga began collaborating more and more extensively. Ockenga addressed the CFF's 1955 Annual Meeting and finally joined the Board in 1956.⁵⁶⁴ By then the other minister that Pew had mentioned to Peale in his 1948 letter, John Richardson, had also joined the CFF's Board.

The Christian Freedom Foundation's broad membership, its annual meetings and smaller conferences provide further evidence of the increasingly close relationship between it and the leadership of the evangelical movement. Like the evangelical movement, the CFF's membership drew from a wide number of denominations. A June 1956 list indicates that 8 Baptists, 1 Brethren,

⁵⁶¹ J. Howard Pew to Norman Vincent Peale, December 31, 1948, JHP, Box 18, Peale Folder. Pew noted that Wright also included Peale's name in the group of "12 or 15" ministers he wanted to bring together.

⁵⁶² Howard Kershner to Harold Ockenga, Dec 1, 1950, HK, Box 13, O-Oh Folder.

⁵⁶³ Harold Ockenga to Howard Kershner, Dec, 1 1950, HK, Box 13, O-Oh Folder.

⁵⁶⁴ For an example of Kershner's and Ockenga's collaboration, see Howard Kershner to J. Howard Pew, June 9, 1954, JHP, Box 182, 1954 CFF Folder. In the letter Kershner notes that Ockenga enlisted him to invite 20 people to attend an event where Ockenga will "present his plan for an evangelistic campaign." Due to the collaboration between the CFF and Spiritual Mobilization it is not surprising that around this time SM President James Ingebretsen urged James Fifield to visit Ockenga during an SM sponsored swing to the East Coast noting that Ockenga "shares our general views on social questions." See James Ingebretsen to James Fifield, Jan 20, 1955, JCI, Box 54, Folder 24.

4 Congregationalists (including Ockenga), 7 Disciples of Christ, 7 Episcopalians, 1 Evangelical and Reformed, 6 Quakers or Friends, 5 Lutherans, 7 Methodists (including one Free), 1 Moravian, 17 Presbyterians (including Fowler and Richardson), and 5 Reformed ministers comprised the CFF's Board.⁵⁶⁵ The CFF's Annual Meetings showed that evangelical leaders took on leadership roles within the CFF. Former NAE presidents Frederick Fowler and R.L. Decker joined Ockenga in giving addresses at Annual Meetings with John Richardson listed as head of a Committee on States' Rights in 1959. Even more impressively, Kershner convinced Daniel K. Poling, the longtime editor of the evangelical magazine, *Christian Herald*, to join the CFF. In addition to serving as secretary for the CFF in its early years, Poling addressed the CFF Annual Meeting twice, the second time as an 83 year-old.⁵⁶⁶ Like Spiritual Mobilization, the CFF also held smaller conferences throughout the country aimed at spreading their message among the clergy. These conferences attracted up to 50 clergymen and featured prominent evangelical speakers such as Pew and *Christianity Today* editor and evangelical theologian extraordinaire, Carl Henry.⁵⁶⁷

In addition to those who joined the CFF, Kershner carried on a close correspondence with many NAE leaders and ministers. For example, Kershner wrote the NAE to ask for a subscription to its magazine *Evangelical Voice*. In his letter he noted, "I have recently had the privilege of occupying the pulpits of three of your most useful members. Needless to say, we greatly rejoice in the fellowship with these splendid men and the members of their wonderful congregations. The same is true of our many contacts with other members of your association."⁵⁶⁸ Kershner's relationship

⁵⁶⁵ June 1956 Membership List, JHP, Box 182, 1956 CFF Folder.

⁵⁶⁶ Annual Meeting Programs, JHP (Each program is in its respective Christian Freedom Foundation folder for that year. Thus the 1954 program is in the 1954 CFF folder and so on). *The Christian Herald* is one of the more understudied evangelical magazines even though its circulation in 1961 was 426,739, or more than twice that of the more well-known *Christianity Today*. For more on the *Herald's* influence in the evangelical movement see Steven P. Miller, "The Persistence of Antiliberalism: Evangelicals and the Race Problem" *American Evangelicals and the 1960s* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 81-96.

⁵⁶⁷ See March 21, 1958 Kershner to Pew

⁵⁶⁸ Kershner to A.S. Taylor, June 19, 1956, HK, Box 13, Nati-Naz Folder. Other correspondence between Kershner and NAE leaders included longtime Secretary J. Elwin Wright asking Kershner to get a Korean national "who is best qualified to take over the leadership of the country upon Rhee's retirement" enrolled in

with the NAE became so close that they asked him to submit a resolution expressing the evangelical view of the relationship of Christianity to economics for their 1958 meeting.⁵⁶⁹ Epitomizing *Christian Economics's* reach into grass-roots evangelicalism was Howard Kershner's relationship with Los Angeles evangelical leader and Presbyterian minister J. Vernon McGee. McGee, whose central role in politicizing grass-roots evangelicalism and bringing them into the Republican coalition is highlighted throughout Darren Dochuk's landmark book, not only read *Christian Economics* but invited Kershner to preach from his pulpit multiple times.⁵⁷⁰ Clearly, Kershner, the CFF and *Christian Economics* had wide exposure within evangelical circles.

The Christian Freedom Foundation not only strengthened its connection with the NAE and evangelical leaders like Harold Ockenga through its membership and Annual meetings, but also used those connections to get in the door of other iconic evangelical institutions such as Fuller Theological Seminary. Fuller, established in 1947 by radio evangelist Charles Fuller in conjunction with Ockenga and Carl Henry, became the theological center of the "New Evangelism."⁵⁷¹ Ockenga's growing relationship with the Christian Freedom Foundation and J. Howard Pew led to a cross-connection between Fuller and the CFF. In 1955, Pew flew out to California to tour the seminary at the invitation of Ockenga and Fuller. Shortly after, Ockenga invited Pew to be a trustee of the seminary, to which he agreed. As trustee Pew donated thousands of dollars to Fuller, with some of it, unsurprisingly, earmarked to help fund a Professor of Christian Economics.⁵⁷² Kershner also

a CFF sponsored seminar so that this "outstanding young man" could gain an education in political matters that would "make his services of the greatest use to his own people." See J. Elwin Wright to Howard Kershner, April 14, 1955, JHP, Box 182, 1955 CFF Folder. The NAE also wrote Kershner to get his opinion on Billy James Hargis. Like the John Birch Society and other "Ultras" Kershner and the NAE mutually agreed that while they were sympathetic to Hargis, they did not like his approach and could not publicly endorse him. See Nov. 1961 NAE correspondence, HK, Box 13, Nati-Naz Folder.

⁵⁶⁹ See Howard Kershner to J. Howard Pew, March 21, 1958, JHP, Box 183, 1958 CFF Folder.

⁵⁷⁰ Howard Kershner to J. Howard Pew, June 6, 1955, JHP, Box 182, CFF 1955 Folder. Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W.W. Norton Press, 2011).

⁵⁷¹ For more on Fuller's importance in the evangelical movement, see George Marsden *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1987).

⁵⁷² See Harold Ockenga to J. Howard Pew, May 15, 1955, JHP, Box 42, Christianity Today Folder.

connected with Fuller through the instrumentality of Ockenga. Over the years Kershner spoke on campus multiple times and for several years taught a course on Christian Economics in a Fuller Seminary sponsored summer school at Winona Lake Seminary.⁵⁷³ Kershner also made sure that Fuller's library was well stocked with books teaching the "right" kind of economics.

The many ongoing formal and informal connections between the CFF and Fuller led Ockenga, Kershner, Pew, and *Christianity Today* Executive Editor L. Nelson Bell to consider a merger of the three organizations. No doubt helped by the presence of Pew and Ockenga in governing capacities in all three organizations, the proposed merger got as far as a detailed proposal. After conferencing with Pew, Kershner wrote Bell to suggest that the Christian Freedom Foundation serve as the umbrella organization for all three to unite their fundraising efforts. The CFF would provide for and pay an executive secretary to oversee the monetary logistics of the proposed union, with donors asked to earmark their money for one of the three groups. Non-earmarked money would be divided equally among the three. While the proposal never went beyond that, it highlights the close relationship between the three organizations theologically, ideologically and personnel wise.

While firmly planted in the "New Evangelism," the Christian Freedom Foundation also identified with and connected with organizations and groups in the conservative movement. Thanks to Pew, Crane, and other network members, the CFF had ready access to many foundational conservative groups. In addition to Spiritual Mobilization and FEE, the CFF had organizational ties to Fred Clark's American Economic Foundation. Not only did Clark and his co-president Richard Rimanozcy frequently write articles for *Christian Economics*, they sent their entire mailing list to the CFF. Similarly, the CFF had numerous ties to the National Association of Manufacturers. For example, Sam Berry, the Southeast Region Manager contacted the CFF and offered to provide

⁵⁷³ Howard Kershner to Herbert Hoover, July 9, 1964, HK, Box 8, Hom-Hoz Folder.

Christian Economics with “information that our many departments furnish weekly.”⁵⁷⁴ Berry informed Kershner, “we are...promoting through our membership subscriptions to your publication ‘Christian Economics.’”⁵⁷⁵ Kershner also exchanged several letters with General Electric president Lemuel Boulware, Boulware encouraged Kershner and gave permission to quote and reprint any articles from GE publications “with or without credit to General Electric, just as you see fit.”⁵⁷⁶ For a corporation and CEO intensely focused on controlling its public image, Boulware’s offer was poetic license indeed.

The Christian Freedom Foundation’s relationship to *National Review* is indicative of how much the foundation connected or “plugged” into the foundational organizations of the conservative movement. William Buckley and Howard Kershner had known of each other since the beginning of the 1950s with some sporadic correspondence in the early part of the decade. After Buckley started *National Review*, their relationship grew closer. Buckley apparently met with Kershner a number of times to discuss *National Review* and the CFF cooperating in a business venture that would potentially bear the publication costs of both organizations’ magazines.⁵⁷⁷ Though this joint venture did not work out, Buckley and Kershner became good friends. Kershner even wrote Buckley noting that around 1952, Buckley’s father paid him a visit to “express his high appreciation of our paper” and to find out “if there might be a spot for you on our staff.” Kershner went on to lament his failure to do so and mused, “I have always wondered how history might have been different had my reaction at that point been a little more prompt.”⁵⁷⁸ Kershner’s standing with Buckley was such that Buckley’s brother-in-law Brent Bozell sought Kershner’s advice when starting up his Catholic magazine *Triumph*.⁵⁷⁹ In addition to the personal and informal relationships, there were shared authors and frequent reprints between the two magazines.

⁵⁷⁴ Sam Berry to Howard Kershner, December 12, 1952, JHP, Box 181, 1952 CFF Folder.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Lemuel Boulware to Howard Kershner, August 20, 1951, HK, Box 7, Gas-Gee Folder.

⁵⁷⁷ See William Buckley to Howard Kershner, Jan 4, 1957, HK, Box 3, Buckley Folder.

⁵⁷⁸ Howard Kershner to William Buckley, August 6, 1969, Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ See Howard Kershner to Brent Bozell, October 11, 1965, HK, Box 2, Bop-Boz folder.

Clearly, Kershner and the CFF were operating well within the center of the conservative movement, mixing evangelical, libertarian and more traditional conservative networks, voices and ideas.⁵⁸⁰

Kershner, the CFF and the broader Spiritual Mobilization network also mixed Protestant and Catholic conservative voices. Their relationship with Catholics such as Buckley, Manion, and Bozell provides insight into the late 20th century political alliance of conservative Protestants and Catholics. Network members' longest running relationship was with Father Edward Keller of Notre Dame University. As head of the economics department at Notre Dame, Father Keller had published a number of articles and tracts over the years, many of which network members actively promoted. For example, Pew widely distributed Keller's pro-free enterprise pamphlet, "The Church and our Economic System" as well as his "The Case for Right-to-Work Laws." B.E. Hutchinson took his support for Keller a step further and actively supported Keller's Christophers organization, which Hutch described as the Catholic version of Spiritual Mobilization. Hutch even introduced Keller to Eisenhower's Secretary of the Treasury in an attempt to boost Keller's influence. Similarly, Dean Clarence Manion of Notre Dame's law school found fast friends among network members, actively collaborating with both Spiritual Mobilization and the Christian Freedom Foundation. Network members considered his book *The Key To Peace*, a masterpiece and Pew even backed a plan to distribute thousands of copies to libraries and other public institutions.⁵⁸¹ Network members' later collaboration with William Buckley and Brent Bozell, as well as their support for and occasional contact with Cardinal Francis Spellman are further examples of prominent Catholics they considered on their side.

⁵⁸⁰ In addition to *National Review*, Kershner and *CE* had a similar relationship with DeWitt Wallace and *Reader's Digest*. Wallace and Pew were good friends and Wallace met Kershner through the instrumentality of Pew (Pew invited both to a Billy Graham luncheon where they sat by each other). By the early 1960s Wallace was reprinting *CE* articles and even hosted a fundraiser for the Christian Freedom Foundation. See S. Bayard to J. Howard Pew, Oct 17, 1961, JHP, Box 184, 1961 CFF folder.

⁵⁸¹ See J. Howard Pew to Joseph N Pew, Nov. 2, 1953, JHP, Box 34, H Folder.

What is most notable about network members' relationship to these prominent Catholics is that outside of Cardinal Spellman, anti-communism is not what brought them together. Indeed, the two Catholics network members and organizations worked most closely with, Clarence Manion and Father Keller, focused much more on domestic economic issues than fighting Communism per se. In other words, Keller and Manion, both of whom published articles in *Christian Economics*, were in many senses part of the Spiritual Mobilization network because they held similar ideas about how Christianity applied to America's economic and political life. The lynchpin of their collaboration and mutual respect was a shared ideology of pagan stateism and Freedom Under God with anti-communism a less important, though still shared, principle. While anti-Communism may have made Catholics more generally accepted in American society, the nucleus of the conservative Protestant-Catholic political alliance went deeper than that. Long before abortion and other "hot button" issues brought them together, conservative Protestants and Catholics were working together to promote their version of "Christian economics."

Though network members and organizations readily worked with and accepted similarly minded Catholics, this was not a seamless alliance. Network members welcomed individual Catholics as allies, but their good graces did not extend to the Catholic Church. As Jasper Crane explained, he could not "applaud without reservation" Catholic pronouncements even if "on economic matters [they] are more moderate than those of some other religious leaders [i.e. the Federal Council of Churches]" because "with their authoritarian philosophy they do not fully accept nor understand the principle of Liberty."⁵⁸² Similarly another one of Pew's friends wrote Pew to thank him for Father Keller's "The Church and Our Economic System," but noted that "[i]t always makes my blood boil a bit to see such a plea for individualism coming from the Roman Catholic Church. If our economic or political systems were set up as is their church, we would have a

⁵⁸² Jasper Crane to William Pierce, Oct. 2, 1947, JEC, Box 1, American Economic Foundation Folder.

dictatorship of some sort.”⁵⁸³ Even Pew feared that if conservative Protestants did not start taking over churches in blue-collar neighborhoods, Catholics would quickly win “working men” over and “we would have a Catholic country,” something only slightly less undesirable than a communist state.⁵⁸⁴ The old Protestant fear of Catholic political power did not die easily, even among ideological allies.

This fear and concern seems to have rubbed off to a certain extent on network members’ relationship with their Catholic allies. Among those Catholics readily accepted by network members, there was something of a barrier to full communion with the larger group. For example, when Hutch and James Ingebretsen were planning a Spiritual Mobilization workshop at Bishop Emrich’s Episcopal retreat, there was some hesitancy about inviting conservative publisher Henry Regnery because Hutch thought he was Catholic and thus “could not come.”⁵⁸⁵ Similarly, Harry Price, a board member of the CFF, resigned from the board after converting to Catholicism. Even though Howard Kershner made sure to print articles by Catholics in *Christian Economics*, a Catholic board member was a step too far for an organization aimed at Protestant ministers.⁵⁸⁶ Even more broadly, while Catholics like Manion, Buckley and Keller largely fit in with network members, they were never central players in the network. Much like Victoria Kellem’s sex prohibited her from being “one of them,” these men’s Catholicism proved a barrier to full fellowship. The closeness and camaraderie of the core of the network remained white, male and Protestant.

Through its many contacts, and its relationships with like-minded individuals on either side of the Protestant-Catholic divide, the Christian Freedom Foundation mirrored many of the networks that made up Spiritual Mobilization and the Foundation for Economic Education. Like

⁵⁸³ President Smith of Oliver Iron and Steel Corp to J. Howard Pew, Aug 4, 1947, JHP, Box 11, 1947 Booklets Folder.

⁵⁸⁴ J. Howard Pew to J. Elwin Wright, May 25, 1960, JHP, Box 67, C Folder.

⁵⁸⁵ See B.E. Hutchinson to Russell Kirk, March 14, 1956, Box 2, Parishfield Conference Folder, B.E. Hutchinson Papers, Hoover Institute.

⁵⁸⁶ This reservation also extended to Mormons as Kershner, who carried on a correspondence with a number of Latter Day Saint leaders, felt he could not invite any of them to join the CFF’s Board.

Spiritual Mobilization and FEE, the CFF worked closely with foundational conservative organizations and thinkers such as the National Association of Manufacturers, Ludwig Von Mises and Russell Kirk. Where the CFF surpassed its parent organizations was in its connections to influential evangelical leaders and institutions. These connections provided a direct link between the conservative movement and the evangelical movement, exposing evangelicals to libertarian economics and conservative arguments within a Christian framework. In some senses the CFF was a translator, allowing two distinctive movements to talk to each other with a common language. Kershner and the CFF made libertarian or laissez-faire economics make sense to evangelicals and other socially conservative Christians. Similarly, its evangelical fervor helped infuse economic libertarianism with religious zeal by equating economic and religious freedom and thus rallying Christians to an ideological defense of laissez-faire. The CFF and its activities reinforced evangelicals' natural skepticism of state-centered Liberalism and connected that anti-Liberalism with specific economic ideas.

Conclusion

When the Christian Freedom Foundation reached its heyday in the mid-1960s, it marked the maturation of the Christian libertarianism that Fifiield had first organizationally inaugurated in 1935. The complexity that the CFF added to concepts such as Fifiield's pagan stateism and Freedom Under God was truly stunning. Where Fifiield had repeatedly, some would say doggedly, played a few key notes, the CFF and even *Christianity Today* were experimenting with the whole range of the ideological and theological keyboard, playing with a distinctly evangelical tenor. This change in tenor underscores one of the more noteworthy stories in the history of Christian political conservatism. What started out as an ideological project by a theologically liberal Congregationalist minister turned into an ideological factory and network that permeated the evangelical movement. Fifiield sketched out the somewhat vacuous outlines of a Christian libertarian ideology, which

Edmund Opitz and Leonard Read of the Foundation of Economic Education began putting down in patriotic ink. The CFF then took those drawings and filled them in with evangelically oriented detail, interjecting them in the ideological DNA of evangelical Christianity. The transformation of Fifield's ideological concepts and their attachment to a specific religious movement brought depth, and influence, to Fifield's ideological sketches.

Organizationally the CFF far outpaced its progenitor. Fifield and James Ingebretsen never had the time for detailed planning; most of Spiritual Mobilization's campaigns were broadly conceived and lacked ideological and organizational focus. For example, Spiritual Mobilization's two most prominent campaigns were its Committee to Proclaim Liberty and its Perils to Freedom Sermon Contest. Neither had a specific goal outside of a general belief that spreading and discussing broad ideological and theological ideas like faith in God and the pagan threat of state power would generally push America towards a more ideologically acceptable path. The Christian Freedom Foundation, on the other hand, carefully planned and executed a close relationship with the burgeoning evangelical movement and arranged for its literature and teachings to penetrate theological seminaries and Bible Colleges as well as other institutions such as schools, colleges, and civic organizations. Even in the publishing world, *Christian Economics* reached almost 10 times as many ministers as *Faith and Freedom*. The Christian Freedom Foundation also registered internationally in a way that Spiritual Mobilization could only dream. The Christian Freedom Foundation's focus, connections and resources brought together and neatly packaged Fifield's founding efforts and ideas in a way that multiplied its ideological and organizational effect.

Given the CFF's successful penetration of evangelicalism and its organizational efficiency it is not surprising that when sociologist Alex Schafer listed the economic ideas that evangelicals broadly supported in the midst of their political mobilization in the 1970s and 1980s, those ideas consisted mainly of "self-interest as a means toward a positive social end as long as it was wedded

to a religiously inspired code of self-discipline,” and a belief that “the answer to poverty [lay] in making the economic pie bigger.”⁵⁸⁷ In other words, Howard Kershner and the CFF’s core idea that a market bounded by Christian virtues and beliefs worked better than a market regulated by government and laws resonated among evangelicals. The CFF’s explicit linking of Christian virtues, such as honesty, to the pillars of Capitalism, such as the profit motive, did not fall on deaf ears. Many evangelicals clearly embraced Howard Kershner’s conception of Christian Capitalism found in *Christian Economics*.

By the time J. Howard Pew passed away in 1971, the Christian Freedom Foundation had been successfully propagating Christian libertarianism for more than 20 years. Not long after Pew’s death, Howard Kershner stepped down from leading the CFF and the CFF began a slow transformation to political advocacy. By 1972, the CFF had dropped *Christian Economics* because of the expenses of publication. In 1974, William McAteer assumed the leadership of the Christian Freedom Foundation, and in 1979 he played a key role in persuading Jerry Falwell to form his Moral Majority.⁵⁸⁸ The CFF’s explicit connection to the rise of the Religious Right underscores its role in marrying evangelical theology to libertarian economic theory and providing a lasting ideological bridge between evangelicals and the conservative political movement.

⁵⁸⁷ *Countercultural Conservatives...*, 116.

⁵⁸⁸ *White, Protestant Nation...*, 342-343.

Epilogue

Much like the movement they had helped build, Spiritual Mobilization network members became increasingly excited about the senior Senator from Arizona. Leonard Read wrote William Mullendore to excitedly point out that Goldwater was directly borrowing from some lectures that Read had given in Argentina titled “Why Not Try Freedom?” Goldwater’s *Conscience of a Conservative* struck a chord with network members, prompting Kershner to write Pew “If all men who believe as he does would state their convictions as courageously we could pull out of our present slide toward surrender. If we lose it will be a case of suicide, not murder.”⁵⁸⁹ Even more significantly Dean Clarence Manion played an integral part in putting together the committee that laid the groundwork for Goldwater’s 1964 run.⁵⁹⁰

As the 1964 election approached, network members’ attraction to Goldwater coalesced into increasingly fervid political and financial support. Closely watching the primaries, Pew wrote to Kershner to celebrate Goldwater’s exhilarating victory over Republican front-runner Nelson Rockefeller in California’s June primary.⁵⁹¹ As the general election approached, there was a flurry of letters back and forth. In August Fifield wrote Pew that he felt “very much encouraged about the outcome for Mr. Goldwater” as he found that “‘the wind is beginning to blow the other way’ in many quarters.”⁵⁹² He followed up with a letter in September that noted, “I still have a quiet confidence deep inside that Mr. Goldwater will win the Election and that the trends in our country are going to be reversed.”⁵⁹³ Pew wrote Fifield back that “there never has been a candidate in modern times who had the support of so many real crusaders, and this will count at election.” More

⁵⁸⁹ Howard Kershner to J. Howard Pew, June 27, 1960, JHP, Box 183, CFF 1960 Folder.

⁵⁹⁰ See Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).

⁵⁹¹ J. Howard Pew to Howard Kershner, June 26, 1964, JHP, Box 184, CFF 1964 Folder.

⁵⁹² James Fifield to J. Howard Pew, August 26, 1964, JHP, Box 229, F Folder.

⁵⁹³ James Fifield to J. Howard Pew, September 22, 1964, *Ibid.*

importantly, Pew, who usually held himself aloof from individual campaigns, wrote Fifield as an insider for the Goldwater campaign, urging Fifield to “get your well-to-do friends to provide money” for some Goldwater television appearances, \$5, 600, 000 to be exact.⁵⁹⁴

Jasper Crane also climbed on the Goldwater bandwagon. He wrote Herbert Hoover in June of 1964 to plug Goldwater, noting “Goldwater, it seems to me, and I have studied him thoroughly from his writings and by several intimate talks, measures up splendidly. I feel that if he is nominated, the people will have the first opportunity since 1932 to vote for a conservative statesman who stands squarely on the Constitution of the United States.”⁵⁹⁵ Writing again in October, Crane pleaded with Hoover to publicly endorse Goldwater as only such a public endorsement could help turn the political tide. Drawing a direct line from Hoover to Goldwater, Crane argued that Goldwater was essentially the ideological heir of Hoover, noting “almost thirty years ago I first met you in Palo Alto and have ever since been crusading for some of the truths that I learned from you that day and which are now included” in Goldwater’s campaign.⁵⁹⁶ Howard Kershner similarly drew a line between Hoover and Goldwater. In a letter to Hoover, Kershner noted “In a recent broadcast over 300 stations, after telling some of the reasons why I thought we should elect Barry Goldwater, I had the following to say about you...’Herbert Hoover is the personification of integrity. He has the strength of Gibraltar. He has Faith in God and His moral law...’”⁵⁹⁷ The ease with which network members passed over decades to connect Hoover and Goldwater is telling. Network members had kept the ideology of Hoover alive even while transforming it, and they saw in Barry Goldwater the ideological heir apparent to Herbert Hoover.

⁵⁹⁴ J. Howard Pew to James Fifield, October 5, 1964, Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Jasper Crane to Herbert Hoover, June 30, 1964, JEC, Box 41U, H 1956-1959 Folder.

⁵⁹⁶ Jasper Crane to Herbert Hoover, October 15, 1964 Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷ Howard Kershner to Herbert Hoover, October 2, 1964, HK, Box 8, Hom-hoz Folder.

Such ideological reminiscing came naturally to a group so closely associated with Hoover ideologically and personally. Hoover's intimate friendships with James Fifiield, Howard Kershner, Jasper Crane and William Mullendore, endured literally for decades. Even Pew met and worked with Hoover after attending Hoover Institute funded retreats to Bohemian Grove in California. It was Hoover who introduced Kershner to Fifiield and Pew, leading to Kershner's assumption of the leadership of the Christian Freedom Foundation. Hoover also worked extensively with Crane to get the *Freeman* up and running. Hoover not only advised Crane on editors and content, he personally spread subscriptions to the *Freeman* with such zeal that he reported, " [I] already have more than doubled the lists and there are more coming in."⁵⁹⁸ In an anecdote that suggests just how much Hoover and the Spiritual Mobilization network thought of themselves as a movement, Hoover enthusiastically told Crane that the *Freeman* "is the best thing we [conservatives] have had yet."⁵⁹⁹ While discrete and largely behind the scenes, Hoover's impact on network members and others in the conservative movement is undeniable. As Jasper Crane wrote in tribute to Hoover

I have been devoting my time and energies to doing what I can in the great struggle to maintain the Republic and to preserve liberty...I am continually impressed by the fact that so many of these men and women [in the struggle] gained their first real knowledge of liberty directly or indirectly from you. I won't name names, although I could list so many of the most effective fighters for freedom who have been energized by you. If human liberty is to be preserved, as we may now begin to believe it may be, your leadership, counsel, and inspiring words will have been invaluable⁶⁰⁰

Though their ties to political figures like Hoover and Goldwater were personally and ideologically strong, the enduring nature of their friendships was the

⁵⁹⁸ Herbert Hoover to Jasper Crane, November 20, 1950, JEC, Box 38, 1950 Freeman Folder.

⁵⁹⁹ Jasper Crane to Robert Darling, December 28, 1950, Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Jasper Crane to Herbert Hoover, August 1, 1949, JEC, Box 41U, H 1947-1950 Folder.

real strength of the network. Fifield and Pew, after a brief time with only sporadic correspondence, renewed their relationship in the early 1960s, writing extensively and meeting each other whenever they could. Despite their theological differences, which Pew minimized, they grew so close that Fifield wrote Pew, "I feel as close to you as anyone in the World. We have shared some important moments and experiences...I will meet you most anywhere and most anytime."⁶⁰¹ While not as given to sentimental language as Fifield, Pew returned the mutuality in large part through his actions, such as pulling strings to try and get Fifield's daughter into medical school and helping Fifield out of personal financial difficulties. Appropriately, both men passed away within a few months of each other in 1972.

Though Fifield and Howard Kershner did not meet until Hoover introduced them in 1949, they too eventually became fast friends. On his frequent speaking tours, Kershner preached in front of Fifield's congregation whenever he was in town. Fifield and Kershner got along so well that in 1967 Fifield convinced Kershner to move himself and the offices of the Christian Freedom Foundation from New York to Los Angeles so that Kershner could join Fifield's church as Minister of Applied Christianity. Kershner even moved into Fifield Manors, a retirement community that Fifield owned and operated. For his part Fifield became active in the Christian Freedom Foundation, addressing one of its Annual Meetings, joining the Board and becoming Treasurer in the late 1960s.⁶⁰² The intimacy of Fifield and Kershner symbolized the ease with which theological principles passed between theological liberals and conservatives, the ideological closeness of their organizations, and the strength of their friendship. Sharing so much despite their

⁶⁰¹ James Fifield to J. Howard Pew, August 26, 1964, JHP, Box 229, F Folder.

⁶⁰² See Howard Kershner to James Fifield, November 7, 1966 and James Fifield to Howard Kershner, May 24, 1967, HK, Box 6, Fifield Folder.

intellectual and theological differences indicated how central their ideology was to their identity. These were not men motivated primarily by financial gain; their, and other network members', defense of laissez-faire came from deep-seated beliefs and convictions. Their ideological, near theological attachment to capitalism led them to overlook and explain away its flaws while questioning the very character of those who struggled in the country's economic life. Though profoundly flawed, biased and often deeply insensitive, their sincere beliefs ultimately defined them, inspired others and became a force that helped bring an enduring movement together.

Conclusion

After Goldwater's spectacular electoral defeat in 1964, James Fifiield wrote J. Howard Pew that he was "glad to have you say over the phone that you are encouraging Barry Goldwater to continue actively. He means much to many."⁶⁰³ Typical of Fifiield, the latest electoral defeat of his candidate did not lead him to slacken or question his efforts over the years. With farsighted patience born of his theologically liberal beliefs, Fifiield put his efforts in a long-term context. It was important that Goldwater, who represented the first real national conservative candidate since before the Great Depression, continue active in politics. Though a candidate might lose, the movement needed to go on.

And go on it did. Barry Goldwater's defeat signaled not the sudden end, but the rise of Conservatism in the United States. Within two years William Buckley would mount a serious challenge in the New York Mayoral race and Ronald Reagan would win the governorship of California running as a conservative. Such successes, limited as they were, proved to be the first of many. They rested on the careful and conscious movement and ideology building of men like Fifiield, Pew, Leonard Read and Howard Kershner.

By the mid-1960s the economic Right was in full swing, in large part because of the organizational and financial efforts of Spiritual Mobilization network members. Among the enduring organizations on the economic right that network members had a hand in were the American Enterprise Institute, the Foundation for Economic Education, the Mont Pelerin Society, and the Chicago school of Economics. Furthermore, the close ties between organizations like the Christian Freedom Foundation and *Christianity Today* as well as people like Carl Henry and Edmund Opitz meant that the ideological and organizational ties

⁶⁰³ James W. Fifiield to J. Howard Pew, December 10, 1964, Box 229, F Folder, J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Archives.

that would bind evangelical conservatism to its economic and anti-communist cousins were already in place.

Perhaps what is most striking about the history of Spiritual Mobilization and its network is the cohesiveness of its ideology and the intentionality of its movement building. These men knew they were building what was ultimately meant to be a political movement. While most of them were not political actors, they saw their efforts as materially aiding Republican electoral prospects. Recognizing that political outcomes rested on more than party and organization, these men sought to change the underlying dynamics of American politics through its religious life. They wanted to not simply own the territory; they literally wanted to reshape the landscape. While forces outside of their control did most of the heavy lifting, whether the Cold War, Civil Rights or postwar prosperity, they did their best to use such shifts to their advantage, and topple a few mountains in the process.

Consider, for example, the National Council of Churches. Upon its formation it was widely considered the most important protestant voice in the political life of the country. Pew's Lay Committee tried in vain to control it, or at least negate its power with well-publicized disagreement and dissent. Within a couple of decades of the Lay Committee's demise, however, Pew's Lay Committee report, with its attack on Social Gospel-inspired thinking had found resonance within the evangelical community that had emerged to take top spot from the NCC in the protestant political landscape. While losing the battle, Pew and his allies had won the war and through their efforts exerted surprising influence on American religious life through their association with evangelical Christianity. While not primarily responsible for toppling the "mountain" of the NCC, Pew and company's efforts

contributed to a dramatic reshaping of the religious landscape, a reshaping with profound consequences for the political, social and economic life of the country.⁶⁰⁴

The history of Spiritual Mobilization and its attendant networks and organizations also gives some insight into the relationship between conservative theology and conservative ideology. Due to the high number of politically conservative evangelicals, some commentators have argued that conservative theology “pre-disposes” believers to conservative ideology. The history of Fifield and his supporters suggests that such a relationship is best understood as an historical construct rather than an inevitable intellectual journey. Fifield himself was more interested in influencing theological liberals than theological conservatives. As this history shows, however, Fifield inspired a key group of evangelical actors who retooled his message for evangelical, and other theological conservatives, consumption. This is a story of how specific actors and institutions arranged theologically conservative beliefs and made arguments attaching them to specific social, economic and political issues. Their success was as much about organization and consistency of effort than any predetermined congruence. They had a plan and the means to persistently carry out that plan.

With that said, Fifield, Read, Pew and especially Howard Kershner succeeded because of how they attached their political, economic and religious beliefs with the thread of Christian individualism. Their belief in the relationship between Christianity and individual action and conscience prompted them to protest government economic programs as pagan, uniting religious and economic conservatives. In the context of the Cold War, Christian individualism had special resonance as the United States battled “atheistic

⁶⁰⁴ For more on the reshaping of postwar Protestantism and its political, economic and social implications see George Marsden ed., *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1984); Mark Noll, *One Nation Under God?: Christian Faith and Political Action in America* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988); Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since WW II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Communism,” or as they often referred to it “collectivism.” While certainly not the only ideological thread to pull together the conservative movement, Christian individualism has had enduring appeal. While Libertarians like Ayn Rand have tried to divorce individualism from Christianity, and traditionalists like Russell Kirk have, at least in his later years, expressed concern about Libertarians and unbridled Capitalism, the thread while arguably frayed has not snapped.⁶⁰⁵ “Socialism” and other forms of “collectivism” have no greater ideological appeal among evangelicals and other theological conservatives today than in the time of Fifield, Pew and Kershner.

While the ideological appeal of Christian individualism carries great resonance by itself, its enduring nature on the American Right comes from how the Spiritual Mobilization network embedded it, and other ideological principles, institutionally among economic and religious conservatives. Whether through organizations like the Foundation for Economic Education and the Christian Freedom Foundation, or through journals like the *Freeman* and *Christian Economics*, Spiritual Mobilization network members built institutions to carry on their ideas. Even organizations they did not solely build or control, like the National Association of Manufacturers, the Mont Pelerin Society and *Christianity Today*, often proved useful for their purposes. Furthermore, their many connections with high profile economic, religious and political figures, like Billy Graham, Herbert Hoover and William Buckley magnified their efforts. Leveraging these relationships they spread their influence far and wide.

⁶⁰⁵ Russell Kirk’s attack on Libertarians is quite revealing given his history with Libertarian organizations like Spiritual Mobilization and the Foundation for Economic Education. It was not until Rand, Murray Rothbard and other “non-Christian” Libertarians became the face of Libertarianism that Kirk publicly attacked the libertarian movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s and drew a line between Libertarians and Conservatives. As this dissertation shows, Kirk’s issue with Libertarians was more of a reaction to Rand and Rothbard’s atheism and utilitarianism than any longstanding concern with Capitalism. For Kirk’s attack on Libertarians see “Libertarians: The Chirping Sectaries,” *Modern Age*, Fall 1981, pgs. 345-351.

The explicitly political institution and alliance building of the 1970s and 1980s have long obscured the institutional and ideological legacy of men such as Fifield, Read, Pew and Kershner. Many of these organizations, such as the Heritage Foundation, Focus on the Family, the Cato Institute and the Moral Majority, have received a lot of attention given their noticeable influence on American politics over the past several decades. While they did not come into being until the 1970s, their political success is just the tip of the conservative iceberg. Underneath the chronological water was a host of non-political organizations tied together but only informally tethered to the Republican Party. Whether the defunct Spiritual Mobilization, the Foundation for Economic Education, the National Association of Manufacturers, or the Christian Freedom Foundation, the 1950s and 1960s saw the flowering of conservative groups focused not on electoral politics but on the dissemination of ideas and beliefs. In many ways the development of explicitly political groups like the Heritage Foundation was the next step for the conservative movement, a sign that the Spiritual Mobilization network had been so successful, the organizations they founded had become obsolete.

Bridging the gap between the electoral strength of the 1970s and 1980s and the ideology of the 1940s and 1950s were ideological gatekeepers like William Buckley and Russell Kirk. Firmly attached to the Spiritual Mobilization network, it was Buckley and Kirk who oversaw the political coalescing of Conservatism. While Buckley, in particular, is important in understanding modern Conservatism's rise to ideological and political power, he stood on the shoulders of those who had gone before. Despite its contradictions and seemingly ad hoc nature, the broad ideology of the Spiritual Mobilization network, which incorporated economic, religious and anti-communist Conservatism, provided leaders in the conservative movement a solid platform to build on. When William Buckley and the

National Review began promoting “fusionism” they found well-tilled soil instead of hard ground and the seeds of an alliance already planted.

Finally, as the Christian Freedom Foundation’s organizational role in bringing about the Religious Right by encouraging Jerry Falwell to form the Moral Majority shows, conservative institution and ideology building in the 1970s sprang directly from the institution and ideology building of the previous decades. Darren Dochuk notes that “Rather than an invention of Falwell and Robertson’s Religious Right, evangelicalism’s politicization was a product of an earlier time made possible by an earlier generation.”⁶⁰⁶ What was true of evangelicalism was also true of the growing political power of economic Conservatism. As the history of the Spiritual Mobilization network and organizations show, it was not coincidence or political convenience that led economic and religious conservatives into an explicitly political alliance in the 1970s. The seeds of their political partnership sprang from decades of mutual institution and ideology building. The conservative “revolution” of the 1980s was not the product of political mobilization in the 1970s so much as the maturation of a long-standing, ideological and institutional partnership.

⁶⁰⁶ Daren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011), xxiii.

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