

REVIVING CHRISTIAN AMERICA:  
THE THOUGHT OF GERALD B. WINROD

by

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B.A., Bethel College, 1983

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A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

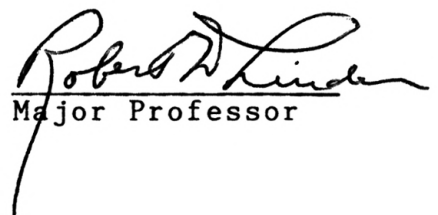
MASTER OF ARTS

College of Arts and Science

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1987

Approved by:

  
Major Professor

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## INTRODUCTION

When the word "fundamentalist" is mentioned in contemporary conversation, it often denotes a person who would like to put prayer in schools and snap locks on the doors of abortion clinics. In popular reference, minister Jerry Falwell is the model fundamentalist. The term, in common usage, becomes synonymous with the new radical political right--and its attempts to legislate religious values in a pluralistic society. Moreover, using this contemporary view, historians and social critics have been inclined to hunt for the modern movement's forerunners in the evangelical fundamentalism of the 1920s.

One of the most often designated progenitors has been Gerald Burton Winrod, Wichita Kansas evangelist and founder of the Defenders of the Christian Faith. Winrod's violent slashes at American politics and society have fascinated students and historians for more than 30 years. In fact, the first full study of his political thought appeared two years before his 1957 death.<sup>1</sup> Since then numerous historians have turned to Winrod when they needed a ready example of a radical right politician. Consistently, they have focused on his political or social critic-

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<sup>1</sup>Ann Marie Buitrago, "A Study of the Political Ideas of Gerald B. Winrod, 1926-1938," (Master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1955).

isms. When they have noted the beliefs he exalted on the pulpit, historians have emphasized his use of dispensationalism, a system of interpreting biblical prophecy, or his defense of traditional religion against modernism, the liberal theology which sought to harmonize Christianity with modern science and society.

While numerous writers have called Winrod a preacher and defender, no one has adequately analyzed what he preached or defended. Stressing his political ideas and activities, historians have failed to explore in detail the beliefs which spawned them. Instead, previous studies have probed Winrod's political thought and pronounced it replete with conspiracy and paranoia. Taken at face value, it indeed appears to be. In fact, in nearly the all political commentary of fundamentalists of the 1920s and those of the 1980s, one finds evidence of seemingly pathological tendencies.

To describe gleefully such behavior and belief systems in psychological terminology and leave it at that is historical evasion. Unless it can be adequately demonstrated that a pathology exists in a person or group under study, historians must strive to determine and communicate the historical sources of ideas. That is what this study seeks to do for Winrod.

Basically, it asks: What were the core beliefs of Winrod's thought? What were their historical sources? In order to account for the political criticism which dominated his publishing career, it inquires further: How did Winrod apply these ideas to social issues?

In answering these questions, three works have provided special assistance. First, in Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925, George Marsden has explored the intellectual sources of the movement. He finds roots in the science of Francis Bacon, the nineteenth century holiness movement, and dispensational premillennialism. In addition, he includes discussions of some fundamentalists' belief in the Christian nature of American culture and their efforts to preserve it. Second, Robert T. Handy's A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities has traced further the presumptions Americans maintain about the alleged Christian foundations of the United States. Finally, Leo P. Ribuffo has supplied clues to the thought of Winrod in his excellent chapter-length study of the evangelist. In The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right From the Great Depression to the Cold War, Ribuffo links Winrod to the holiness movement and dispensationalism. With less emphasis, he notes Winrod's belief in the special virtue of America. Ribuffo's primary

purpose, however, is the extraction of Winrod's politics, and he still falls short of full significance of the more central assumptions of Winrod's life and thought.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this study, then, is to examine the constant assumptions of Winrod's world view and see how he applied them to the society and politics. The thesis it posits is: the thought of Gerald B. Winrod combined Baconian science, holiness theology, dispensational premillennialism and the ideal of Christian American. He applied the world view born of these concepts to contemporary problems and arrived at solutions which relied on religious renewal and its function in the social order.

Other historians have reached their conclusions about Winrod by looking primarily at his articles in The Defender. Sticking to this technique skews any interpretation toward Winrod's day-to-day journalistic efforts to translate the world for his readers, and results in mistaking the application of his beliefs for core ideas themselves.

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<sup>2</sup>George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Robert T. Handy, A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities, 2nd rev. ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Leo P. Ribuffo, The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Depression to the Cold War, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983).

Winrod's books and pamphlets, however, present a different and more complex picture. In such early works as Christ Within (1925) and The Keystone of Christianity (1930), Winrod set forth the main tenets a consistent, if not wholly systematic, theology. In addition, he established many of his basic opinions on Christian America, as well as gave clues to his views on science and his use of dispensationalism. The ideas formed here remained constant throughout Winrod's life. Many appear in almost unaltered form in his final work, Prayer in the Atomic Age (1957). Although his books and pamphlets contained the same ideas as The Defender, they were given more considered treatment and were less intertwined with a specific news item to which Winrod was reacting as each issue went to press. In these pages, the stable elements of his world view are more easily detected.

As Winrod looked at the America he had hallowed, he saw a nation that no longer fit these assumptions. But he had hope that it could be different. Thus, instead of adopting the assumptions of the twentieth century, he devoted his life to readjusting society to his way of thinking, to reviving the religion and values of Christian America.

## I. CHRISTIAN AMERICA AND EVANGELICAL FUNDAMENTALISM

The world view of Gerald Winrod combined ideas which had originated in nineteenth-century America and earlier. He placed faith in a Christian America, believing it had once existed and could again. Theologically, he adapted the teachings of the nineteenth-century holiness movement to his own system of religion. Although he was not wholly of it, Winrod brought these ideas to the world of evangelical fundamentalism and associated with its chief proponents. A background in these historical ideas and movements sheds light on the sources of Winrod's thought.

While Winrod has been seen primarily as fundamentalist, the tenets of his faith were bound up in an idea running through the Protestant experience in America since the start--the belief in a Christian America. And exploring this tradition is essential to accounting for the sources Winrod's assumptions. However, the point here is not to fire another volley in the current battle over whether America actually is, or ever has been, a Christian nation. The objective is to examine the tendency of Americans to believe their country to be Christian, regardless of whether this is actually the case.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For an examination of whether America is, or ought to be, a Christian nation, see Jerry S. Herbert, ed., American, Secular or Christian?: Readings in American



George Marsden, historian of fundamentalism, begins his analysis of the movement's background by stating flatly, "In 1870 almost all American Protestants thought of America as a Christian nation."<sup>2</sup> He continues to point out that in the late nineteenth century most evangelicals believed Christianity to be the only sound foundation for civilization. Although the exact meaning of Christianity in American culture was unclear Christian character was seen as basic to the survival of any republic.<sup>3</sup>

This nineteenth-century Protestant consensus was only the high point of what other historians have identified as a common belief. Americans have generally followed the presumption that the nation has been favored by God and guided by the principles of Christianity. Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, and Marsden in their work The Search for Christian America observe the existence of this sentiment. While these authors intend to disabuse Americans of the idea, they concede that "the notion of America's chosen-

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Christian History and Civil Religion, (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1984); Mark A. Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, and George M. Marsden, The Search for Christian America, (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1983); and Robert D. Linder and Richard V. Pierard, Twilight of the Saints: Biblical Christianity and Civil Religion in America, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press), 1978.

<sup>2</sup>George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

ness as a uniquely Christian land has persisted throughout the United States' entire history."<sup>4</sup> Sociologist Robert N. Bellah, who has argued strongly for the existence of an American civil religion, also believes Americans have defined themselves as a religious nation. "In the beginning, and to some extent ever since, Americans have interpreted their history as having religious meaning," he contends. "They saw themselves as a 'people' in the classical and biblical sense. They hoped they were a people of God."<sup>5</sup> A large number of evangelical Christians, Robert D. Linder and Richard V. Pierard lament, "view the Constitution and American system of government as Christian and believe that evangelical principles are the foundation and hope of the nation."<sup>6</sup> Conrad Cherry also stresses that Americans have seen their nation as having a

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<sup>4</sup>Noll, Hatch, and Marsden, The Search for Christian America, p. 160.

<sup>5</sup>Bellah, "America's Myth of Origin," in Herbert, America, Secular of Christian, p. 99. See also Bellah's essay on civil religion, "Civil Religion in America," in Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones, eds., American Civil Religion, (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 21-44.

<sup>6</sup>Linder and Pierard, Twilight of the Saints, p. 23. The authors strongly reject this view. They conclude: "The truth is that the United States never was nor is it now a Christian nation. No nation is, has been or can be a Christian nation," Twilight of the Saints, p. 163.

special place in the plan of Providence, and have continuously characterized America as God's New Israel.<sup>7</sup>

The faith that America is Christian originated in colonial America. As historian Robert T. Handy notes, "From the beginning American Protestants entertained a lively hope that someday the civilization of the country would be fully Christian."<sup>8</sup> Upon landing in America in 1630, Puritan leader John Winthrop in his famous pronouncement aboard the Arabella cast the die: "for we shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon us."<sup>9</sup> Puritans and other immigrants transported the idea that established religion is central to society, expanding on the sense of mission Winthrop envisioned.<sup>10</sup> Religion in Massachusetts and other colonies became an established part of the civil order. While increasing pluralism and declension from the original ideal took place, colonists

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<sup>7</sup>Conrad Cherry, ed., God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 21.

<sup>8</sup>Robert T. Handy, A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities, 2nd rev. ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. ix-x.

<sup>9</sup>John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," in Cherry, God's New Israel, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup>Handy, A Christian America, pp. 4-7. On the Puritans sense of mission, see Perry Miller, Errand into the Wilderness, (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1956).

maintained the hope for, and belief in, a Christian society.<sup>11</sup>

The era of the Revolution was a crucial period for the relation of religion to the nation. At that time, as Sidney Mead has argued, the pluralism of America interacted with the cosmopolitan, Enlightenment assumptions of the revolutionaries to form a "religion of the republic" which stressed reason over revelation. This religion, like those which relied on revelation, was essentially prophetic; it called the nation back from waywardness.<sup>12</sup> Jefferson made the value of reason crystal clear in a letter to his nephew Peter Carr. "Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call to her tribunal every fact, every opinion," he advised. "Question with boldness even the existence of God; because if there is one, he must more approve of the homage of reason, than that of blindfolded fear."<sup>13</sup> However, Jefferson also believed in the primacy of morality in a republic. In 1809 he wrote, "The practice of morality being necessary for the well-being of society, he [the Creator] has taken care to impress its precepts so

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<sup>11</sup>Handy, A Christian America, pp. 19-23.

<sup>12</sup>Sidney Mead, The Nation with the Soul of a Church, (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 65-67, 114-26.

<sup>13</sup>Jefferson quoted in James Skillen, "The Republican Vision of Thomas Jefferson," in Herbert, America, Secular or Christian?, p. 150.

indelibly on our hearts that they shall not be effaced by the subtleties of our brain."<sup>14</sup>

As the Revolutionary era drew to a close, American writers detected the handiwork of God in the formation of the new nation. The poet Ezra Stiles bubbled with enthusiasm for America's newly acquired independence as he described the role of Providence in bringing it about. God had been with Washington on the battlefield and had raised up the great and powerful French to assist the cause. Indeed, he believed, "God's American Israel" had been created in the Revolution. "Already does the new constellation of the United States begin to realize this glory," he beamed.<sup>15</sup>

With the founding of the new nation, Protestant evangelicals pursued their dream of building a Christian civilization in America. However, with religion disestablished, they attempted to ensure Christian character through voluntary means. In the early days of the republic, Protestants assumed that religion was essential to the preservation of the nation. This vaguely defined assumption, Handy argues, meant "an orderly, well-mannered, and moral society based on a broadly Christian

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<sup>14</sup>Jefferson quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 155.

<sup>15</sup>Ezra Stiles, "The United States Elevated to Glory and Honor," in Cherry, God's New Israel, pp. 82-92. Quotation on p. 83.

system of values and code of behavior."<sup>16</sup> Timothy Dwight, president of Yale and leader of the Second Great Awakening on that campus, put the issue clearly:

Morality, as every sober man, who knows anything of the subject discerns with a glance, is merely a branch of religion; and where there is no religion, there is no morality. Moral obligation has its sole ground in the character and government of God. But, where God is not worshipped, his character will soon be disregarded; and the obligation, founded on it, unfelt, and forgotten. No duty, therefore, to individuals, or to the public will be performed. Justice, kindness, and truth, the great hinges on which Society hangs, will be unpracticed, because there will be no motives to practice, or sufficient forces to resist the passions of men. Oaths of office, and testimony, alike, without the sanctions of religion are merely solemn farces.<sup>17</sup>

Morality, in Dwight's terms was what stirred individuals to responsible service and restrained them from irresponsible activities. Religion, unspecified in this instance, was the basis for morality, ergo the only foundation for a society.

Based on such assumptions, nineteenth-century Protestants strived to build a Christian society. Horace Bushnell summarized Protestant hopes:

The wilderness shall bud and blossom as the rose before us; and we will not cease till a christian [sic] nation throws up its temples of

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<sup>16</sup>Handy, A Christian America, p. 28.

<sup>17</sup>Dwight, Travels; in New-England and New-York, 4 vols., (New Haven, 1822), IV: 403, quoted in Handy, A Christian America, p. 21.

worship on every hill and plain; till knowledge, virtue and religion, blending their dignity and their healthful power, have filled our great country with a manly and happy race of people, and the bands of a complete christian [sic] commonwealth are seen to span the continent.<sup>18</sup>

Reconciling this Christian dream with the cosmopolitanism of the Founding Fathers came easy for evangelists such as Lyman Beecher, Mead contends. Beecher made the Republic "the ark of God's redemptive work in the world" and transformed Protestantism into "a principle of high generality which, he thought, permeated and was being incarnated in the democratic institutions of the Republic."<sup>19</sup>

Noll, Hatch, and Marsden suggest an explanation for this synthesis. The American revolution, they claim, "was not Christian, but it stood for many things compatible with the Christian faith." For example, it was not biblical, but its leaders read Scripture and led lives of exemplary courage and morality.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, David Gill comments, the generation of the Founding Fathers was Christian to the extent that "a general commitment to biblical values

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<sup>18</sup>Bushnell, Barbarism the First Danger, p. 32, quoted in Handy, A Christian America, p. 56.

<sup>19</sup>Mead, Nation with the Soul of a Church, p. 72.

<sup>20</sup>Noll, Hatch, and Marsden, The Search for Christian America, p. 100.

and ethical norms carried over."<sup>21</sup> Indeed, as Linder and Pierard note, the Second Great Awakening completed the inculcation of evangelical values begun during the First Great Awakening, giving the nineteenth century "its basically evangelical cast." Hence, the early years of the nineteenth century saw Protestant evangelicalism growing into a "kind of national church or national religion," church historian Martin E. Marty concludes.<sup>22</sup>

In the 30 years after the Civil War social forces pressed hard on the earlier dream, but Protestants clung to the hope of a Christian nation. Confronted with urbanization, immigration, and industrialization, and faced with the intellectual challenge of Darwinism and Marxism, Protestants stayed the course. In fact, they thought they were winning. Protestantism was permeating the social structure and institutions increasingly during the Gilded Age.<sup>23</sup> The relationship of Christianity to

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<sup>21</sup>Gill, "Faith of the Founding Fathers?," in Herbert, America, Secular or Christian?, p. 144.

<sup>22</sup>Linder and Pierard, Twilight of the Saints, pp. 67-68; Martin E. Marty, Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America, (New York: Dial Press, 1970), p. 67.

<sup>23</sup>On the stresses on the Protestant consensus during the Gilded Age, see Paul A. Carter, The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age, (Dekalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois U. Press, 1971); and Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1870-1920, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967). On the permeation of Protestantism in America, see Handy, A Christian America, p. 81.



society altered. Before the war Protestants placed emphasis on Christianity as the best part of society; during the Gilded Age, they increasingly shifted the emphasis to the culture itself, as Protestants identified their values with the civilization at large. They perceived respect for women, personal purity, and temperance, to name but a few, as values of any good civilization. Placing this stress, Handy contends, gave Protestants a point of unity in the face of growing pluralism. As America moved into the twentieth century, they held to the belief in a Christian nation, attempting to expand it to a Christianized world.<sup>24</sup>

However, World War I and its aftermath brought increasing pressures on the Protestant consensus. Industrialization sped ahead, the nation's population migrated in growing numbers to the cities, and naturalism and pragmatism triumphed over the old idealism.<sup>25</sup> Although Protestants tried to return to normalcy with the rest of the nation, the aftermath of the war and the fundamentalist-modernist embroilment brought the onset of what Handy terms a "spiritual recession." Missionary support and assurance in the old faith faltered, as Protestants

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<sup>24</sup>Handy, A Christian America, pp. 95-133,

<sup>25</sup>Handy, A Christian America, p. 167. Wiebe, Search for Order, passim.

lost the hold they had achieved over social institutions. More telling, the consensus no longer pervaded middle America. For example in studying Middletown, Robert and Helen Lynd found that while religious beliefs theoretically guided this Indiana city, "actually, large regions of Middletown's life appear uncontrolled by them."<sup>26</sup>

The decline of Protestant influence brought on what Handy labels the "second disestablishment." While Protestants continued to talk about a Christian America, with Christian values and institutions, their words rang hollow as the twentieth century progressed. In the new century, "the continued use of the rhetoric of a Christian America was increasingly out of place," Handy points out. "When it was used, it often produced a sense of unreality that has troubled institutional religious life ever since." By the 1930s, the Protestant era had ended.<sup>27</sup>

For the majority of the nineteenth century, then, Americans put faith in the myth of a Christian America believing that the country's values and institutions were grounded in Christian precepts. In the nineteenth century, this assumption had at least some base in reality as the Protestant consensus directed social institutions.

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<sup>26</sup>Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts, p. 295, quoted in Handy, A Christian America, p. 177.

<sup>27</sup>Handy, A Christian America, p. 181.

Moreover, Dwight's maxim that civilization was based on the internal controls of religion and morality persisted.

But pluralism and societal change were on the rise. Economic and demographic shifts eroded the social structure which supported the Protestant consensus, and alien ideologies blasted at the foundations of the belief system. After the war, new ideologies and a new consumer economy subverted the bases of nineteenth-century America.

Protestants, however, were not going to give up without a fight. The religious controversies which developed in the denominations and in the national press in the early twentieth century, usually labeled the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, were, in part, the aftershocks of the collapse of the Protestant consensus. Although historians have traced roots of the conflict deeper than the clash between the new and old orders, the controversy still involved the rejection of new, and not necessarily better, ways of thinking by those who clung to the older assumptions. In this atmosphere, American evangelical fundamentalism grew and flourished.

After World War I, fundamentalists opened up a two-front offensive against modernism. In the religious arena, they fought theological liberalism in major denominations, especially within the Northern Baptist

Convention and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.<sup>28</sup> At the same time in the nation's courts and legislatures, fundamentalists battled to prevent the teaching of evolution in public schools. In 1923, Oklahoma enacted the first law banning the teaching of evolution. Florida followed suit a year later. However, when evolution burst onto the national scene in the Scopes Trial, prosecutor William Jennings Bryan's humiliation in the national media during the celebrated case against teaching Darwinian science dealt the anti-evolution cause a crippling injury.<sup>29</sup> Although seriously slowed by the Scopes Trial, the anti-evolution wing of fundamentalism continued its mission. Minnesota evangelist William Bell Riley's World's Christian Fundamentals Association and its Anti-Evolution League, self-appointed Bryan successor George F. Washburn's Bible Crusade of America, and California evangelist Paul Rood's Bryan Bible League manned the front against Darwinism. Using sensationalist publications, these organizations took the anti-evolution

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<sup>28</sup>For a detailed account, see Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, pp. 141-195.

<sup>29</sup>Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 909-910; Marsden, pp. 184-88.

message across denominational lines to local congregations.<sup>30</sup>

Much historiographical debate has erupted in the attempt to interpret the reasons this movement gained such a hold on American evangelicalism. While Winrod did not always fit the fundamentalist mold, he associated with the leaders of the movement and helped publicize their ideas. Thus, a look at the literature on the movement, when added to that on Christian America, will produce a clearer synthesis of the group of ideas from which Winrod drew his belief system.

Until the mid-1960s, historians interpreted fundamentalism primarily as an expression of adjustment to tensions facing American society as it recovered from World War I and entered the twentieth century. Scholars saw the movement as a reaction to the new urban, industrial, scientific society by those who still clung to the values of an America with primarily rural, agrarian, and religious bases. Early discussions also emphasized political actions taken by fundamentalists. The movement, though religiously based, appeared as essentially a sociological, psychological or political phenomenon.

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<sup>30</sup>Ahlstrom, Religious History, p. 910; Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, pp. 189-194.

William E. Ellis, professor of history at Eastern Kentucky University, has recently surveyed interpretations from contemporary observers in the 1920s to current historians of the 1980s.<sup>31</sup> Ellis begins by offering his own definition of fundamentalism. He makes it clear that he believes "fundamentalism" should be set apart from "evangelicalism." When denoting a specific movement or type of religious belief, Ellis contends, "'fundamentalist' should be used specifically to identify militant conservative evangelicals who have supported attacks against liberal theology and modern science."<sup>32</sup>

In reviewing writing on fundamentalism, Ellis detects three schools of interpretation. The first group, participants and observers of the movement itself, influenced writing about it throughout the early 1950s. Reared in the liberal tradition and upset about McCarthyism, a second group of writers controlled writing of the history of the movement until the mid 1960s. Finally, Ellis concludes, a revisionist school has developed in the last 15 to 20 years.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>William E. Ellis, "Evolution, Fundamentalism, and the Historians," The Historian 44 (November 1981). This historiographical essay will serve as the source for summarizing earlier writings on fundamentalism.

<sup>32</sup>Ellis, "Evolution, Fundamentalism, and the Historians," pp. 16-17. Quotation on p. 17.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid p. 17.

The first group of writers, Ellis argues, followed a liberal interpretation. In short, they "found fundamentalism and its concomitant anti-evolutionist viewpoint to be anti-modern, anti-science, and anti-intellectual, but doomed to the backwoods of the 'Bible Belt.'"<sup>34</sup> During the 1930s and 1940s, he continues, writers continued the liberal tradition. For example, Howard K. Beale saw fundamentalism as part of the long-term struggle for academic freedom. H. Richard Niebuhr marked fundamentalism as part of urban-rural conflict--a movement without theological underpinnings. Stewart Cole, in the first book-length history of the movement, stressed its rural nature but also emphasized the hold it had gained on major seminaries and denominations.<sup>35</sup>

Beginning in the early 1950s, Ellis believes, young historians began to form a second distinct school of thought, although it still followed liberal ideals. For instance, Norman Furniss linked fundamentalism with the post-World War I reactions against intellectualism, communism, immigration, and religious modernism. Additionally, popular works such as the play Inherit the Wind and the book Six Days of Forever? focused attention on the

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20.

Scopes Trial and furthered the liberal interpretation of fundamentalism as an anti-intellectual movement.<sup>36</sup>

Other works during the 1950s, although they did not deal directly with fundamentalism, also contributed to the liberal school. Among these, Paul A. Carter and Robert Moats Miller saw fundamentalism as a reaction to the Social Gospel. In a host of works, Richard Hofstadter denounced what he saw as the anti-intellectualism of the movement, describing William Jennings Bryan as an "intellectual adolescent." In prohibition, anti-immigration laws, the activities of the Klan, and fundamentalism, William Leuchtenburg detected hostility to the city and a desire to halt change.<sup>37</sup>

Church historians during the 1950s also downgraded fundamentalism. For example, Winthrop Hudson argued that the movement lacked theological depth, while Sidney E. Mead described its use of "obsolete theology." Martin E. Marty deplored fundamentalism's literalist tendencies as divisive to Protestantism. However, some church historians of the 1950s displayed divergent opinions. Herbert W. Schneider identified the birth of "evangelical scholasticism" within fundamentalism, while Robert T. Handy noted that fundamentalism was but the most conservative of five

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<sup>36</sup>Ellis, p.21-22.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 22.



major factions. John Dillenberger criticized all sides in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy for giving in to the challenge of modern science.<sup>38</sup>

Overall, Ellis believes both liberal schools interpreted fundamentalism similarly: "They found the anti-evolution crusade to be symptomatic of a deeper malaise that included fear of the modern world and science, a reaction to the trauma of World War I, and a desire to coerce education and society into conformity with fundamentalist ideals." Proponents of this "cultural lag" thesis found the movement basically to be a failure of southern culture.<sup>39</sup>

In the mid-1960s, the trend of interpretation began to change. For example, Louis Gasper argued that fundamentalism survived the death of Bryan, while modernism faded. William B. Gatewood emphasized the diversity within the movement, denied the cultural lag interpretation, and contended that fundamentalism indicated a renewed interest in religion. Several studies of Baptist thought as well as biographies of various fundamentalist leaders documented the movement's diversity.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>39</sup>Ellis, p. 25.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-29.

In the March 1967 issue of Church History, Ernest R. Sandeen of Macalester College presented a significantly new interpretation by exploring the deeper theological origins of fundamentalism. Sandeen viewed the movement as a combination of dispensationalism and Princeton Theology which coalesced into an alliance about 1918.<sup>41</sup> Given birth by the Plymouth Brethren in Britain during 1820s, dispensationalism divided the past into seven prophetic periods, or dispensations. Most dispensationalists believed themselves to be living in the sixth dispensation, from the crucifixion of Christ until the judgment of the world, and expected the return of Christ and the beginning of the Millennium. Summer Bible conferences, especially the Niagara Conference in Niagara Falls, New York, brought dispensationalism to American churches.<sup>42</sup> Princeton Theology, the particular method of teaching at Princeton University best articulated by Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge, eventually became identified with a belief in Biblical inerrancy--at least as set down in the original texts. Challenging the new theologies of the Social Gospel and immanence of God, both Princeton theologians and dispensationalists, Sandeen argued,

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<sup>41</sup>Ernest R. Sandeen, "Toward a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism," Church History 36 (March 1967): 67.

<sup>42</sup>Sandeen, "Origins," pp. 68-73.

"stressed God's transcendence and supra-historical power and expressed themselves in very pessimistic terms when discussing social problems."<sup>43</sup> Sandeen identified the premillennial advent as the belief which united the two groups. Sandeen noted the influence of dispensationalists, members of the Princeton faculty and "Calvinist-oriented clergy" in writing The Fundamentals, a series of articles defining what came to be the key doctrines of the movement. Sandeen contended the five points usually identified with fundamentalism--Biblical inerrancy, the Virgin Birth, substitutionary Atonement, the physical Resurrection, and the miracles of Christ--did not define the movement entirely.<sup>44</sup>

In reviewing Sandeen's work, LeRoy Moore, Jr. criticized Sandeen for ignoring the "foreground" of fundamentalism. In his search for theological origins, Moore believed, Sandeen missed the actual battles being fought in the 1920s, sidestepping those who did not believe in dispensationalism of the Princeton Theology but who were still fundamentalist leaders. Augustus Hopkins Strong and his role in the fundamentalist controversy in the Northern Baptist Convention provided Moore with a case to dispute Sandeen. Strong had found truth in both

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<sup>43</sup>Sandeen, "Origins," p. 74.

<sup>44</sup>Sandeen, "Origins," pp. 78-80.

premillennialism and postmillennialism, preferring to call the Bible "infallible" rather than "inerrant." In his support of fundamentalism within the NBC, Strong committed himself to a program of control of schools, missions, and confessions of faith. In doing so, Moore contends, Strong and the NBC had the same practical interests as modernists, and theological issues such as dispensationalism or inerrancy remained at the fringes of the controversy.<sup>45</sup>

Moore concluded that the definition of fundamentalism should be split between "doctrinaire fundamentalism" and "fundamentalism as a party movement." Doctrinaire fundamentalism referred to "the more-or-less distinguishable abiding movement," which Sandeen had described. On the other hand, fundamentalism as a party movement meant intradenominational and interdenominational movements organized at various times for various reasons in order to fight liberalism and control the "'ecclesiastical machinery.'"<sup>46</sup>

While many historians believe fundamentalism faded in the late 1920s, one recent interpretation extends Gasper's view the movement stayed vital during the 1930s into the 1940s. Joel A. Carpenter of Trinity College proposes that

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<sup>45</sup>LeRoy Moore Jr., "Another Look at Fundamentalism: A Response to Ernest R. Sandeen," Church History 37 (June 1968): 195-201.

<sup>46</sup>Moore, "Response to Sandeen," p. 202.

"fundamentalism was not a defeated party in denominational politics, but a popular religious movement which in the 1930s developed a separate existence from the older denominations as it strengthened its own institutions."<sup>47</sup> Joining attempts to define the movement, Carpenter recognizes its diversity:

...fundamentalism is a distinct religious movement which arose in the early twentieth century to defend traditional evangelical orthodoxy and to extend its evangelistic thrust. The movement combined a biblicist, generally Calvinist orthodoxy, an evangelistic spirit, an emphasis on the higher Christian (Holy Spirit directed) life and a millenarian eschatology.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, he continues, fundamentalism was more than a mentality; it was a movement with leaders, institutions, and "a particular identity. Fundamentalists recognized each other as party members..."<sup>49</sup>

As old line denominations declined in membership and financial prosperity, fundamentalists created their own network of institutions as they move further away from the mainstream churches. Central to the fundamentalist institutional structure was the Bible institute, Carpenter believes. Schools such as the Bible Institute of Los

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<sup>47</sup>Joel A. Carpenter, "Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942," Church History 49 (March 1980), p. 63.

<sup>48</sup>Carpenter, "Fundamentalist Institutions," p. 64.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

Angeles trained ministers and printed fundamentalist writings. Also, summer Bible conferences at Winona Lake, Indiana, "offered a unique vacation: a blend of resort style recreation, the old-fashioned camp meeting and bible teaching from leading fundamentalist pulpiteers." These meetings supplied a means to strengthen interdenominational connections. To spread their message to a broader audience fundamentalists increasingly used radio. Concerned with missions, fundamentalists supported independent efforts such as the China Inland Mission, which experienced huge gains during the 1930s.<sup>50</sup>

George Marsden of Duke University has provided the most comprehensive recent interpretation of fundamentalism. Marsden concurs with Sandeen's major argument, that fundamentalism, when seen as a religious phenomenon, emerged from a combination of premillennialists and believers in Biblical inerrancy. However, he suggests an interpretation which combines Sandeen's work with earlier social interpretations and explores the cultural dimensions of fundamentalism. Marsden views the movement "not as a temporary social aberration, but as a genuine religious movement or tendency with deep roots in intel-

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<sup>50</sup>Carpenter, pp. 66-73. Quotation on p. 69.

ligible beliefs."<sup>51</sup> Dispensational premillennialism, the nineteenth-century holiness movement, efforts to defend the principles of the old faith, and differing views of the relationship between Christianity and culture, all influenced fundamentalism.<sup>52</sup>

One ingredient of this blend is particularly important for an examination of the thought of Winrod--holiness teachings. The movement which Marsden sees as a part of fundamentalist thought emerged in the United States in the 1840s and 1850s. Its purpose, notes Richard V. Pierard, "was an endeavor to preserve and propagate John Wesley's teaching on entire sanctification and Christian perfection."<sup>53</sup> Wesley, the founder of Methodism, contended that "nothing is sin, strictly speaking, but a voluntary transgression of a known law of God."<sup>54</sup> Hence, sin could

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<sup>51</sup>George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925, (New York: Oxford Press, 1980), pp. 5-6. Quotation on p. 6.

<sup>52</sup>Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup>Richard V. Pierard, "American Holiness Movement," in Walter A. Elwell, ed. Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 516. For a more complete examination of the holiness movement, see Melvin Easterday Dieter, The Holiness Revival of the Nineteenth Century, (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1980); and Vinson Synan, The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971).

<sup>54</sup>John Wesley, Christian Perfection, quoted on Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, p. 73.

be totally eradicated by the Holy Spirit and perfection attained.

After the Civil War, the Keswick movement, which began in Britain in 1875, revived interest in Wesley's teachings, but denied the ability to achieve total sanctification. Rather, as Pierard points out, they believed that "the tendency to sin is not extinguished but is counteracted by victorious living through the Holy Spirit."<sup>55</sup> These teachings were popularized in America by Charles Trumbull, editor of the Sunday School Times, who explained sanctification as "Christ within us." With Christ in control, his followers could avoid sin as long as they did not resist.<sup>56</sup> A significant part of the fundamentalist movement incorporated the beliefs of Wesley and the Keswick teachers.<sup>57</sup>

At its high point, however, Marsden notes, the fundamentalism may be defined best by concerns rather than by theologies such as holiness. "Militant opposition to modernism" established fundamentalism as separate from other movements. Marsden argues, "Fundamentalism was a loose, diverse, and changing federation of co-belligerents

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<sup>55</sup>Pierard, "American Holiness Movement," p. 518.

<sup>56</sup>Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, pp. 96-98.

<sup>57</sup>For his treatment of holiness and fundamentalism, see Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, pp. 72-101.



united in their fierce opposition to modernist attempts to bring Christianity into line with modern thought."<sup>58</sup> He notes three themes exhibited in the movement: a tendency to identify with both "outsiders" and "the establishment" at various times; a strong relationship to early revivalism and pietism; and an uneasiness about intellectualism and science, even though the leaders of the movement often articulated a strong faith in Baconian science and common-sense reasoning. These intellectual assumptions, along with adherence to Biblical inerrancy, alienated fundamentalists from large sectors of society. Evangelical Christianity, which had undergone several innovations in the late nineteenth century, faced cultural, religious and intellectual crises as it entered the twentieth century. These and other factors, Marsden believes, altered evangelical Christianity and gave birth to fundamentalism.<sup>59</sup>

Preceding historiography, then, has found fundamentalism to be an exceedingly diverse, loose movement. This is indeed an accurate judgment. Elements emphasized by several historians are instructive in defining fundamentalism. While it was by no means consistent, many fun-

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<sup>58</sup>Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, p. 4.

<sup>59</sup>Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, pp. 6-8.

damentalist leaders concerned themselves with eschatology to the expense of other areas of doctrine, and most were biblicists; "inerrancy" or "infallibility" was not as important as the centrality of the Bible. Even more consistently, most fundamentalists possessed the view of science discovered by Marsden. Even if they did not call it Baconian, they believed in a science that described the universe in terms of hard facts and orderly immutable relationships. From the arguments currently being used, then, one irreducible element of religious fundamentalism meant a world view resting on the belief in a fixed orderly universe as described in the Bible.

Such a definition, based on current historiographical trends, accounts for the theological-religious elements of fundamentalism adequately. However, as Marsden notes, fundamentalism in action depended on concerns. These concerns, in turn, imply a political-social definition of fundamentalism which had little to do with theological issues, although it had much to do with matters of faith. The issues raised by fundamentalists dealt with the whole of American society; evolution in schools, prohibition, racial tension, and sexual mores were all touched on by fundamentalists.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>For a discussion of fundamentalists' social thought, see Robert Elwood Wenger, "Social Thought in American Fundamentalism, 1918-1933," (Ph.D dissertation,

Historians must account for this social and political dimension of fundamentalism. Winrod and fundamentalists saw themselves as champions of morality against the onslaught of secular values. In reality, what they defended was the idea of Christian America. Spokesmen for the part of the movement with which Winrod associated wanted a return to the mores of the Christian nation they believed had existed in the nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup> This wish blended with their religious world view. Christian society, they believed along with Timothy Dwight, was based on morality and order. The Bible demonstrated the existence, and need for, order as did nature itself. Furthermore, the regulated Christian nation of the past was both the axiom and the application of order. The new social, political, and economic structure emerging after World War I destroyed the foundations of this world view, leaving those who held it confused and angry.

Winrod was one of the individuals whose world view was destroyed by the new order. He believed in the existence of the orderly, spiritual universe described in the Bible, the religion based on it, and the America he assumed had grown and flourished its foundations. By the

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University of Nebraska, 1978).

<sup>61</sup>Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture, pp. 132-135, 206-208.

time Winrod began his career as an evangelist the social bases which undergirded such a world view were in decay. A few years later, they were gone. As he entered the world at the dawn of a new century, a life of intellectual frustration awaited.

## II. GERALD B. WINROD (1900-1957)

Gerald Burton Winrod was born March 7, 1900 in Wichita, Kansas into the home of John Wesley Winrod and his wife Mabel. On the basis of this parentage, a life on a higher plane seemed unlikely. Drinking had played a significant role in John's early life; he had been saved at a Baptist service, but his alcohol-induced brawling had driven him from his home in disgrace. In Wichita, he tended bar at the 410 Saloon, an illegal establishment complete with slot machines. The son of a poor Missouri farmer, John met and married Mabel Craig in 1899.<sup>1</sup>

About a year after Gerald's birth, the elder Winrod's saloon incurred the wrath of radical prohibitionist Carrie Nation. Jarred by the experience, John Winrod vowed to reform but had trouble walking the straight and narrow. Mabel's miraculous cure from cancer in 1910, however,

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<sup>1</sup>Leo P. Ribuffo, The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Depression to the Cold War, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), p. 80. Ribuffo's chapter on Winrod is the best introduction to his life. His official biography, written and published by his followers, is G.H. Montgomery, Gerald Burton Winrod: Defender of the Faith, (Wichita: Mertmont, 1965). The most detailed work is Gail Ann Sindell, "Gerald B. Winrod and the Defender: A Case Study in the Radical Right," (Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western University, 1973). Clifford Hope, "Strident Voices in Kansas between the Wars," Kansas History 43 (October 1969): 54-64; and Ann Marie Buitrago, "A Study of the Political Ideas of Gerald B. Winrod, 1926-1938," (Master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1955), are also good introductions to Winrod, although both focus on his political commentary.

prompted him to repent of his former sin. Her escape from the disease after surgery and subsequent addiction to morphine appeared to the Winrods as a supernatural experience. Later, John testified that God had spoken directly to Mabel, counseling her to give up drugs. "God's miraculous healing power instantly delivered my dear wife from the morphine habit and healed her completely and permanently of cancer," John wrote in 1932.<sup>2</sup> John and Mabel found renewed faith from the ordeal. John gave up his former ways and established the Healing Tabernacle in Wichita, where he preached and Mabel taught Bible classes. This experience of healing also impacted heavily on the personality of young Gerald, turning him away from surgical medicine and toward vegetarianism.<sup>3</sup>

Gerald Winrod's ventures in evangelism began early in life. From his youth, his mother remembered later, he was concerned with religion. Rejecting the vice of his father, he searched for a better existence. "We did not measure up to Son's standard for true Christians," Mabel confided. "He was so spiritually minded, so serious, that he expected us to live on a higher spiritual plane."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>John Wesley Winrod, Redeeming Years the Locust Has Eaten, quoted in Montgomery, Gerald Burton Winrod, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Montgomery, Gerald Burton Winrod, pp. 11-13.

<sup>4</sup>Mabel Winrod, quoted in Montgomery, Gerald Burton Winrod, p. 10.

Having dropped out of school at the fifth grade, by age 14 Gerald began his career in evangelism under the direction of revivalist Newton N. Riddell. At age 17, he started a small newspaper, Jesus is Coming Soon, and by age 21 began speaking at Chautauqua meetings. According to his official biographer, "pastors and churches vied for his services."<sup>5</sup>

Winrod was a self-educated man, and the sermon-lectures he gave incorporated tidbits of information gleaned from a wide array of people and publications. Riddell, a mysterious California itinerant much like Winrod, had the greatest impact. Riddell's columns later appeared frequently in Winrod publications, and Winrod quoted freely from Riddell in his writings. Fundamentalist leaders William Jennings Bryan and William Bell Riley of Minnesota also had considerable influence. Especially during the early part of his career, Winrod drew arguments from Bryan, even referring to a letter he supposedly received from the man. Riley often appeared on the same platform with Winrod in the late 1920s and the two fought side-by-side in the war on evolution.<sup>6</sup> In a broader sense,

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<sup>5</sup>Montgomery, Gerald Burton Winrod, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup>For borrowings from Riddell, see examples in Three Modern Evils. Quotations from Winrod's letter from Bryan appear in Christ Within, (Wichita: Winrod Publication Center, 1925), p. 120. Sindell, "Gerald Winrod and the Defender," p. 32 discusses his association with Riley.

Winrod was heavily influenced by the teachings of John Wesley.<sup>7</sup> As he traveled around Kansas and the nation lecturing, Winrod judged the country to be at a low ebb. By his standards, America had declined to an all time low. Hence, taking the Wesleyan revival of England as his example, Winrod set out to beat back the new order. His army in the coming holy war would be the Defenders of the Christian Faith.

The Defenders formed when Winrod called a meeting of ministers in an "upper room" in Salina, Kansas in November 1925.<sup>8</sup> Addressing the second Defender's convention two years later in Lindsborg, Kansas, Winrod fondly remembered the genesis of the movement. The group met to correct what they believed to be a "**monstrous wrong**. It was a blessed day. History was written on that occasion. Plans were made. A program was outlined."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>See examples in The Keystone of Christianity, (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1930), p. 135 and Roosevelt and the Brain Trust, (Wichita: Defender publishers, 1933), p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>A lengthier section on the founding and early activities of the Defenders is included because less has been written on the organization and because the changes it underwent in its early years reflect Winrod's thinking in the best method for reform. The "official history" of the movement is Fire By Night and Cloud By Day: A History of the Defenders of the Christian Faith, (Wichita: Defender publishers, 1966). Sindell, "Gerald Winrod and the Defender," also contains material on the organization.

<sup>9</sup>The Defender, December 1927, p. 1.



Actually, during its first two years of operation, the organization had little that resembled an overall plan. The Defender magazine began publication under Winrod's editorial eye in June 1926, concentrating primarily on the problem of evolution in schools. In November 1926, the organization held its first annual convention in Wichita. During the summer of 1927, Winrod organized about 60 local conferences in Kansas towns and spread literature to local churches about Defender Week and Defender Sunday, November 6-13.<sup>10</sup> By far the most significant development in the first two years, the formation of the Flying Defenders in June 1926 provided Winrod and the evangelists with whom he associated a device to advance the anti-evolution struggle. Their purpose, Winrod reported, would be "to acquaint people with the tremendous scope covered by evolution and its accompanying dangers."<sup>11</sup> Most of the squadron's action, however, occurred outside the state of Kansas. Winrod and Riley co-authored an anti-evolution bill which the Minnesota Senate bombed 55 to 7. Winging onward to

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<sup>10</sup>Buitrago, "Political Ideas," p., 6. For examples in The Defender, see June 1926, p. 3 and November 1927, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>The Defender, June 1926, p. 1.

California, the Flying Defender's attempt to enact anti-evolution legislation met a similar fate.<sup>12</sup>

Winrod's keynote address to the second annual Defender's convention marked a turning point for the organization. Citing the accomplishments of the previous two years, Winrod declared the Defenders offered "the first organized challenge of the middle-west...to the forces of Evolution and Modernism."<sup>13</sup> Evaluating the success of their efforts, he ventured "it is impossible to even estimate the number of young people that have been saved from the ravages of scholarly atheism now stalking abroad in our institutions of learning." After reviewing the arguments against evolution, Winrod concluded "the time must come when the public school system will be purged of this infidelity."<sup>14</sup>

To facilitate the speedy arrival of that day, Winrod presented a plan for action, the most important aspects of which were constituted in committees on legislation, textbooks, school boards, and in a speaker's bureau. His recommendations charged the legislative committee with the responsibility of drafting a bill for introduction into the next session of the Kansas Legislature. He contended,

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<sup>12</sup>Sindell, "Gerald Winrod and the Defender," p. 34.

<sup>13</sup>The Defender, December 1927, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

"Our only hope of correcting this evil is through legislation. This method is both legitimate and Christian."<sup>15</sup>

The Textbook Committee would undertake to review books, report their findings in The Defender and make formal protests to the state about any undesirable content. The Schoolboard Committee would aim to communicate the issues involving evolution to local school boards. The Speaker's Bureau, proposed Winrod, "may have suggestions to offer for promoting the spirit of evangelism over the state and for organizing Bible Conferences."<sup>16</sup>

Both the Legislative Committee and the Textbook Committee became active immediately. The January 1928 Defender reaffirmed the organization's support for legislative measures.<sup>17</sup> In the February 1928 issue, the Textbook Committee reported its findings from the review of three books, one of which was a psychology text it determined to be "dangerous to an immature mind." The same issue reprinted a Wichita Eagle article reporting on the Defenders' efforts to draft anti-evolution legislation.<sup>18</sup> As 1928 opened, however, Winrod was abandoning political

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>The Defender, January 1928, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>The Defender, February 1928, p. 10.

action and returning to his common answer to social ills--change in the hearts of the afflicted.

The foundations for the movement's new direction appeared in The Defender as early as January 1928, even as the legislative campaign still received support. Realizing the organization had "gone beyond the experimental stage" and that "expansion is inevitable," Winrod proposed a series of approximately 300 groups to be organized in communities during 1928 to carry on the spread of opposition to evolution and modernism. The goal of the groups would be to replace apostasy with real religion, to "build along constructive lines."<sup>19</sup> The success of these projects demonstrated to Winrod the effectiveness of local meetings in communicating the organization's ideas. Having acquired a following both inside and outside Kansas, the Defenders officially became an national movement in February 1929. Winrod arranged a national convention at the Cadle Tabernacle in Indianapolis, Indiana, where an estimated 40,000 people heard fundamentalists such as Paul Rood of the Bryan Bible League and Charles E. Fuller of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles.<sup>20</sup> The Indianapolis Convention, Winrod promised, was only the beginning of a plan designed

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<sup>19</sup>The Defender, January 1928, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>The Defender, February 1928, p. 6; Sindell, "Gerald Winrod and the Defender," p. 31.

"to establish a nerve center in every state in the Union." In following this path, Winrod reoriented Defenders to a clearly anti-organizational movement. There would be "no burdensome committees," "no swivel-chair leadership"--only a direct appeal to the people.<sup>21</sup> By the end of 1929, it was clear that the convention method worked; 14 conventions had been held during the year and all had been financially supported by the Defender family.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout 1929, as the movement became more popular, Winrod forgot more and more about its roots. The convention method, he wrote, applied the idea of the 350 Kansas meetings on a larger scale; gone were references to constructive organizations.<sup>23</sup> The movement existed only to give a testimony, "to protect and promulgate vital Christianity." It did not seek to establish local organizations; instead, it preferred to send out new speakers.<sup>24</sup> The organization was non-denominational and inter-denominational. Realizing the effects of doctrinal divisions, it sought to aid local pastors, but if they resisted, it proceeded anyway.<sup>25</sup> In the closing months of

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<sup>21</sup>The Defender, February 1929, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup>The Defender, December 1929, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup>The Defender, June 1929, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup>The Defender, July 1929, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup>The Defender, January 1930, p. 7.

1930, Winrod expanded his direct appeal to the people with the help of modern technology, setting up a radio ministry in Oklahoma City.<sup>26</sup>

During the mid-1930s, Winrod occupied himself with bringing the message of vital Christianity as well as speaking out on movements he considered political conspiracies, among which he numbered the New Deal.<sup>27</sup> By 1937 he felt the United States to be mortally threatened by numerous political conspiracies. Consequently, he ventured back into the public arena, announcing in January 1938 his bid for Senator on the Republican ticket.<sup>28</sup> Using radio station WIBW in Topeka, Winrod broadcast his program of reform. His seven-point proposal called for defense of constitutional democracy against Communism and Fascism; reconstruction of the national character; rigid observance of State's rights to combat growing federal bureaucracy; absolute neutrality in foreign policy; return of control of the monetary system from the Federal Reserve Board to

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<sup>26</sup>Buitrago, "Political Ideas," p. 11.

<sup>27</sup>See Chapter 5 for more an exploration of this social and political commentary.

<sup>28</sup>The campaign has been explored in great detail in Sindell, "Gerald B. Winrod and the Defender;" Buitrago, "Political Ideas;" and Darrell D. Garwood, "Gerald Burton Winrod and the Politics of Kansas During the Depression, " Heritage of the Plains 17 (Winter 1984): 27-34 which is based on Garwood's M.A. thesis, "Gerald Burton Winrod and the Republican Senatorial Primary of 1938," (Master's thesis, Emporia State University, 1982).

Congress; repeal of New Deal labor and business legislation; and "an attitude on the part of the national government that will inspire confidence" in order to encourage the controllers of private capital to create "honest jobs."<sup>29</sup> Winrod also sent mass mailings using Dr. John R. Brinkley's 150,000 name mailing list, and drove about in a car equipped with a speaker, taking his message directly to Kansas voters.

However, because of the apparent anti-Semitism and near-support for Hitler's anti-Jewish policies in his previous speeches and publications, numerous Kansans opposed his candidacy. John D. M. Hamilton, then Chairman of the Republican National Committee, and former Kansas Governor Alf Landon spoke out against the Winrod campaign. Although part of the Wichita clergy lent support, another group of ministers organized against Winrod, publishing a pamphlet titled Drive Fascist Ideas From Kansas. In addition, prominent Kansas publishers such as Emporian William Allen White, denounced the Winrod effort in editorial columns. In the August 2 primary, he ran a distant third place, carrying only Clay County, a Brinkley stronghold. The majority of support he did receive came from areas with high populations of Mennonites or members

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<sup>29</sup>Hope, "Strident Voices," pp. 56-57.

of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>30</sup> After the defeat, he returned to his career of speaking and broadcasting, lashing out against the policies of the Roosevelt administration and warning of a coming war.

But by 1942, Winrod was again back in the public eye, the prime defendant in a mass sedition trial.<sup>31</sup> The first of three separate cases charging him and a varying number of others with sedition was handed down by a federal grand jury on July 23, 1942. It and another case in 1943 were dismissed. On January 3, 1944, a third indictment, charged that Winrod and 30 others had

unlawfully, willfully, feloniously and knowingly conspired, combined, confederated and agreed with each other and with officials of the government of the German Reich and leaders and members of the Nazi Party, in Washington and in other parts of the country, and in Germany and elsewhere, to commit acts with the intent to interfere with, impair and influence the loyalty, morale and discipline of the military and naval forces of this country.<sup>32</sup>

Winrod had become trapped by the hysteria of a country at war.

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<sup>30</sup>Hope, "Strident Voices," p. 57; Ribuffo, Old Christian Right, p. 124. For Winrod's influence on Mennonites, see James C. Juhnke, "Gerald B. Winrod and the Kansas Mennonites," Mennonite Quarterly Review 43 (October 1969): 54-64.

<sup>31</sup>For an excellent detailed account of the case, see John D. Waltner, "Gerald B. Winrod and the Washington, D.C. Mass Sedition Trial of 1944," (Undergraduate research project, Bethel College (Kansas), 1968).

<sup>32</sup>Quoted in Hope, "Strident Voices," p. 58.



During the trial, which dragged on through the summer of 1944, he and the other defendants argued--in Winrod's case justifiably--that there was no evidence of a conspiracy to subvert the armed forces. All the argumentation became moot, however, when presiding Judge Edward C. Eicher died abruptly on November, 30, 1944, ending the case.<sup>33</sup> After the trial, Winrod continued to publish The Defender and fought with the Federal Drug Administration over approval of several cancer cure drugs. He died November 11, 1957 from multiple sclerosis, complicated by Asian flu.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Hope, "Strident Voices," p. 58.

<sup>34</sup>For an excruciating description of Winrod's death, see Montgomery, Gerald Burton Winrod, pp. 98-101.

### III. WINROD'S THOUGHT

Historians who have written on Gerald B. Winrod often focus purely on the social or political dimensions of his life. In doing so, they have failed to explore basic assumptions which underlay his strident commentary. With such an omission, Winrod's thought seems the product of a confused, if not diseased, mind. His discovery of conspiracy behind nearly all turmoil appears to be evidence of a paranoid tendency, and historians have interpreted him and fundamentalists of a similar stripe as exemplary of what Richard Hofstadter termed "the paranoid style in American politics."<sup>1</sup>

A deeper look at Winrod, however, reveals more historical than psychological roots for his ideas. As stated in the introduction, Winrod's thought combined: 1) the assumptions of Baconian science; 2) the theology of the nineteenth-century holiness movement, altered by dispensational premillennialism; and 3) a belief in Christian democracy and a Christian America. All of these elements coalesced into the core of his thinking. As he

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<sup>1</sup>See for example, George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Evangelicalism: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 210-211. Richard Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).

looked at the social situation, these principle guided his critique. At times, they conflicted with each other; for example, premillennialism might have denied the possibility of reforming Christian America. Yet Winrod was seldom bothered by such inconveniences. In his mind, he held to a coherent, consistent body of ideas which constituted the only reasonable way for people to think. He was a man unaffected by twentieth-century relativism, for in his mind the truths which formed his world view were universal law.

He was, however, deeply troubled by those who had accepted uncertainty and skepticism. Their adoption of evolutionary science, modernist theology, loose morality, and liberal or socialist politics appeared to him a violation of universal principles. His was an earlier way of thinking, one that involved more certitude, and no doubt.

Although Winrod's religion formed the central precepts of his thinking, his conception of science and the nature of universe constituted a common denominator which tied religion to other areas. These general statements about the nature of the universe set ajar the door to his thought.

Winrod's universe was one in which science discovered and codified hard facts; hypotheses had no place. Winrod's

criticism of evolution bared his scientific assumptions. The theory, he proclaimed, "is not demonstrated science; it is speculative philosophy." Not a single "proved fact" supported what he called the "guess" of evolution.<sup>2</sup> Along with like minds, Winrod found no problem in harmonizing religion with science. Theological precepts were just as demonstrable as scientific ones. As with fact-based science, "The fundamentals of the Christian religion constitute exact statements of spiritual laws which must be demonstrated to be understood."<sup>3</sup> These supernatural principles, he believed, existed as an opposite pole to the laws of the natural world.<sup>4</sup>

To Winrod, the world of spiritual laws was reality. To prove such an assumption, he argued that modern science only dealt with outer effects, failing to reach primal causes. The reason was that "there is a spiritual world back of things physical. The world of reality is not the physical world..."<sup>5</sup> At all times, God toiled in the spirit world. Behind material reality, Winrod revealed, "is the

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<sup>2</sup>Three Modern Evils, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1932), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Christ Within, (Wichita: Winrod Publication Center, 1925), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Watching: Three Sermon Lectures, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1933), p. 26.

<sup>5</sup>Christ Within, p. 13; Watching, p. 25.

spiritual world out of which root causes proceed. The temporal world is but the husk, the anatomy, the outer casing, fashioned and formed by an intelligent Architect working behind the scenes." In their earthly manifestations, spiritual laws appeared to humans as miracles, God's natural mode of operation.<sup>6</sup>

The relationship between the spirit world and the natural world, Winrod held, was directional cause and effect. He explained:

The relation of the spiritual world to the physical world is that of cause to effect. All causes proceed unseen. ...When a cause is changed in the spiritual world, the effect will automatically be made to conform to the physical world.<sup>7</sup>

Most importantly, Winrod purported, every destructive idea unleashed on earth had a spiritual source. Detrimental thoughts originated in the realm of the spiritually abstract and became manifest in the material world of the concrete. "Behind every abnormal condition with which the human family is victimized, there are equivalent evil forces," he concluded. Satan, God's counterpart in the spiritual world, worked through human personalities in the temporal realm. Consequently, Winrod testified, he took Benjamin Disraeli's statement that "'The world is governed

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<sup>6</sup>Christ Within, pp. 14-15, 137. Quotation on p, 14.

<sup>7</sup>Watching, pp. 25-26. Emphasis in original.

by very different personages from what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes'" to be "literally true."<sup>8</sup>

Winrod's thoughts about reality may be called scientific constructs or conspiracy theories, depending on the observer's point of reference. His ideas fit perfectly into Hofstadter's "paranoid style." On the other hand, they are also consistent with George Marsden's analysis of fundamentalist models of science. Taken in historical context, Winrod's view of universal laws are not as far-fetched as they appear at first glance. While his application of them bordered the extreme, his basic constructs were far from radical. Whether infallible or insane, these precepts were only the most abstract elements of Winrod's theology.

Even though a theory of science may be extracted from Winrod's thinking it represents the outer edge, not the core. More than any of the other components of his thought, Winrod's religious precepts guided his life. Since Winrod was first of all an evangelist, this seems only natural. However, some historians have emphasized his political ideas and actions and missed their connection to his religious ideas.

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<sup>8</sup>Hidden Hand, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1933), p. 11.

Winrod's religion followed the tenets of the nineteenth-century holiness movement. He believed in the ability of Christians to experience an inflow of the Holy Spirit and with such energy to achieve perfection. Such beliefs necessitated contact with a spiritual universe. This, Winrod believed, men and women could achieve. Once gained, unity with the spirit of God purged the destruction caused by the Fall and made one a new creature.

Looking at Winrod only as a political radical obscures his well-developed religious belief system. Although it was not presented in a systematized form in any one place, Winrod constructed a coherent theology in the course of his writings. In addition, he outlined a theory of Satan or, as he called it, a "demonology." Finally, Winrod designed a theory of the Church, which is especially important if one is to understand his admonitions for Christian action.

Winrod's theology lay based in his conception of the spiritual world. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit were all spirits, he believed. Furthermore, "man is a spirit, and the relationship with God is a spiritual union based upon living, spiritual contact, rather than mere belief or dogma."<sup>9</sup> Consequently, man was a spirit with a body, not the inverse. Human personality is invisible. Though it

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<sup>9</sup>Christ Within, p. 19.

contained purpose, intellect, and will, these qualities were never materially seen.<sup>10</sup>

In this belief system, transcendence characterized God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. "God is a Personality," Winrod preached. Yet, he did not mean God was personal.

The Christian concept is that God is a Personality, and, as such, He is removed from this mundane creation, as I am a personality removed from my child who is a personality. This planet could be snuffed out and all the life there is on it would disappear, and yet nothing would be subtracted from the personality of God.<sup>11</sup>

God remained completely otherworldly; He did not equal creation or the processes of nature.

Because God did not reside in the temporal world, he could not be discovered by human endeavor, Winrod argued. God appeared to men only through divine revelation. Because of his transcendence, God is "removed from the natural processes of creation and manifests Himself through supernaturalism. God is NOT discovered through naturalism. He is revealed through supernaturalism."<sup>12</sup>

Such a seemingly distant deity revealed himself three ways. First, the scientifically accurate Bible, written by men embodied with supernatural power, showed God to

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<sup>10</sup>Christ Within, pp. 14, 18; Watching, p. 26.

<sup>11</sup>The Keystone of Christianity, (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1930), p. 46.

<sup>12</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 47. Emphasis in original.



humanity. Moreover, God was unveiled in Christ. The Virgin Birth and 300 fulfilled prophecies about Jesus offered a clear record of God's existence.<sup>13</sup>

But most importantly for Winrod's faith, salvation revealed God. "The purest and highest form of evidence for the existence of God is to experience the Deity in consciousness." Here, the transcendent God made intimate contact with individual Christians and created absolute realization of His presence. Ultimately, this experience obviated the need for historical revelation. Winrod went so far as to say, "Every Bible in the world could be destroyed and I would still know that I have contacted God." No written words could reveal God like union in consciousness. All creeds were fallible, including the Apostles Creed and those being drawn up by twentieth-century fundamentalists.<sup>14</sup>

That Winrod could strip away so much of historical Christianity and still find God demonstrates the influence of his holiness teachings on his beliefs. After everything else was removed, Winrod's theology rested on the experience of Christ Within. In supernatural salvation, the divine world met the carnal one and effected a transforma-

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<sup>13</sup>Keystone of Christianity, pp. 47-50.

<sup>14</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 51-53. Quotations on p. 51.

tion. The agents of that change were Christ and the Holy Spirit.

As with God, Jesus was wholly apart from the material world. What mortal men call the miracles show Jesus' relationship to the world, Winrod stated. When Jesus accomplished these acts, "He did not oppose natural law; He simply transcended it, and manifested a higher type of power than is known to natural man."<sup>15</sup> More importantly, the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit, "the extended personality of Christ," created the basis for Christianity. Through the Holy Spirit, "Jesus Christ is with us, to forgive, heal and free souls from the works of Satan."<sup>16</sup> This relationship was essential for Christian salvation in Winrod's theology.

The need for supernatural salvation through the Holy Spirit occurred because of the Fall. When the serpent tempted Eve, God's creation changed. Winrod taught that before the Fall, creation and man had been perfect. In the beginning, God had created man in his image, and in this manner man lived for an indeterminate time in Eden. Created from divine chemicals as a spiritual being, Adam lived "in conscious communion with God, and the source or

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<sup>15</sup>Christ Within, p. 22.

<sup>16</sup>Christ Within, pp. 20-21.

his life was the heart of divinity."<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Adam enjoyed a healthy existence, in "harmonious adjustment to [his] environment."<sup>18</sup> However, this bliss was not to last. Man exercised his free will and disobeyed God. Not a preordained event, the responsibility for the Fall, Winrod clarified, rested solely on man. This act constituted a transgression of divine law, and thus, produced the necessary effect: "Man's pure spiritual body became distorted, after which it was chemicalized into murky, material substance and became subject to the laws of sin and death. His Fall was from eternal life to natural life."<sup>19</sup>

The Fall had created sin, and a race of spiritually unclean beings. Winrod likened the heart of the fallen individual to a barrel of stinking, maggot-infested garbage. No, it was even worse: "Within the heart of every unregenerate man and woman, there is a mass of sinful ooze and putrescence that far surpasses anything that I might relate by illustration," he concluded.<sup>20</sup> This rotten heart had the tendency to keep saying "I will" to God's will.

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<sup>17</sup>Christ Within, pp. 25, 81. Quotation on p. 25.

<sup>18</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup>Christ Within, pp. 23-25. Quotation on p. 25. For more on Winrod's belief in free will, see Keystone of Christianity. p. 40.

<sup>20</sup>Christ Within, p. 32.

Employing free will, Winrod claimed, defined sin. To sin in this manner, though, was simply to follow the natural principles of planet. After the Fall, the first law of nature became degeneration, to keep decaying morally.<sup>21</sup> Man unsaved wallowed in the disharmony resulting from the Fall, and without divine intervention, he struggled in vain to purge himself of sin. While all religions sought to overcome this state of affairs, only Christianity had a plan for "spiritual readjustment."<sup>22</sup>

Along with other fundamentalists, Winrod preached that the "historic fact" of the Fall necessitated this readjustment. "Man's Fall made necessary Christ's atonement."<sup>23</sup> Because of the Fall, the race had experienced physical, mental, and spiritual dislocation. In the body, this meant that "multitudes are digging their graves with their teeth, because they lack adjustment to their physical environment." Winrod, the vegetarian and the son of a healer, diagnosed human disease as the result of the Fall's discord. In the mind, the Fall created the need for education. "If [man] were in perfect mental tune with his environment, he would not need a single school," Winrod

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<sup>21</sup>Keystone of Christianity, pp. 14-15. See also, The NRA in Prophecy, p. 14, on Winrod's definition of sin.

<sup>22</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 19 and passim.

<sup>23</sup>Christ Within, p. 28.

lectured. "The root purpose of education is to aid in placing man in harmony with the mental realm." To the fifth-grade dropout Winrod, adjustment negated the need for learning. Most importantly, in the realm of the soul, the dislocation of the Fall led to the need for a spiritual adjustment to purge the Fall's guilt.<sup>24</sup>

Fortunately for the human race, God had understood the depths of the Fall and cleared a path back to harmony. In all beings, Winrod discerned a sense of conscience which made them aware of their fallen state, and most importantly, informed them of moral right and wrong. He declared, "There is a light of conscience which lights up every mortal coming into this span of existence." The glow in the human soul created by this light let the individual know his inner condition.<sup>25</sup> More basically, when God pitied man's condition, he granted absolute reunion through Jesus. On the Cross, "Jesus was re-establishing the broken union between God and man for all who will accept." Jesus brought the opportunity for reconciliation with God through the Holy Spirit. Winrod reiterated:

Man's soul and body could be vitalized by the Spirit of God; his nature could be re-created; he could possess a higher order of life than

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<sup>24</sup>Keystone of Christianity, pp. 16-19. Quotations on p. 18.

<sup>25</sup>Christ Within, p. 28; Keystone of Christianity, pp. 19-20. Quotations on p, 20. Emphasis in original.

that of natural man, and Satan's power over a human soul could be broken, for the "seed of woman" had "bruised the serpent's head."<sup>26</sup>

This Jesus could bring about a more thorough change than the one known to liberal theologians, or even other fundamentalists. Winrod was not speaking in metaphorical terms. He meant that the body literally changed, and that a regenerate man actually contacted the Edenic spirit world.

Regeneration through Christ was a primary element of Winrod's theology and he went to great lengths to describe its processes. First of all, he made clear how regeneration does not occur. Humans do not develop or evolve into Christ's nature; remember, the first law of nature is toward degeneration, not regeneration. In addition, education would not help since mental dislocation resulted from the Fall's maladjustment. Neither would a change of environment synthesize a new man.<sup>27</sup> No, the sense of guilt which brought man to regeneration was a universal phenomenon and the carnal self must be crucified, totally destroyed.<sup>28</sup> Winrod's regeneration took place only in the

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<sup>26</sup>Christ Within, pp. 28-29. See also Keystone of Christianity, p. 62.

<sup>27</sup>Christ Within, pp. 12, 43-47.

<sup>28</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 12; Christ Within, p. 10.

realm of the divine, and no act in the temporal world could make the change.

In the evangelical tradition, regeneration involved an inflow of the Holy Spirit. Winrod defined the experience:

Unregenerate man is dominated by sinful desires, a lustful mind, wrong emotions and a perverted imagination. ...At the experience of regeneration, he is begotten of God by the incoming of the Holy Spirit and becomes a generative center of divine life.<sup>29</sup>

This alteration of man's nature took place in the human heart. Winrod accepted as a "spiritual fact" that "the center of man's life is the spiritual heart." In sin, the heart had been a barrel of slimy ooze. But regeneration changed that. Christ, working through the Holy Spirit, transformed the spiritual heart, which in turn altered the physical heart--again, supernatural cause, natural effect--and a new being emerged. He noted:

Nothing in material science can tell us what makes the heart beat, because the beat of the heart is a spiritual operation. Just there, in the heart-beat, you may meet your Lord, in the Holy Spirit. Christ in union with the spiritual heart changes heart qualities, generates divine life in man and ultimately creates a new creature.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Christ Within, p. 49.

<sup>30</sup>Christ Within, p. 52. Emphasis on original. See also, Keystone of Christianity, p. 64.

To dwell on this point is appropriate, for regeneration is the nucleus of Winrod's theology. Winrod believed this divine experience split Earth's inhabitants into two races, the old, Adamic, unregenerate race, and the new, "in-Christed," regenerate race.<sup>31</sup> It must be made clear that for Winrod, the regenerate--the true Christians--were different beings than natural men. The "process" of regeneration "separates the individual from the debasing things of this world and places him in a state where he can be responsive to the higher vibrations of the spiritual world."<sup>32</sup>

Such a statement might be used to indicated tendencies toward Spiritualism or Transcendentalism in Winrod. However, this would misread his theology. He strongly disavowed these belief systems as well as Pentacostalism. Grace remained the "keystone of Christianity." However, Winrod's definition of grace lay in the inflow of the Holy Spirit and the resultant experience.<sup>33</sup>

Ultimately, grace or regeneration led to perfection. By living in Christ, one could reach the higher life of divine humanity. Although movement toward the central

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<sup>31</sup>Christ Within, pp. 29-30; Keystone of Christianity, pp. 56-57.

<sup>32</sup>Christ Within, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup>Christ Within, p. 8; Keystone of Christianity, pp. 11-35.



transformation of regeneration was not developmental, the advance toward perfection was. After regeneration, "the consciousness of the Spirit becomes more and more real as the regenerate soul grows in grace."<sup>34</sup> Like the water lily, the Christian heart grew into perfect union with the Lord.

Not unlike [the lily] is Christ dwelling in the heart of a Christian, lifting the soul up, up and up, into higher life and consciousness until, finally, it unfolds into a pure, refined, in-Christed personality, to be kissed by the Eternal Son of Righteousness and moistened by union and communion with God. This is Christ Within.<sup>35</sup>

The benefits of this relationship were numerous. Good works flowed from the experience of grace. More importantly, though, in-Christed beings could see the operation of the spirit world.<sup>36</sup>

Winrod's theology, then, lay based in the traditions of the holiness movement. He saw a spiritual universe, with a spiritual God, Christ, and Holy Spirit. Man had once been a harmonious part of this cosmos but had fallen from grace. However, with regeneration he could step onto the return track, and eventually reach reunion with the spirit world and his true nature. This accomplished, he

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<sup>34</sup>Christ Within, pp. 7, 52. Quotation on p, 52.

<sup>35</sup>Christ Within, p. 53. See also, Keystone of Christianity, p. 49.

<sup>36</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p.54; Christ Within, p. 37.

could discern the spiritual causes behind effects in the material world.

This cosmology explains Winrod's "conspiracy theory" of history and politics. He thought that the material world was only the shadow of spiritual causes. Himself a regenerate soul, he could determine the real roots of action and reaction and expose them to an unregenerate world. This negates the conclusion that Winrod originally held to a holiness strain of fundamentalism and then veered off into a conspiracy view of history--a common interpretation.<sup>37</sup> Rather, it means that his holiness fundamentalism included as part of its definition what historians and social critics label as "conspiracy" or "paranoia."

But was this theology consistent throughout his life? Though it became less obvious after 1933, its assumptions remained. The material that supports the preceding analysis comes from Christ Within (1925) and The Keystone of Christianity (1930). Since these books contain the most complete rendering of his theology, it may still be argued that he indeed changed after the mid-1930s. However, a part printed at both the beginning and end of Winrod's

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<sup>37</sup>For a summary of this view of Winrod, see Clifford R. Hope, "Strident Voices in Kansas Between the Wars," Kansas History 2 (Spring 1979): 60-63.

career--his "philosophy of prayer"--indicates the permanence of these ideas in his system of thought.

Winrod's conception of the nature of prayer employed his theological concepts. In complete essay form, he published it in 1933, the same year he detected the "hidden hand" and the conspiracy of the brain trust, and again in 1957, the year of his death. The 1957 edition, though altered in form, contains the same ideas of the 1933 theory.

Prayer, Winrod believed, is basic to human experience. All around the world, people could be found praying.<sup>38</sup> Prayer, as defined by Winrod, "is not in the words which are spoken but rather in spiritual contact which is formed with God."<sup>39</sup> In the act itself, prayer makes contact with the spiritual world of reality; "When one really prays with the Spirit he sets in motion creative causes." Prayer activates spiritual law and creates what appears in the material world as a miracle.<sup>40</sup> If done properly, he reported in 1933, prayer became a transcendent experience, and he had one:

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<sup>38</sup>Watching, p. 21; Keystone of Christianity, p. 13; Prayer in the Atomic Age, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1957), p. 24-25.

<sup>39</sup>Watching, p. 22. Emphasis in original. See also, Prayer in the Atomic Age, pp 26-28.

<sup>40</sup>Watching, pp. 27-28; Prayer in the Atomic Age, pp. 28-32.

There is a place to reach in God where the Holy Spirit can take such complete possession of one's psychic, emotional and spiritual qualities that He will literally pray through you. I have had experiences often, when in prayer, I would seemingly be lifted out of myself and have found myself praying for things and conditions that I could not understand.<sup>41</sup>

Prayer, in effect, completed the final divinity of man, lifting him out of his temporal body into the high reaches of the spirit world. It is impossible to tell exactly what kind of experience Winrod was having here; in fact, it is hard to explain these claims in all people who make them, at least within the paradigms of the twentieth century. But for Winrod, this was as natural--or supernatural--as taking a breath of air.

As might be gathered, prayer played a key role in the ultimate goal--Christian perfection. "Prayer harmonizes all mental, emotional and moral qualities," Winrod explained. "It stimulates dormant energies to life. It opens the channels for man to express the most creative forces which nature possesses."<sup>42</sup> In its highest form, prayer brought the supplicant into union with the Deity. Winrod confided, "In its innermost meaning, prayer is loving communion with God the Father, and knowledge of conscious cooperation with God, the Eternal Son, who is

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<sup>41</sup>Watching, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup>Watching, p. 21.

the Creator and Sustainer of all things material and spiritual."<sup>43</sup>

Here, in Winrod's theory of prayer, appear the constant elements of his theology. His essays on the subject contained the same doctrines at the end of his life as at the beginning: the dichotomy between the spiritual and material worlds and the cause-effect relationship between them; the transcendence of spiritual forces; man's relationship to the spirit world; and the perfection of man through regeneration and the resulting ability to affect the material world by working through the spiritual.<sup>44</sup>

While the tenets of Winrod's religion compose a theology, their inverse in the spiritual universe should not be ignored. Though less theoretically elaborate, Winrod also sketched what he called a "demonology." "Demons," he scolded modernist disbelievers, "are real. Demons are intelligent. ...All demon forces follow instructions from a Satanic headquarters." Anything could be, or could be controlled by, a demon. Even death was a demon.<sup>45</sup> Tracing their origins, he found that Satan had

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<sup>43</sup>Prayer in the Atomic Age, p. 40.

<sup>44</sup>Prayer in the Atomic Age, pp. 17-20, 34-38 also contain a restatement of Winrod's belief in the reality of the spirit world.

<sup>45</sup>Three Modern Evils, pp. 7, 14. Quotation on p. 14.

inhabited the unfallen Eden. There, as Lucifer, he ruled a kingdom of angelic beings. Being a free moral agent, Lucifer allowed his ego to become inflated and placed his will against the sovereign will of God. Upon doing so, the angelic Earth dissolved into chaos, became "without form, and void." Later, God re-created the universe and placed Adam and Eve in it. The fallen Lucifer, Satan, stayed in this realm and tried to undo God's recreation. Sometime after the new world appeared, other fallen spirit beings, "sons of God" (Gen. 6:4), broke through to the earthly plane and polluted the daughters of men, creating a race of half-breeds which produced "an abnormal stimulus in the life-stream of the human family."<sup>46</sup>

Thus, demons could operate in the material world and complicate the lives of mortals. Paul's experience proved that demons fought with men. But more importantly, Satan and his demon henchmen carried on a war with the Church. Satan hated Christianity. Consequently, "throughout the centuries we see that [the Church] has been beset and besieged by every conceivable form of Satanic strategy." From the tortures of Nero to the minds of the modernists,

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<sup>46</sup>The NRA in Prophecy and a Discussion of Beast Worship, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1933), pp. 13-18. Quotation on p. 18.

Satan toiled to destroy God's divine program.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, Satan played a key role in the cosmos. As the force of evil in the real spiritual world, he stood behind all misfortune which befell men. He originated plots and worked through human actors to achieve his ends. Humans who committed evil acts were either pawns of the Devil or in league with him.<sup>48</sup> Again, Winrod did not mean this as a metaphor. To him Satan was as real as a lamppost--more real in fact.

When Winrod detected a Satanic plot against the Church, he did not mean against the worldly institution. Rather, his definition aligned with what theologians designate the "invisible church." Christ's bride, the Church, was composed of "regenerate mortals," all those who had undergone the transformation of grace. Hence, the Church was a supernatural organism rather than an earthly organization.<sup>49</sup> Winrod summarized: "The church is made up of people, regenerate mortals, believers who have been moved upon by the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit, and not machinery."<sup>50</sup> Moreover, church membership and

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<sup>47</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 78; Three Modern Evils, pp. 10-11.

<sup>48</sup>Hidden Hand, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup>Christ Within, p. 11; Keystone of Christianity, p. 59, 137.

<sup>50</sup>Three Modern Evils, p. 8-9.

denominational affiliation were not intrinsically parallel, although they might be. He continued:

You can not [sic] join the church; you must be born into it. Every soul that has renounced sin and experienced the new birth is a member of the true church. This group of believers is an organism primarily not an organization. Every such illuminated mortal is a living cell in the body of Christ, possessing His uncreated eternal life.<sup>51</sup>

When Winrod talked about the attack on the Church, then, he meant the continual assault on the faith of the regenerate, not primarily on the social institution, although the two might be the same.

Because they lived in the material world, God had charged the cleansed souls in the Church with a duty. The Church is "the great organism...through which God works in accomplishing his purposes on the earth." If the Church is true its mission it occupies a place of high esteem in society, however, if it apostatizes it is trampled. In any event, God holds the Church responsible for what happens in society, and in times of crisis, the Church has the ability and the responsibility to save society.<sup>52</sup> In explaining how the Church could save society, Winrod used the same model over and over again--the Wesleyan revival of England. He greatly admired the teachings of John

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<sup>51</sup>Three Modern Evils, p. 9. Emphasis in original.

<sup>52</sup>Three Modern Evils, p. 9.



Wesley and claimed that Wesley had "saved England from committing suicide."<sup>53</sup>

If the Church was to revive society, it had to have a guidepost. This Winrod found in biblical prophecy interpreted with a dispensationalist framework. Several studies have detailed intricately Winrod's dispensationalism. Indeed, most historians who have examined Winrod have found this to be the central portion of his religion. This thesis agrees only partially with that assessment. Winrod's holiness beliefs were the core of his religion. He used dispensationalism as a tool to interpret the actions in the material world and discern the "real" spiritual causes. Thus, its content could change radically over time. Dispensationalism was never a fixed dogma for Winrod; it was a method, a way to interpret an unclear natural world and bring it into line with the spiritual realm. Thus, the point here is not to completely cover Winrod's dispensationalism. Instead, the following summarizes its basic purposes as he employed it and looks at some of its content.

Winrod's conceived of biblical predictions as literal prior notice of events in the material world. "Prophecy," he stated on numerous occasions, "is history written in

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<sup>53</sup>Three Modern Evils, p. 9; Keystone of Christianity, p. 135.

advance."<sup>54</sup> It indicated events which absolutely would happen. "It is no use to oppose Bible prophecy," he prefaced one discussion. "That which is predicted will come to pass."<sup>55</sup> Not only would prophecy help individuals in troubled times, nations could benefit as well. "Statesmen would do well to search the prophecies," he advised. "Their decisions could be made in light with divine decrees."<sup>56</sup> The Bible unveiled the role nations would play in the divine scheme. "Literal messages regarding nations ancient and modern are found in the sacred oracles," Winrod revealed.<sup>57</sup> Making use of prophecy to criticize the nation did not make one less a citizen, he clarified. Using prophecy simply gives the patriotic Christian "long range information and offers a rational explanation for causes behind international trends which would otherwise

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<sup>54</sup>The Present International Crisis, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1939), p. 56; The Prophetic Destiny of the United States, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1943), p. 7; Communism in Prophecy History and America, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1946), p. 5.

<sup>55</sup>The NRA in Prophecy, p. 7. Emphasis in original. See also, The Prophetic Destiny of the United States, p. 7, Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, p. 5, and Keystone of Christianity, p. 108.

<sup>56</sup>The NRA in Prophecy, p. 7. See also, The Prophetic Destiny of the United States, p. 5, and Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, p. 7.

<sup>57</sup>The Prophetic Destiny of the United States, p. 8. See also, The NRA in Prophecy, p. 25.

remained veiled a mystery."<sup>58</sup> Indeed, Christians should view the world with a newspaper in one hand and Bible in the other, Winrod often counseled. When they did so, they discerned the "demonism at work behind the scenes."<sup>59</sup>

Basically, Winrod meant that through prophecy mortals could discern the spiritual causes of earthly effects. If communion with the spirit world was incomplete, prophecy opened a window. Using the prophetic passages of the Bible gave the Christian insight into the real world and explained the seemingly inexplicable.

The exact framework of Winrod's view of prophecy varied. At times, he employed the seven ages of the church outlined in Revelation. At other points, he examined the four watches of the Church mentioned by Jesus. Most often, like other dispensationalists, he saw history in the seven ages predicted in Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's vision.<sup>60</sup> Actually, the specific dispensational

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<sup>58</sup>The Present International Crisis, p. 78. See also The NRA in Prophecy, p. 45.

<sup>59</sup>The Prophetic Destiny of the United States, p. 7-8; The NRA in Prophecy, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 111; Watching, p. 13; The Present International Crisis, pp. 56-78. For a more complete explanation of Winrod's dispensationalism, see Leo P. Ribuffo, The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Depression to the Cold War, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), pp. 93-98; and Larry B. Sullivan, "Gerald B. Winrod," (Master's thesis, Fort Hays State University, 1967), pp. 13-19.

structure mattered less than the way in which he used it, and the conclusion at which he arrived--the world was living in the end times.

Winrod's identification of the signs of the end changed, dependent on the piece of information under prophetic scrutiny. He thought the rise of Spiritualism and occult societies in the years after World War I meant that people were seeking worship of the devil, a sure sign of the coming of the AntiChrist. Since the end would involve worship of the Beast, Winrod looked for marks of the creature. Evolution might be the indication; so might the Blue Eagle of the National Recovery Administration. In addition to increased demon activity, the opening of the spirit world in the end times would provide for a new science which would unlock untold mysteries and perhaps build a mechanical Beast in a lab in Jerusalem. Television was a clue in this direction. Whatever the specifics, the last days would bring tribulation and martyrdom for Defenders of the Christian Faith.<sup>61</sup>

Specific content of prophetic interpretation for Winrod was less important than its general message. Prophecy showed the inner workings of the spirit world.

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<sup>61</sup>The NRA in Prophecy, pp. 13, 17-18, 20-23, 40-44; Watching, p. 17; Christ Within, p. 54-55, and passim. Other examples appear throughout Winrod's writing and in The Defender.

Just as the natural world could change, so could the spiritual realm. Satan may use different agents at different times to carry out his plot against the regenerate. Prophecy let Winrod keep track of him and his temporal henchmen as they pursued the regenerate. Primary in Satan's assault on the Church was an attack on one area of it in particular--the part residing in the Christian republic of the United States. This connection brings this survey to the last main component of Winrod's thought: his belief that America was a Christian nation, with a special mission in the cosmos.

Much of Winrod's political thought related directly to the state of affairs in America. However, he also outlined a more general theory of Christian democracy. Winrod started his political thinking from the assumption that nations, like individuals, possessed a conscience which they dared not ignore.<sup>62</sup> The troubles of any nation sprang from a disregarding the dictates of conscience, as they did in the unregenerate mortal. In much the same way, a nation could only be saved through a revival, a spiritual readjustment of the national conscience.

Faith founded a Christian democracy. With both men and nations, divine grace occupied a central place. Faith

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<sup>62</sup>Talks on Sound Government, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1938), p. 16.

and Christian character supplied the restriction needed to keep a nation intact.<sup>63</sup> Winrod envisioned the scenario without it:

When you break down the thought of God, you take the clamps and restrictions off of the human conscience. There is nothing that can cultivate the conscience except the knowledge that someday we will give an account to a just God for the deeds done in the body. Destroy the idea of God, and you destroy the conscience, Destroy the conscience, and you open the flood-gates of immorality. Open the flood-gates of immorality, and you destroy the nation.<sup>64</sup>

In a democracy, the internal controls of Christian character maintained the nation. With adherence to a moral code, democracy shone as the best form of government known; without it, it descended into the worst. To teach a man that he came from God and to instill a sense of morality supplied "the only safe foundation upon which to build a nation."<sup>65</sup>

Christian democracy emerged as the ideal form of government for Winrod. In the tradition of Jefferson, he based government on internal controls of the individual rather than external controls of the state. As with the Church, the state would be made of those of correct heart; it would not be created as an outside organization. A

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<sup>63</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 35; Christ Within, p. 95.

<sup>64</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 44.

<sup>65</sup>Three Modern Evils, pp. 37, 45. Quotation on p. 45.

strong refrain of individualism rang through Winrod's religion and it echoed in his conception of the nation. The nation was not the bureaucracy of government, just as the Church was not the denomination. The nation, then, acquired a spiritual dimension based on the degree of purity in the hearts of its people. Any hope for a nation lay in its conscience.

To further illustrate this point, Winrod turned to examples where conscience had been neglected. Those in the "heathen lands" in the Far East languished in darkness because they had abandoned conscience. In the prime example, post-revolutionary Russia suffered because it dethroned God. Descriptions and pictures of the horrors of Stalin's purges covered the pages of The Defender to substantiate the point. Later, Mussolini and other World War II era dictators confirmed the harvest of a nation without morality.<sup>66</sup> Winrod taught:

When restraint is lifted a nation becomes weak and flabby. To the degree that the morals of a country sag, ideals likewise deteriorate and patriotism wavers. Class hatreds multiply, the people become divided and a strong man arises with the backing of an organized minority. He steps to the helm, liberty vanishes and the citizens find themselves in a strait jacket. This is the line of least resistance which several modern states have followed.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Keystone of Christianity, pp. 22, 44.

<sup>67</sup>The Present International Crisis, p. 36.

In general, the decline in national morality led to a host of ills.

With this concept of Christian democracy in mind, Winrod found America to have been a Christian nation. America in the twentieth century enjoyed the advantages of Christian civilization as it had been built throughout history. More to the point, "Even a casual reference of the nation's early history reminds one that the secret of our strength is that we have built on strong Christian foundations from the beginning."<sup>68</sup> Measuring the light of national conscience, Winrod discovered a considerable amount illuminating American shores. The United States had been a nation blessed throughout its history.<sup>69</sup>

This blessing resulted from a divine plan. Winrod revealed that America had been in the mind of God before it had materialized in the minds of men, and to demonstrate this fact, he unearthed "several plain references to America in the prophetic Scripture." Opening the book of Isaiah, he spotted the American eagle winging through the passages. Distilling the eighteenth chapter further,

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<sup>68</sup>Three Modern Evils, p. 11; The Present International Crisis, p. 46.

<sup>69</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 19; Radio Speeches on War and Peace, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1939), p. 43. These addresses were delivered over radio station XERA on the Mexican border, near Del Rio, Texas, in April and May of 1939.



he extracted no less than twelve references to the United States. For example, sending "ambassadors by sea" indicated America because it was "one of the few nations whose official representatives are obliged to travel on water in reaching their points of diplomatic service." The mention of a "terrible" people foretold American's ability to win at war, and the image of a mountain prophesied America's example to the world. Finally, and most importantly, the prophet foresaw a special fate for the United States at the judgment of the nations. When Christ descends to assess the nations and establish his millennial kingdom, "America will be singled out for special duty and holy service." Envisioned by God, prophesied by Isaiah, the United States enjoyed a hallowed spot in the universe.<sup>70</sup>

As a nation ordained, America occupied a special geographical position on the globe. It lay in the temperate zone, where "the high orders of civilization have developed." From a strip of the Earth between the thirtieth and sixtieth parallels of north latitude, Winrod surmised, grew the nations which took the lead in philosophy, poetry, history, science, religion, statesmanship and government. The nation lay too far south to be frozen by the arctic and too far north to be smothered by the tropics. From this placing arose the commanding position

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<sup>70</sup>The Prophetic Destiny of the United States, pp. 8-22.

of the United States in world affairs. And such good fortune "did not come by chance or accident. Providences have always worked on our behalf."<sup>71</sup> God had planted America in a zone of the earth where she could grow and prosper.

The providences Winrod mentioned had, he believed, controlled the course of American history from the very start. In general, God had blessed the U.S.A.:

It is not difficult to detect the hand of God in American history. Every period of stress has been accompanied by special providences. ...We have been a favored people. We ought to be a thankful people.<sup>72</sup>

Believing in the westward advance of world history like some of his fellow citizens, Winrod found America a part of it. He discovered, "It was under this magnetic pull, following the movement of the Sun, that Christopher Columbus discovered the new world."<sup>73</sup> The magnetic pull had also brought the Pilgrims to the fresh religious air of the new world. Winrod sentimentalized:

I am thinking now of that little band of Pilgrims who reached the shores of the new world on that winter's day, December 21, 1620. They climbed out of a frail vessel and knelt beside a granite boulder. Tears streamed down their

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<sup>71</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, p. 48; The Present International Crisis, p. 44.

<sup>72</sup>The Present International Crisis, p. 47.

<sup>73</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, p. 49. See also, The Present International Crisis, p. 47.

cheeks. They thanked God for a safe voyage. They had arrived in a new world which was to be to them 'a land of the free and the home of the brave.'

That day, on the shores of the Atlantic, at the spot now called Plymouth Rock a spiritual flame started burning. And that flame still burns today. ...I have confidence the same Infinite Hand is still watching over this nation.<sup>74</sup>

This little band bore with them the ideals which would become America, Winrod believed. And they wrote them down in the "Mayflower Compact," which would flower into the U.S. Constitution.<sup>75</sup> As America grew, it retained its faith. When the Revolution came, the republic was formed by "men who had a holy reverence for the Bible. These men established high moral standards and rugged religious practices." The fact that many of the Founding Fathers were Deists like those he indicted in the modern world did not bother Winrod, the historian. American civilization stood on the Bible, and the country owed its prosperity and power to "the golden vessels of Christianity."<sup>76</sup>

Convinced that the Founding Fathers were Christians, Winrod believed they had codified their holy ideals in an infallible civil document--the Constitution. Before the

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<sup>74</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, pp. 41-42. See also, The Present International Crisis, p. 47.

<sup>75</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, p.43.

<sup>76</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 87. See also, Radio Speeches on War and Peace, p. 43.

writing of the civil writ, George Washington was troubled. But, God stepped in. The same "pull of the invisible" that attracted Columbus and the Pilgrims "brought the Constitution of the United States into existence--A Document which became literally a new conception of the science of government."<sup>77</sup> That Winrod capitalized the word "document" like the Bible was no copy-editing error. The Constitution had the force of a holy book. When the founders finished their toils,

They had produced a document which has given the people of this part of the world more liberty, for a longer period time, than any other nation has ever enjoyed. Our Constitution has been correctly called "the American ark of the Covenant."<sup>78</sup>

After the smoke lifted, Washington felt relief; his heart cleared. Peace and tranquility fell over the land, Winrod declared. It was the Constitution which had effected what Winrod called the "magic change" which saved the colonies. Like the Bible, an infallible code of unbreakable principle had passed to humanity, for "one might as well try to change the multiplication tables as improve on the preamble of the Constitution."<sup>79</sup> The Constitution brought truth for all times, and as the Bible guided the regener-

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<sup>77</sup>Talks on Sound Government, pp. 9-10; Quotation from Radio Speeches on War and Peace, p. 49.

<sup>78</sup>Talks on Sound Government, p. 10.

<sup>79</sup>Talks on Sound Government, p. 11.

ate Church, the Constitution should always guide the regenerate nation. "We have no problem today that cannot be solved within the bounds of that Document," Winrod stated flatly. He clung so strongly to the preamble that it even denied him restriction of Jewish rights, something he found tempting.<sup>80</sup>

As American history unfolded, statesmen lived out the faith of the national elders. And this practice proved effective to the health of the country. For example, when Abe Lincoln called national days of prayer, the Civil War promptly ended. Under God, the nation blossomed. His "providential leadership" aided the settlers as they carved "a high order of civilization out of the wilderness," and wrought a nation blessed with the riches of the culture of abundance. Moreover, Jefferson and the other founders had established liberty as well as domestic tranquility. Winrod held, along with Jefferson, that "'the government which governs best is the one which governs least.'"<sup>81</sup> In the onslaught of New Deal bureaucracy, Winrod grasped what he saw as the nation's traditional liberty:

We love our liberties. We are reminded that much blood was spilt that we might enjoy freedom of

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<sup>80</sup>Quotation from Talks on Sound Government, p. 11; The Present International Crisis, p. 35.

<sup>81</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, pp. 49-52, 20-21.

speech, freedom of the press, the right of secret ballot, the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience and the many other advantages which make life worth living. We love these liberties. We have no thought of giving them up.<sup>82</sup>

For these blessings, Winrod said, he owed "a lasting debt of gratitude," and he wanted an America where his children and the other "jewels of the nation" might enjoy the same.<sup>83</sup>

The only way to preserve this governmental idyll was to stay the course. Just as moral conscience underlay any Christian democracy, so too it provided the path for Americans. Faced with the turbulence of the late 1930s, Winrod warned, "Only the moral safeguards of our forefathers faithfully perpetuated in this generation, can preserve the democratic institutions which give to us the liberty we enjoy."<sup>84</sup>

The key word here was "moral." By this, however, Winrod meant more than the Protestant consensus of nineteenth-century America. He referred to what he thought was the moral conscience in the hearts of the founders and those who had furthered their faith. Their ideals of liberty and government, he believed, precursed his.

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<sup>82</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, p. 21

<sup>83</sup>Talks on Sound Government, pp. 64-65.

<sup>84</sup>Talks on Sound Government, p. 16.

Winrod's religion, as we have seen, was highly individualistic. Salvation came as a personal inflow of grace through the Holy Spirit. As a result, the Church equalled not an organization or a denomination, but those who had the experience of regeneration and possessed a clean moral conscience. So too was Winrod's idea of the nation.

Indeed, it probably is a misnomer to even use the word "state" in describing his political thinking. He seldom employed it himself. To Winrod, the "real" nation was invisible, like the real Church. Thus, the creation of a modern state bureaucracy by the New Deal seemed foreign. Essentially, the nation was a spiritual entity with moral, not political, bases. If it faltered, it needed spiritual realignment.

Winrod stuck to a theory of government which emphasized individual liberty and morality over state control of the public sphere's well-being. Ideally, the people of the nation were regenerate and thus the national conscience stayed clean, allowing a stable social order. If not, the regenerate Church stepped in to call the nation back to God and stability. As America progressed into the twentieth century, the state of its national conscience shocked Winrod. He detected the declension of American morality and government, and to save it, he proposed a spiritual revival.

As Winrod traveled around the United States as an evangelist and as he surveyed the news, he found immorality running amok. In 1925, he located the signs of moral sag in World War I, crime among the youth, popular movies, bootleg liquor, public dance halls, women's fashion, evolution in the schools, and modernism in the church. By 1930, America had become as wicked as Babylon. By the end of the decade, revolution threatened. National immorality had allowed a conglomerate of Communists, apostate Jews, and Illuminists to penetrate the country and menace its foundations.<sup>85</sup> Spiritual decay, Winrod clarified, had brought on this situation:

After these years of orderly government based upon Christian principles and a written Constitution our institutions are facing their greatest challenge. Every Christian is faced with a solemn responsibility to do his or her part in defending the faith of the fathers in this hour of great uncertainty. As previously suggested, religious decay is always followed by economic and political decay. When the religious conscience becomes calloused, business, industry, agriculture and every department of life feels the effect. We are witnessing the kind of declension in our Country today which any nation must expect that permits spiritual life to become devitalized.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Christ Within, pp. 33-43; Keystone of Christianity, p. 86; Talks on Sound Government, pp. 12-14. For more detail, see chapter 5.

<sup>86</sup>The Present International Crisis, pp. 48-49. Emphasis mine. Although this statement appeared in 1939, its reasoning was consistent with earlier warnings. See, for example, Christ Within, pp. 66-74, where Winrod describes opposition of evolution as a religious and



National problems, Winrod believed, stemmed from causes in the realm of the spirit. They came from the decline of morality, or as we shall see, from outright conspiracies originating the spirit world.

The cure for the disease was a quickening of the national conscience, a task in which the regenerate Church would perform the vital functions. In one of the many examples of this line of thinking, Winrod reviewed the state of affairs during the Senate race of 1938 and proclaimed that America must rebuild the national character in order to prosper. The old-fashioned principles of political and economic morality would restore the national conscience to the point where prosperity and national well-being would return. This, however, should not be seen as a mere harkening back to the Protestant consensus. It recalled a very special part of it, a part based in the supernatural precepts of holiness. Winrod continued:

New spiritual energies must be released with all possible haste. A revival of supernatural religion to involve the national conscience, a great spiritual awakening, is the supreme need of the hour.<sup>87</sup>

Only revival would save the nation from the fate which awaited its fallen state.

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patriotic duty. More on this appears in chapter 5. See also, Talks on Sound Government, pp. 16-17.

<sup>87</sup>Talks on Sound Government, p. 15.

Though he often labeled it so, Winrod saw this release as more than a simple return to nineteenth-century values. Salvaging the nation was like saving the individual soul. The nation had fallen from its Edenic origins. Now it needed regeneration. In looking at how to keep the country out of World War II, Winrod advised that the United States must receive "a new spiritual baptism of its national conscience. This can only be accomplished by a great spiritual awakening."<sup>88</sup> Since God had worked miracles in the founding of America, so could his spiritual energies revive this fallen child.

Central to this revival would be the group of regenerate Christians which composed the church. Peter taught that "all great periods of spiritual awakening have been precipitated by men who were watching for the return of the Lord."<sup>89</sup> Defining the church, Winrod elaborated on its social responsibility. If this body of cleansed souls took responsibility for saving society, it could awaken unregenerate humanity and solve society's ills. In this instance, the threat to Western Civilization was Modernism. Winrod speculated:

If the church were to shoulder its task today it could start a sweeping revival that would put the fear of God back into human hearts, build up

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<sup>88</sup>The NRA in Prophecy, p. 38. Emphasis in original.

<sup>89</sup>Watching, p. 11. Emphasis in original.

moral standards, put restraint on human depravity and solve our every problem.<sup>90</sup>

Should Christ tarry, a revival offered the only hope. And, Winrod assured his audience, such action would have the desired effect. While the model of the Wesleyan revival best illustrated this fact, other junctures in history also evidenced the basic truth that spiritual awakening brought divine assistance. Lincoln's national prayer days provided one proof, the defeat of the Spanish Armada another. Winrod concluded that history was replete with acts of supernatural intervention, times when "spiritual forces more potent than anything known to modern science were released through mass prayer." Ideally, as more and more individuals became regenerate the nation would be saved. However, if this proved ineffective, Winrod hoped that the younger generation could be transformed into the mechanism for national rebirth in the future.<sup>91</sup>

These examples of Winrod's thoughts on a spiritual revival are taken from writings scattered throughout his 30 years of publication. While the specific evils which prompted the call for awakening changed over time, the essential concepts remained stable. Conscience supplied the spiritual energy for a potent nation. When it flagged,

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<sup>90</sup>Three Modern Evils, p. 10.

<sup>91</sup>Talks on Sound Government, p. 15; The Present International Crisis, p. 52.

the nation required a spiritual readjustment, a regeneration. If it turned to the power of God, it could enjoy the higher life, like the individual. Essentially, both the nation and its individual human components must become In-Christed for society to function properly.

National revival, thus, provides an interface into the social and political themes which other historians have seen as dominant in Winrod's life. Keeping in mind the constants--the spiritual universe, holiness perfection, dispensationalism, and Christian America--Winrod's commentary on contemporary topics grows more clear. As society changed, Winrod's mind stayed the same. With newspaper and Bible in hand, he surveyed American society from the 1920s to the 1950s, and saw a people and land fallen from grace and ignoring the dictates of conscience. In such a condition, they could not discern their real problems or the real causes. As a perfected spirit, however, he could locate the true spiritual sources, and possess knowledge of the only effective solution. Hence, no matter what the current problem was, the answer was always spiritual awakening and a revival of the national conscience of Christian America.

#### IV. REVIVING CHRISTIAN AMERICA

Although Winrod's core beliefs directed his life and thought, they manifested themselves most tangibly in his application of them to issues in American society. Winrod's system of thought, especially his notion of the regenerate church in relation to society, necessitated action for Christians in the public sphere. Winrod held that God had formed the perfect nation in America. However, it had declined from its pristine birth by the early twentieth century. Regenerate Christians, imbued with the special power of the Holy Spirit, were required to effect a spiritual revival of this nation, as they had done in Wesley's England.

Spiritual readjustment, the "quickenning of the national conscience," formed the central precept of Winrod's social criticism and action. Although he suggested legislation when confronted by evolution, his ultimate solution to the nation's problems lay in a change in its citizens' souls. National conscience, the collective purity of the citizenry, was key. In the past, Winrod believed, Americans had possessed regenerate souls. The pure hearts of the most important Americans, the Pilgrims, George Washington, Abe Lincoln, had strengthened the soul of the country. Consequently, any current crisis called for a return to their nature. If

the citizens purified their hearts, the nation would rebound to its glory of old.

Surveying the state of America from World War I through World War II, Winrod detected a host of ills. Before 1930, the primary threat was evolution in the schools and modernism in the churches. Other signs of the rot in the human heart included the repeal of prohibition and the shocking alterations in women's behavior. During the 1930s, Winrod pieced together an increasingly immense political plot against America. In a variety of ways, Winrod's desire for supernatural causality subsumed the problems of the 1930s to this Satan-inspired assault. At the same time, he took on the New Deal as a threat to the American way of life. Finally, displaying a mixture of patriotism and isolationism, Winrod opposed America's entry into World War II.

The four basic elements of his world view wound through these social criticisms. The threat at hand pressured a Christian America and usually stemmed from hidden causes. While temporal efforts might help, the real solution for Winrod lay in regeneration, the spiritual perfection effected by the inflow of the Holy Spirit. Evolutionary science, which presented a challenge to the very existence of such a solution, started Winrod on his career as a social evangelist.

Evolution and the teaching of it in America's schools were Winrod's most persistent demons during the first years of the Defenders movement. Evolution challenged the whole basis of his world view compelled him to fight back.

While Winrod's most basic objection was religious, he tried to meet the scientists on what he thought was their own ground. Evolution, he determined, was not science at all; it was "only a hypothesis and has neither proved science nor Scripture to sustain it." It was an unproved theory, a guess.<sup>1</sup> In branding the theory as such, Winrod employed different assumptions about the very definition of science than those used by the people he attacked. Evolution, he concluded, sprung from the work of bad scientists. On the other hand, the "careful scientist of the past" worked differently, remaining "reluctant to present his unproved theories as facts."<sup>2</sup> Science to Winrod was a body of demonstrable facts. "Suffice it to say," he purported, "that there is not a single proved fact in science, rightly understood, to support the idea of man's animal origin. ...Evolution is not demonstrated

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<sup>1</sup>Christ Within, (Wichita: Winrod Publication Center, 1925), pp. 55-56.

<sup>2</sup>Christ Within, pp. 55-57, 62. Quotation on p. 57.

science; it is speculative philosophy."<sup>3</sup> In requiring proved facts, Winrod utilized the Baconian model for science invoked by other evangelicals and fundamentalists. Science lay in the realm of the tangible. Facts in the natural world had to be readily apparent to be true.<sup>4</sup>

Because of the lack of tangible proof, the materialist scientist was forced to employ faith to prop up his hypothesis, Winrod assured. Nothing proved the spontaneous generation of new species. Neither were any changes of one species to another recorded; each produced after its own kind just exactly as the Bible described.<sup>5</sup>

Under this "lie" of science, Winrod judged, Satan was mocking Christianity and destroying the belief in its fundamental precepts. Aimed at the faith, evolution was devastating. Winrod totaled the damage:

[Evolution] destroys every fundamental upon which the Christian religion is builded. It destroys faith in the Inspiration of the Bible, evolves man over the Fall, robs Jesus Christ of

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<sup>3</sup>Three Modern Evils, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1932), p. 31.

<sup>4</sup>On the influence of Baconian science on other fundamentalists, see George Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 55-61. An example of Winrod's borrowing of ideas from Newton N. Riddell appears in Three Modern Evils, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup>Christ Within, p. 74-83.



his Deity, makes a Saviour and an Atonement for sin impossible, eliminates divine Grace, Regeneration and the presence of the Holy Spirit as the projected manifestation of Christ. When carried to its logical end it annihilates revealed religion.<sup>6</sup>

Essentially, evolution removed the supernatural underpinnings of these beliefs. Evolution did not so much negate the particulars of each part of Christianity for Winrod as it cut the entire divine root from which it grew. Furthermore, evolution indicated the coming of "Supermanism" associated with the Apocalypse. History, Winrod believed, proved this to be true. In Germany, Freidrich Nietzsche had promulgated the wicked doctrine of animalism and its implication of a super man, and Germany had paid dearly in World War I, Winrod warned. Evolution was the Mark of the Beast prophesied in Revelation and portended beast worship.<sup>7</sup>

Regenerate Christians, faced with such a basic challenge to their faith and well-being, had a duty to oppose it. "Christianity and Evolution cannot both survive," Winrod declared. "One must go."<sup>8</sup> While Christians should face this challenged on the religious front, Winrod raised the stakes.

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<sup>6</sup>Christ Within, pp. 67-68.

<sup>7</sup>Christ Within, pp. 54, 101.

<sup>8</sup>Christ Within, p. 67.

Not only was the Christian faith tested. Because society rested upon Christian morality, animalism subverted the well-being of the nation. Like some cancerous growth, Winrod warned, "the roots of Evolution have been planted in every department of life and are now eating away at the heart of civilization."<sup>9</sup> When Winrod used the word heart, he meant the controls of character. What turned evolution into a societal threat was that, when taken seriously, it transformed morality into a "mere convention," implying that religion was only a "state of mind," marriage a "social institution," and property rights simply a "notion." In essence, evolution destroyed internalized controls and their institutional manifestations. "Such a wicked jungle doctrine is a menace to civilization," Winrod was convinced. "It is intellectual T.N.T."<sup>10</sup> He saw the empirical manifestations of this truth as numerous. Didn't the rapid rise in crime in America's youth demonstrate the lack of morality brought on by animalism? Didn't the German experiment with animalism, Nietzscheism and Supermanism show what could happen to a society which accepted the jungle doctrine?<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Christ Within, p. 66.

<sup>10</sup>Christ Within, p. 70.

<sup>11</sup>Christ Within, pp. 96, 72-73.

America's schools, Winrod asserted, were infecting the nation's youth with this evil belief system. In general, no nation could survive under such conditions. If its youth no longer believed in law and order, and the Christian faith, a commonwealth would fall.<sup>12</sup> Evolution in the schools taught atheism and removed the controls of morality; rampant youth would run amok. Winrod predicted the harvest:

Atheistic education engenders selfishness, lawlessness, lust, war and anarchy. If it is not removed from the schools, it will turn America into a seething hell in the next few years.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, Americans had a "patriotic duty" to oppose this dire test of the nation.

Like many fearing the teaching of evolution, Winrod thought the answer might lie in political action. Patriotic Christians should use their power of the vote to put in office lawmakers who would take decisive action. Futhermore, they should get behind laws which would end the teaching of evolution, and replace it with a program to build character. Such laws, Winrod claimed, would not violate the constitutional rights of teachers. Certainly, he reasoned, the nation had the right to control anything so dangerous to the public welfare. And, since the teacher

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<sup>12</sup>Christ Within, p. 99.

<sup>13</sup>Christ Within, p. 74.

was a public servant, the employee of the state, he or she was bound by its instructions.<sup>14</sup>

Although Winrod developed a plan for legislation to stop the teaching of evolution in Kansas, he abandoned the idea rather quickly in favor of what had always been the ultimate solution--spiritual reawakening. This had really been his prime objective anyway. A change in the heart promised more hope for defeating evolution than did a change in the law. What America needed was "an immediate awakening of the national conscience and the restoration of a universal faith in the open Bible as God's revelation to man."<sup>15</sup> Winrod wanted a return to the Protestant consensus of the nineteenth century. Control exerted by conscience would keep the nation from descending into chaos.

When Christians accepted the tenets of evolution, they became what Winrod saw as the second major threat to America in the late 1920s--Modernists. Modernism, the attempt to reconcile Darwinian evolution with Christian theology, presented a threat to all the doctrines of Christianity, he believed. Modernists were destroying America's churches and America's youth, and they had to be removed.

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<sup>14</sup>Christ Within, pp. 93-102.

<sup>15</sup>Christ Within, p. 71.

Basically, he charged, modernism was the contemporary manifestation of Satan's eternal struggle with God.<sup>16</sup> Humanism, as Winrod sometimes termed it, was not a new development. He found it to be "the same lie which brought about the collapse of Eden." The central tenet of modernism was the denial of the spiritual universe, he claimed. Humanism ruled out a transcendent God and destroyed faith in the supernatural.<sup>17</sup> Like the silky-tongued serpent, modernism lulled innocent Christian believers into what Winrod called "soul sleep." In such a condition, Christians, most of whom ignored the call to the higher spiritual life anyway, became devotees of the Modernist-Satanic deception and turned a deaf ear to the call to the spiritual plane.<sup>18</sup>

Modernism undercut the central precept of Winrod's holiness theology, the supernatural universe. If they accepted the implications of modernist theology, Christians could deny the existence of the multi-faceted spiritual world in which Winrod found reality. The need for spiritual readjustment and perfection through the Holy Spirit became unnecessary, if not impossible.

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<sup>16</sup>Three Modern Evils, p. 7 and passim.

<sup>17</sup>Keystone of Christianity, (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1930), p. 38.

<sup>18</sup>Christ Within, 11, 112, 139.

In describing the details of the modernist threat, Winrod often sounded like a standard fundamentalist. Modernism, Winrod declared, destroyed the inspiration of the Bible, the Virgin Birth, the Atonement, the Resurrection, and miracles.<sup>19</sup> However, it was the destruction of the idea of supernaturalism which concerned him most. Modernists, he charged, were ignorant of spiritual laws, God's natural mode of operation. Denial of the spiritual science of the cosmos made them a bunch of intolerant religious fanatics in Winrod's eyes.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, Winrod indicted the modernists for taking away the supernatural Christ. In their acceptance of evolution, they reduced Christ to the level of an animal, made Him merely a man whose birth was not foretold in any way. Rather, Winrod taught, the modernist's Christ

...came as the natural product of evolution. Instead of possessing the nature and qualities of God, he possessed the nature and qualities of the gorilla. He was not supernaturally born.<sup>21</sup>

Modernism, thus defined, removed the primary part of Christ's nature for Winrod--his supernatural origin and activity. Christ had provided the opportunity of spiritual readjustment through the Holy Spirit. If Christ was only

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<sup>19</sup>Christ Within, pp. 121-137; See also *Ibid.*, p. 106, where Winrod claims that modernism denies the Apostle's Creed.

<sup>20</sup>Christ Within, p. 137.

<sup>21</sup>Christ Within, p. 110. Emphasis in original.

as natural man, he could not have established this relationship with God, and a major portion of Winrod's theology would crumble.

To Winrod, the modernist "lie" threatened more than his theology. Like evolution, modernism confronted the nation's youth. To demonstrate its potent impact, Winrod recounted the "tragic experience of Mary Lou." The heroine of this tragedy was an upright Ohio farm girl who went away to a liberal college. There the corrupt social life and the wicked modernists stripped her of the faith of her upbringing. In her third year, the soul sleep overtook her, and she slipped mysteriously into a fatal illness. As the modernist pastor quoted poetry and tried to console her with thoughts of dancing in the church basement, a shocked Mary Lou finally awakened and called for the faith of her parents. The kind physician, a true believer, intervened and told her the story of Jesus' Atonement once more. With her faith thus restored, Mary Lou slipped happily into eternity.<sup>22</sup>

In this sentimental tale, Winrod illustrated the seriousness of modernism and youth. With their faith removed by the modernist influence in the schools, American youth became sickened. In Mary Lou's case, she happily departed the cruel world solid in her beliefs.

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<sup>22</sup>Three Modern Evils, pp. 26-29.

However, Winrod feared that this disease among the young would fester into a full-blown social infection. Modernism would lead to atheism which would bring the final destruction of the controls of conscience and lead the nation to the evil of Bolshevism.<sup>23</sup>

Because of these dire consequences, Winrod called for a purge of the modernists. If modernists wanted to hold their beliefs, they could leave the evangelical churches for Unitarianism. Lay persons in the church should speak out and make sure that preachers of their congregations were doctrinally sound.<sup>24</sup> To the laity, Winrod issued this call to battle:

It is the bounden duty of every professing Christian to lift voice and prayer against these false teachings. Modernism is worthy of the most severe condemnation. Compromise is impossible. To dodge the issue would be cowardly. To ignore it would be disastrous. To refuse to fight would be treasonous against the government of God. Christendom is passing through a crisis. If the Cause of Christ is to be triumphant, fearless warriors must contend for the faith.<sup>25</sup>

Evangelical Christians must rise and reassert the supernatural faith. Although Winrod left the exact method unclear, he urged evangelical Christians to awaken from their soul-sleep and fight the modernists by removing

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<sup>23</sup>Three Modern Evils, pp. 25, 30.

<sup>24</sup>Christ Within, pp. 113, 118.

<sup>25</sup>Christ Within, pp. 140-141. Emphasis in original.



their dangerous influence from the churches and from society at large.

The loosening of controls brought on by evolution and modernism had caused a host of specific ills which required a national revival. Two morality issues which concerned Winrod during the late 1920s were prohibition and women's equality.

Winrod's answer to the widespread disregard of Prohibition involved more than a strengthening of the law. While the law had indeed been a great help to America, the real problem lay in human heart. A change there would obviate the need for Prohibition in the first place. Winrod proposed:

All true reformation begins with regeneration.  
If the United States would spend one-half as much money in promoting the Gospel in a systematic way to counteract the liquor evils as it does in confiscating bootleg whiskey, the whole problem could be solved in a short time.<sup>26</sup>

Laws could do some good. But in Winrod's Christian republic, social order and reform rested with the individual, and a change in the individual's heart. Spiritual reawakening was the key. Again, it is important to remember that this alteration was not meant in a metaphorical sense. Winrod meant that if the human heart was regenerated through the Holy Spirit, its possessor would

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<sup>26</sup>Christ Within, p. 38. Emphasis in original.

be put on the path to a more perfect existence in which alcohol would have no place. At the very least, regeneration would assure the light of conscience shone bright enough to prevent the individual from imbibing.

Winrod's assessment of the state of womanhood circa 1930 revealed a slightly different twist on the idea of revival. Jesus had elevated the status of women from that conferred by other religions. Real women knew this and when truly happy, they lived on a higher plane.<sup>27</sup> Like Queen Esther, true women maintained purity of character and consecrated their lives to service of the divine. All this talk of equality, not to mention modern dress which disgusted Winrod, was silly. It denied women's true purpose.<sup>28</sup> "Can it be," Winrod asked, "that women are in possession of qualities entirely different from those which men possess, and which are just as powerful, or even more powerful, in making happy homes and Christian nations?" Sounding like nineteenth-century publisher Sarah Hale, Winrod counseled that as long as women were not removed from their proper sphere, where they were more physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually adapted, they were uniquely equipped to bring their

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<sup>27</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 91. Christ Within, p. 40.

<sup>28</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 103. Christ Within, p. 39.

special virtues to society. However, when they digressed into swearing, smoking, drinking, they rightfully lost the respect of men. Once it creeps into male-female relations, disrespect creates "the hot-house which breeds immorality," Winrod warned. "How long western civilization can exist with the present universal disrespect for womanhood remains to be seen."<sup>29</sup>

Given these statements, Winrod can be correctly labeled as both a throwback to the nineteenth-century ideal of true womanhood and as a modern male chauvinist. However, he did not simply oppose women's equality because he found it personally threatening. Idealized womanhood represented his ideals of character and internal control. True women embodied these virtues and could pass them on to their families, thus effecting a spiritual revival on a very personal level.

Evolution, modernism and moral reform had all been bound together in Winrod's thought in the late 1920s and the first years of the 1930s. He believed that evolution and modernism were undermining what he assumed were the traditional beliefs of the American republic, and that the only way to solve the problem would be to bring about a spiritual awakening, whose participants would drive the evil doctrines out of the churches and the schools. He

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<sup>29</sup>Keystone of Christianity, p. 104

relied on the revival of the controls of conscience and what he saw as the regeneration of the human heart. As regenerate individuals followed the upward path to perfection, Winrod believed that they would at least save society from ruin, if not perfect it. America could be re-energized through a spiritual rebirth of the national conscience. While this conflicted with his belief in premillennialism, Winrod seldom addressed and never resolved the dilemma. Although he chose to interpret the rise of evolution, for instance, as the Mark of the Beast, it never prevented him from advocating its eradication.

After 1930, evolution and modernism occupied less and less of Winrod's time and thought. Rather, he became fascinated with what he thought to be their harvest--a massive plot to overthrow America and the American way. With Satan as its director, Communists, Jews, and Illuminists as its actors, this sinister drama and its subplots dominated Winrod's social thinking for most of the 1930s.

Bolshevism, Winrod argued, had roots deep in history. It had first manifested itself in Plato's Republic. In modern times, evolution and modernism with their accompanying atheism had planted the seeds.<sup>30</sup> Shattered

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<sup>30</sup>The Red Horse, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1932), p. 7; Three Modern Evils, p. 35.

morality and slumbering conscience lay the basis for revolution.

Now, the Reds were conspiring against the Western world. By using evolution in the schools and modernism in the churches, Bolsheviks had put together an organized assault and conspiracy against God, the Bible and Christians. After undergoing training in Russia, Red agents returned home to spread the seeds of anarchy and unrest. The strikes of 1922 in the United States provided ready evidence of the attack, Winrod testified. While President Harding and the strong moral conscience of the nation had fought them off then, Bolsheviks had now redoubled their efforts to overthrow America's religion and system of government. The Third International, Winrod reported, clearly set for the goals of these destructive agencies: hatred of God and religion; destruction of private property; social and racial equality, which meant the promotion of class hatred; the stirring up of strikes, sabotage and other forms of anarchy; the fall of representative government; and, finally, world revolution.<sup>31</sup> Since Communists wanted the overthrow of all capitalist governments, they had brought about the Depression. Through careful machination, Moscow "slipped one over" on the West. Playing the economist, Winrod taught:

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<sup>31</sup>Three Modern Evils, pp. 35-41.

By "pauper labor" Russia produced grains, ores and products at low prices and suddenly **dumped** them on the markets. The result was a financial crisis which threw millions of men out of work. And among these idle millions the Red Horse is now galloping, sowing the seeds of Communism, anarchy, radicalism, and revolution.<sup>32</sup>

This thoroughly erroneous scenario makes it appear like Winrod had suddenly discovered the Depression and was trying to explain it through political-economic conspiracy. Such a hypothesis is only partly true. In a way, Winrod was flailing to comprehend the economic downturn like other Americans. However, he called on arguments he had been using in times of prosperity.

Communism, Winrod claimed, equaled Evolutionism. Every leader in the Soviet Union was an evolutionist-atheist. "Russia," he reiterated, "is in a state of moral collapse because of the animalistic consciousness produced by Evolution."<sup>33</sup> Their economic actions were only a manifestation of their moral collapse, which, of course, had Satanic origins.<sup>34</sup>

More importantly, the solution for these economically caused problems was spiritual. While others proposed redistribution of the wealth or monetary reform, Winrod

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<sup>32</sup>The Red Horse, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup>The Red Horse, p. 13.

<sup>34</sup>The Red Horse, pp. 12-13.

offered revival.<sup>35</sup> Although the Bible predicted that things would get worse in these, the end times, Winrod declared that he wanted to save as many souls as possible before the world's finale. Thus, he proclaimed

A great revival of supernatural religion, an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to build up moral standards, to put the Bible back in its rightful place, to put restraint on the national conscience, to put the fear of God into human hearts--is the supreme need of the hour.<sup>36</sup>

The way to cure Communism, and thus the Depression, was a change in the national soul, not the national economy.

When Winrod put forth this particular call to revival in 1932, he still referred to the plotters as Russian atheist-Communists who worked through dupes such as the modernist preachers. Their designs on America were the natural outgrowth of modernism and evolution unchecked. In early 1933, however, Winrod revealed a new level of intrigue--the plans of an international cohort of Jews. Having read a recent translation of the anti-Semitic forgery, The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion,

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<sup>35</sup>Proposals for fixing the American economy came from all corners in the 1930s. Perhaps the two most strident advocates of radical alterations were Louisiana Sen. Huey Long and Detroit radio preacher Father Charles Coughlin. Long proposed a program to "Share Our Wealth," while Coughlin called for reform of the money system, including the remonetization of silver. See Alan Brinkley, Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression, (New York: Vintage Books, 1983).

<sup>36</sup>The Red Horse, p. 14.

Winrod decided that a group of apostate Jews were the real Communists who worked behind the scenes.

For the plot he described in the March 1933 Defender and in a booklet titled The Hidden Hand, Winrod has been accused of being a strong anti-Semite. On one level he surely was, yet his attitudes toward Jews were always ambivalent. In prefacing his arguments, he cautioned that he did not hate Jews as a people. In fact, they were a chosen group whose actions helped interpret Biblical prophecy. Consistently, Winrod maintained that he was talking only about a small group of apostate Jews. On the other hand, their special place in the divine plan had made them an egostictical people as a whole. Moreover, Jews as a nation possessed what America didn't--a "quickening of the national conscience." The Zionist Movement convinced Winrod that the Jews were on the move and about to return with renewed energy to Palestine. Peering through his prophetic looking-glass, Winrod saw the Jews large on the horizon.<sup>37</sup>

Whatever the case, while the rank and file of Jews knew little or nothing about it, a small group of Jewish leaders had been promulgating a massive attack on the

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<sup>37</sup>The Hidden Hand, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1933), pp. 7-9; The NRA in Prophecy and a Discussion of Beast Worship, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1933), p. 26; Keystone of Christianity, p. 90.



world. With the help of the Protocols and Biblical prophecy, Winrod had discovered "the inner workings of what appears to be the the most mysterious, gigantic and diabolical plot ever perpetrated against an unsuspecting world."<sup>38</sup> He elaborated:

The present world-wide economic collapse, the breaking down of moral standards, the ever increasing corruption in politics, the disrespect for law and order, the growing selfishness and suspicion existing between nations, the general disregard for God, the birth and development of Communism and the atheizing of masses of people, may all be explained by the hypothetical proposition that behind the scenes there is A HIDDEN HAND; a small group of super-intelligent personalities who control the gold of the world and pull the wires for the deliberate purpose of tearing down the Gentile peoples.<sup>39</sup>

Having thus summarized the threat, Winrod expanded on the details by lining up quotations from the Protocols with current events. In the political realm, the Elders promoted Liberalism, with the intention of destroying faith in the government and promoting unlawfulness and disorder. Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 election, Winrod claimed, showed how Liberalism had grabbed hold of American politics. Knowing the devastating effects of a moral collapse, the Jewish conspirators had tempted American with sexual vice, polluted amusements, filthy literature, and free-flowing liquor. By manipulating the

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<sup>38</sup>The Hidden Hand, pp. 13, 10. Quotation on p. 10.

<sup>39</sup>The Hidden Hand, p. 10.

world's supply of gold, the Elders brought on the Depression, said the revised Winrod economics. Suddenly, the Communists had all become Jews. As a matter of fact, Communism, which simply put meant internal strife and revolution had existed for centuries, and could be readily seen in the Protocols. Finally, the Jews were preparing the way for the Anti-Christ and the final tribulation.<sup>40</sup>

That Winrod could so easily adopt a new set of plotters is not surprising. It was, of course, the same play; only the actors had changed. The Elders, like the Bolshevists before them, were the earthly agents of a great supernatural drama which Winrod believed had been going on since the beginning of time. Satan, he reminded, worked his spiritual machinations through personalities in the physical world. The abstract evil of Satan became concrete in the minds of his small body of henchmen. Apostate Jews and Bolshevists were of the same cohort group in Winrod's sociology of evil.<sup>41</sup>

By the late 1930s, Winrod again recast the drama. Jews were out; Illuminists were in. During the 1938 campaign, Winrod claimed that this new alliance had unleashed a revolution on the world, especially in America. "Powerfully organized destructive forces, the

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<sup>40</sup>The Hidden Hand, pp. 17-27.

<sup>41</sup>The Hidden Hand, p. 11.

likes of which civilization has never faced before, have been released during the last decade," Winrod reported. "A study of the map of the world must impress one with the fact that the earth is turning red. Alien ideas of government are being transplanted on American soil."<sup>42</sup> The kindlers of these "subterranean fires" presented a formidable enemy. Because they were of the spirit world, the plotters had special powers, including the ability to see the future.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the currents of this conspiracy ran deep in the stream of history. Winrod now felt sure that Communism was the twentieth-century manifestation of the age-old plot of Satan against God. As a matter of fact, he found that "it existed, back in the Old Testament times as a conspiracy against the plan and purposes of God." A rather strained exegesis of Ezekiel 38 followed to demonstrate the point.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the reference to Gog from the land of Magog, sounded a lot like Russia to Winrod. The Scofield Reference Bible proved the fact that Gog also denoted the color red. Not surprising, he confirmed. "It

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<sup>42</sup>Talks on Sound Government, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1938), p. 11.

<sup>43</sup>Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1946), p. 67.

<sup>44</sup>Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, p. 27.

is significant that Communists of our day are called 'reds.'"45

This Biblical scavenger hunt was only part of greater analysis. Old Testament exegesis supplied further bracing to Winrod's overall theory of revolution, into which the current Illuminist-Communist conspiracy fit neatly. In analyzing the crisis at hand, Winrod repeated his belief that:

...revolutions do not just happen. Political disorders and economic convulsions always result from deliberate planning. Under the surface, unknown people, secret schemes are hatched out against law, order and religion.

Subversive forces are set in motion behind the scenes. Good people are taken off their guard. ...Revolutions are always precipitated by powerfully organized and powerfully financed minorities.<sup>46</sup>

The real sources of revolution were not social forces; revolution was a Satan-directed plot of evil men against the civilized world.

In 1938 and 1939, Winrod claimed he had clearly identified the culprits. He now linked all revolution in modern Western history to one set of conspirators--the

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<sup>45</sup>Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, p. 28.

<sup>46</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1939), p. 31. These addresses were broadcast from radio station XERA across the Mexican border from Del Rio, Texas, in April and May of 1939. See an almost identical passage in Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, p. 35.

Illuminists. Born on May 1, 1776, Illuminists helped spread revolution throughout eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe and gave birth to the modern Communist movement, he believed.<sup>47</sup> However, this dark historical movement was incubated by a greater force than the men in it. "Satan is the mastermind behind Illuminism," Winrod revealed. The master demon had been working his twisted plot for hundreds of years. "Centuries were required for the forces of the Illuminists, motivated by Satan, to generate the subterranean flame that would eventually produce a world-wide holocaust."<sup>48</sup> Led by Adam Weishaupt, a man Winrod called a "human devil," these plotters planned to overthrow all that was dear to Winrod. He enumerated the destruction: the abolition of all orderly government, of inheritance, of private property, of patriotism, of family, and of religion. These six basic principles, the same as those of Communism, created a threat to the existence the West, Winrod decided. No doubt the plotters could accomplish these aims, he claimed, pointing to the bloodletting in the French and Russian revolutions.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, pp. 31-32. See also, Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, p. 37.

<sup>48</sup>Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, p. 44.

<sup>49</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, 57, 60; Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, p. 32.

These destructive forces were at work sapping the power of America. Clearly, Winrod thought, the methods of Weishaupt and the Illuminists paralleled those of present-day Communists and fellow-travelers. Modern day plotters spewed propaganda through hidden control of the press and the international banking system. To Winrod, the prophetic seer of the invisible, the threat was obvious. "Only gullible and uninformed persons doubt that an American Illuminati is now operating in the United States, fermenting hatreds toward the Church and orderly government," he concluded.<sup>50</sup>

This kind of challenge required dire action. Here, for the first time since his fight against evolution, Winrod hinted that direct action might be justified. Shortly after the 1938 campaign, he lectured, "The way to save America from every alien ism, the way to preserve Constitutional Democracy in this part of the world, is to cut the tap root of all un-American activity--and that tap root is the menace of international atheistic Communistic propaganda."<sup>51</sup> Eight years later, having undergone a sedition trial for his efforts, Winrod felt the crisis to be even deeper, but he retreated to the usual solution.

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<sup>50</sup>Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, p. 63.

<sup>51</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, p. 35.

With dire seriousness, he described the cause and the cure:

The United States is facing its supreme test. The success or failure of the nation is resisting the forces of destruction will be determined by the strength or weakness of the Cause of Christ in this part of the world. The Christian Gospel faithfully proclaimed will build national character and strengthen the soul muscle for triumph over these powers of darkness.<sup>52</sup>

Winrod's ravings against Communists, Jews, and Illuminists were clearly the most virulent of his career. Still, even here he followed the same basic principles he had applied to evolution, modernism and moral reform in the 1920s. Communism, the Hidden Hand, and Illuminist machinations were really the same. Instead of erupting from social force, revolution stemmed from the actions of Satan in the supernatural world. Marx, the Elders, and Weishaupt were only the most obvious manifestations. Reality lay in the force which controlled and guided their minds.

The answer to the challenge lay in the moral action of regenerate Christians and Americans. Christians must arise and rebuild the national character. In effect, the nation as a whole must undergo a quickening of its spirit, just as Zionist Jews had done. With fortified soul

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<sup>52</sup>Communism in Prophecy, History, and America, p. 86.

muscles, Americans could resist the evil perpetrated by the demonic forces.

However, Winrod's hope for a cure was outdated. When he called for a spiritual revival of America, he stood in line with the moral reformers of the nineteenth century, who operated within the Protestant consensus.<sup>53</sup> Hope lay in the alteration of the individual. If only Americans would come back to God, back to the power of the Holy Spirit, back to the order the spirit could impart, back to the power of the higher life, they could withstand any evil and preserve traditional institutions and values.

The answer lay in a change of the soul, not a change of the system. People who tried to tinker with American values were suspect. Thus, Winrod hated the New Deal and branded Franklin Delano Roosevelt a Communist sympathizer. Consequently, as Roosevelt and the country moved toward World War II, Winrod violently opposed involvement. Against these two threats, which he associated with the larger Communist-Jewish-Illuminist conspiracy, the answer again lay in revival of a particular type of Christianity and a set of values born in an America which now existed only in memory.

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<sup>53</sup>On the difficulty of revival in after 1930, see Robert T. Handy, A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 180.



That Roosevelt was soft on Communism was bad enough for Winrod. But the Brain Trust, with its Jewish members, he could not brook. However, it was not primarily their Jewish connections which made these men suspect. Rather, the Brain Trust's members had "demonstrated their inability to respect and adjust to the great standards which were staked out by those rugged Christian builders of the Americanism that has made our democratic system of government a blessing to untold millions, and a beacon of light to the world," Winrod wrote in 1933.<sup>54</sup> The reason Jewish members committed this transgression stemmed more from their history and religion than from any racial trait; these men "could hardly be expected to share sympathetically, the Christian point of view, of the founder and perpetuators of our government and institutions."<sup>55</sup> This group of un-Americans, Winrod charged, were out to destroy the holy writ of the American government. "The truth is, a revolution in American government is being staged, with little or no regard for our fundamental document, the Constitution," he posited.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Roosevelt and the Brain Trust, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1933), p. 9.

<sup>55</sup>Roosevelt and the Brain Trust, p. 13.

<sup>56</sup>Roosevelt and the Brain Trust, p. 11.

Later, he was still convinced that the Roosevelt administration was attacking the fundamental foundations of America. Invisible forces in Washington controlled the government, he told prospective voters in 1938. The New Deal had brought a stream of purportedly required legislation which had become law only through "violation of ordinary constitutional processes."<sup>57</sup> Despising expanding federal "instruments of power," Winrod insisted that "if the new deal plan is allowed to run its course without interruption we will be carried into a system of regimentation in which the citizen will become the property of the state."<sup>58</sup>

New Deal intervention presented a threat to Winrod's highly individualistic religion and patriotism. While he may have led a mass movement, his criticism of the New Deal indicates that this movement intended to preserve individualism against the growing power of the state. Such a goal sprung naturally from his theology, his view of the church, and his concept of the ideal citizen. Winrod's theology envisioned a God who, while completely transcendent, eradicated evil in the individual soul through the work of his agent, the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the Church comprised these individual regenerate Christians in

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<sup>57</sup>Talks on Sound Government, p. 41.

<sup>58</sup>Talks on Sound Government, p. 58.

an invisible body not necessarily coterminous with the temporal institution. True citizens, in addition, were those regenerate persons who followed the guides of conscience to form a Christian republic. The idea that the state could regulate such a republic crossed the current of individualism in Winrod's thinking. Moreover, it seemed ludicrous to Winrod to try to reform institutions. What was needed was a reconstruction of the national character.

Thus, as early as 1933, Winrod called for the removal of Roosevelt and the Brain Trust. Claiming no party affiliation at this point, he declared that Roosevelt should be impeached. That done, the country should find a great Christian statesman possessing the qualities which Woodrow Wilson took to the White House after his first election.<sup>59</sup>

Kicking out Roosevelt, however, was only a stop-gap solution. What the country really needed was help with its soul. Winrod prescribed:

Beneath every structure of good government there is an iron base of morality. A nation's cohesive quality is to be found in its spirituality. The greater values of life and government are spiritual. There is an imperative for moral regeneration. America's sickness is first spiritual, then physical. If we are wise we will seek spiritual readjustment.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Roosevelt and the Brain Trust, p. 8, 21-22.

<sup>60</sup>Roosevelt and the Brain Trust, p. 24. Emphasis in original.

The spiritual chiropractors who would perform this healing would be Christians. In 1933, "the Christian element of our citizenry must be stirred out of its lethargy" and sally forth in "organized concerted Christian action." The weapons in this holy war, however, should not be profane. Winrod exhorted Christian Americans to effect the spiritual revival by "bombarding God with the old fashioned weapon, called prayer."<sup>61</sup> The rottenness of America could be purged, Winrod predicted, by the faithful application of the salt of the Gospel. Christians needed to throw off the compromise of modernism and become energized with a new enthusiasm and fervor for the Gospel. By following the great tradition of the Wesleyan revival of England, Christian Americans could still save the nation. "The time has come when America must be visited by a great, spiritual awakening, or our doom is sealed!" Winrod exclaimed. Letters of protest might help, "but above all, pray that the slumbering conscience of our nation shall quickly be awakened."<sup>62</sup>

The way to rid the country of the menace of the Brain Trust and its New Deal legislation was revival. It involved fixing a political problem with moral rehabilita-

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<sup>61</sup>Roosevelt and the Brain Trust, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup>Roosevelt and the Brain Trust, pp. 5-6, 24-25. Quotations on p. 6. Emphasis in original.

tion. By the same token, as World War II approached, the patriot Winrod advocated non-involvement because of the moral unpreparedness of America.

Like all other evil, Winrod believed that the coming of world war stemmed from action behind the scenes. As they had done before World War I, the press was whipping up anti-German and anti-Japanese sentiment, he charged. However, common sense and American history dictated that the United States stay out of foreign disputes. The common people, Winrod believed, did not want war, and he advised them to use their right of petition to lobby for non-involvement. Moreover, the pronouncements of Thomas Jefferson indicated isolation in foreign policy. Hence, Winrod repeated constantly in the closing years of the 1930s that neutrality was a necessity.<sup>63</sup>

Why did Winrod, the lover of America, oppose the coming of the good war? At times, sounding almost like a pacifist, he told listeners that "war never pays." The destruction of World War I and the fury of modern weaponry made war unbelievably destructive.<sup>64</sup> However, it is unlikely that Winrod abhorred war as an absolute wrong.

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<sup>63</sup>The Present International Crisis, (Wichita: Defender Publishers, 1939), pp. 7, 14, 22; Radio Speeches on War and Peace, 9-18, 29, 44.

<sup>64</sup>Talks on Sound Government, p. 25; Radio Speeches on War and Peace, p. 24.

Rather, he worried about what it could do to the nation and its citizens if they went into it unprepared. He was certain that if the United States went to war the Constitution would be abolished and the country would find itself under a dictatorship. In fact, the chaos of war might bring a "demigod" to power. Furthermore, the country was still deep in debt and economically unprepared for armed conflict.<sup>65</sup>

In short, Winrod believed not in any absolute anti-war dictum. The country simply was not ready. He listed the reasons:

With our enormous public debt, with our crushing tax burden, with the rapid growth of class hatreds, with the undermining of alien isms, with the loss of moral and spiritual vitality, with the demoralization of patriotic sentiments, with the surrender of American nationalism to internationalism--our institutions, in which we enjoy our liberties, are simply not prepared to stand the strain of another war.<sup>66</sup>

Although he included the nation's economic woes, the basic problem was a weakened national conscience. Class conflict, un-American ideologies, loss of patriotism and nationalism, vanished spirituality--factors which were both symptom and cause--demonstrated the fragility of the American soul. Most important in the list, the absence of

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<sup>65</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, pp. 7, 21; Talks on Sound Government, p. 20.

<sup>66</sup>Radio Speeches on War and Peace, p. 8.

spirituality indicated a nation with a sick heart. No nation in such poor condition could expect anything better than disaster in war. Common sense dictated isolation.

America should stay out. Being uniquely favored by Providence and advantageously situated, the United States could afford to ignore the conflicts of the world, Winrod contended. Furthermore, Christian Americans believed in peace and did not want another war-torn world. What the country needed, of course, was not armed conflict but moral regeneration. In the face of growing international tension in 1939, Winrod pleaded:

More than war preparations and feverish propaganda, America needs to humble herself before God and return to the faith of the fathers. Every effort must be made to place our Country in line with the divine will through prayer and recognition of spiritual guidance.<sup>67</sup>

Here, more succinctly than anywhere else, Winrod synthesized his core ideas and applied them to a political problem. The nation must follow the infallible example of the Founding Fathers, and choose non-involvement. But, more importantly, Americans must come into contact with the supernatural plan of God. Though it remained unstated, this contact could only come to pass through regeneration. The regenerate Church should do its duty by leading the

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<sup>67</sup>The Present International Crisis, p. 55.

rest of the nation to God. So strengthened, America could resist any evil.

Winrod's criticism of political and social issues consistently applied the main tenets of his world view. Any given issue under scrutiny was measured against his ideas of the supernatural universe, his theology, demonology and view of the Church, his prophetic backdrop for history, and his love of a Christian America. At times, this process lay close to the surface and appeared clearly in his writing and speaking; at others, his presumptions lay hidden. Most analyses mixed the elements of his thinking, leaving only his conclusions for the audience. The inability of Winrod's contemporaries to look beyond his specific criticisms made him a very misunderstood figure. He and they spoke in different languages.



## CONCLUSION

Winrod's belief system drew on Baconian science, a theology linked to the nineteenth-century holiness movement, and the belief in that America was founded on a specific variant of Christianity. In addition, he used dispensationalism to make sense of world events. Analyzing American society with these assumptions, he found it troubled and proposed spiritual revival as a cure.

Following the common fundamentalist position, Winrod's view of science comprised a theory grounded in established facts which operated in orderly relationships. However, Winrod also employed this framework to describe a spiritual universe which followed preordained rules and interacted directly with the visible world of nature. Causes originating in the spiritual world became manifest in the temporal realm. Hence, reality lay in the world of spirits.

This cosmology stemmed from Winrod's theology of the higher life. In forming these beliefs, he combined ideas from John Wesley as well as from the Keswick movement. From the Keswick teachers, he took the term "Christ within," that the In-Christed being was protected from the tribulations of sin. More of Winrod's holiness theology, however, came from Wesley. He directly borrowed

Wesley's definition of sin--a willfull transgression against divine law. More importantly, he adapted Wesley's cure for the sinful being--Christian perfection. Although he sometimes utilized the terminology of the Keswick teachers, Winrod believed in total sanctification, something they rejected. With Wesley, he held that regeneration created a completely new being, who achieved absolute perfection and communion with God through the Holy Spirit.

In their daily lives, Winrod believed, these new men and women constituted a different race, which in totality comprised the Church. Able to see more clearly the workings of the spirit world, it was their duty to watch for the plottings of Satan and expose them to the unregenerate society.

To reach this end, Christians had been given the gift of Biblical prophecy, Winrod taught. Within a loose dispensational framework, he interpreted events to unmask their real, spiritual causes. Throughout his career, the spiritual facts he discovered indicated to him that the end times were upon the Earth. If he had been like many premillennialists, he might have stopped there and waited for the Rapture. His belief in Christian America prevented that.

Like many other Americans, Winrod remained convinced that the United States rested on Christian foundations. The nation, he claimed, had been favored by God from the beginning and had a special role in the millennial kingdom to come. Furthermore, its founders and values had been Christian, a fact which provided the nation's strength.

What Winrod meant by Christian values was the restraint of internalized controls which could hold a democracy together. As such, he was in line with Timothy Dwight and others who stressed virtue in a republic. Christian morality underlay the nation, and this must be recaptured to re-energize America.

On one level, Winrod wanted a return to what he believed to be the Protestant consensus of the nineteenth century. However, he subscribed to a more specific vision of internal control than generalized morality. For Winrod, Christian perfection, a change of heart, supplied the controls necessary for the maintenance of social order.

During his career as an evangelist and sometime political activist, Winrod applied this set of beliefs to contemporary issues. Concluding that America's ills resulted from a moral decline, he consistently proposed the same solution--spiritual readjustment. Everything from the evils of drink to the economic ills of the Depression could be solved thereby.

Reviving Christian America brought together the assumptions of Winrod's world view. All social problems stemmed from the unseen actions of Satan and his associates, a truth Christians could determine if they looked at the world through a prophetic lens. The way to resist any evil and solve its temporal manifestations was individual spiritual readjustment which would bring the nation back to its Christian roots.

Readjustment required a cleansing of the human heart. Since the inability to withstand evil stemmed from the fallen condition of humanity, Winrod believed eradicating the effects of the Fall would cut immorality at its source. A nation of regenerate citizens would thus experience a "quickenning of the national conscience" and be able to resist Satanic plots.

In the broader sense, Winrod's world view embraced the individualism of nineteenth-century America, rejecting the coming of an increasingly pluralistic society. In his version of Christianity, salvation and church membership were both solitary acts. Similarly, national regeneration occurred first in the hearts of its individual members. Taken together these altered citizens made a regenerate nation much like the invisible Church.

These conclusions about Winrod's belief system imply two broader issues about him and those like him. First,

did these beliefs mean that Winrod and his followers had pathological tendencies? Hardly. Winrod operated under a set of assumptions rooted deep in American history, applying them quite rationally to American society. His conclusions, however, conflicted with the preconceptions of twentieth-century America. Given pluralism, the new science, social science and psychology, and liberal politics, historians could label persons like Winrod as "paranoid." Within their definitions, he was. However, the sources of his thought and his consistency indicate he was not clinically ill. If he was mentally unbalanced, so were a majority of Americans.

Second, as some charged during 1938 election, was Winrod a fascist, or something like one? Again, no. Although he disliked Jews, his absolute faith in the Constitution prevented him from action against them. In reality, Winrod advocated as little government as possible. He quickly abandoned a legislative solution for evolution, and his platform in 1938 proposed more government inaction and repeal than state intervention. Like Huey Long, he would use the state as a vehicle to restore his version of individualism. Even this was a last resort. His desired solution, of course, was an adjustment of the national conscience not an alteration of the national code.

Thus, in the end, Winrod was only partially connected to the new religious right of the 1980s. Although he preached Christianity and its crucial function in a Christian America, he believed in a voluntary approach. Unlike modern fundamentalists who accept state control, Winrod had little desire to enact morality. Rather, he wanted desperately for Americans to return to what he thought they once were--regenerate Christians, living lives guided by the inner light of conscience. Unfortunately for him and others like him, the new order of twentieth-century America rendered this dream impossible for him and his generation.

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REVIVING CHRISTIAN AMERICA:  
THE THOUGHT OF GERALD B. WINROD

by

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B.A., Bethel College, 1983

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1987

The rise of the new religious right in the United States has again brought attention to its apparent progenitors--politically involved fundamentalists of the 1920s. Often, these figures have come in for sharp criticism, much of it deserved. However, many of these evaluations, couched in psychological terminology, have failed to account for the historical sources of their thought.

This study seeks to find historical roots for the world view of one such leader of early twentieth-century fundamentalism, Wichita evangelist and publisher Gerald B. Winrod. As a thesis, the opening section posits that his thought combined assumptions taken from Baconian science; elements of the holiness theology associated with John Wesley; dispensational premillennialism, a method for interpreting Biblical prophecy; and the concept of a Christian America.

To provide a context, chapter 2 briefly addresses the idea of Christian America as it has developed since colonial times, and discusses the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early twentieth-century, paying attention to historiography and definitions. Background on the American holiness movement and dispensationalism are included where they relate to fundamentalism. Chapter 3 provides further introduction through a short biography of Winrod.

Chapters 4 and 5 comprise the heart of this work. The former section details the elements of Winrod's thought as set forth in the thesis. It discusses: 1) his views on science, emphasizing his rejection of theoretical science in favor of hard facts, and his core belief in the spiritual nature of the universe; 2) his theology, including his concepts of God, regeneration, Christian perfection, prayer, the Church and "demonology;" 3) his use of dispensationalism; and 4) his belief in Christian America and his plan to revive it from its recent decline. Overall, it finds Winrod's thought dependent on internal controls of conscience for both individuals and nations. Chapter 5 traces Winrod's application of this world view to contemporary problems, including evolution, theological modernism, moral reform, Communism stemming from various sources, the New Deal and World War II. This chapter concludes that while Winrod at times proposed legislation to restore Christian America, his ultimate cure always involved the spiritual revival of its citizens.

The final section summarizes these basic ideas and their broader implications. It again stresses his belief in individual control, internal regeneration and perfection. It reiterates that his commentary on society and his cures for its ills stemmed from these and other parts of his world view. Finally, the conclusion briefly disputes

charges that Winrod was insane or was a fascist. Rather, it finds him holding to a set of beliefs no longer functional in twentieth-century America.