The Roots of the Religious Cold War: Pre-Cold War Factors

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Abstract: The article is an examination of the roots of the amalgam of complex forces that informed the 'religious cold war'. It looks at the near and the more distant past. Naturally this includes consideration of the interwar years and those of the Second World War. It also means addressing divisions in Christianity that can be traced back to the end of the third century, to the official split of 1054 between Catholic and Orthodox, the impact of the Crusades and the entrenched hostility that followed the fifty-seven years imposition on Constantinople of a Latin Patriarch. It surveys the rise of significant forces that were to contribute to, as well as consolidate and strengthen, the religious cold war: civil religion, Christian fundamentalism and the Religious Right. The article examines both western and eastern mobilization of national religious resources for political purposes.

Keywords: religious cold war; Christendom; communism; East-West divide; civil religion; Christian fundamentalism; American foreign policy; the Vatican; ecumenical movement

1. Introduction

'Wherever there is theological talk, it is always implicitly or explicitly political talk also'.
Karl Barth, 1939. (Busch 1994, p. 292).

The major Cold War belligerents all had histories marked by the intricate interplay between religion and politics. The 21st century witnessed the emergence of a scholarly consensus that there was a religious dimension to the Cold War and that it was a multi-faceted, multi-faith global phenomenon (Kirby 2003, 2013, pp. 491–530; 2017; Muehlenbeck 2012). The 'religious cold war' was more than a by-product of the Cold War era, it was an amalgam of complex forces with roots reaching into the near and the more distant past. Cold War history remains bitterly contested, even with access to previously inaccessible archives. There is, however, scholarly agreement that the Soviet threat was exaggerated. Absolutist Christian anti-communism claimed communism was godless and hence evil. It was a claim that helped provide justification for shifting the Soviet Union from wartime ally to postwar enemy. It was also critical to western propaganda's depiction of the Soviet regime as inherently hostile to the values of western civilization and Christianity and to be bent on their destruction and eventual world domination (Kirby 2014).

Generalizing about Christians at all, never mind during the contentious Cold War era, is difficult and dangerous as churches contain members and leaders of all political persuasions. Christianity is a diverse and complex world religion with a wide variety of churches, some of which see others as rivals for the faithful or holding erroneous beliefs. A further complication derives from the way in which for many love of Church and nation are inextricably linked, a consequential combination. It is impossible to understand relations between the different branches of Christendom without an appreciation of their myriad histories and the political context and dynamic forces, national and international, to which they were subjected. Also important were relations between and within churches, because these were to be significantly impacted by the religious cold war.

Oppositional and inflammatory rhetoric deploying religious tropes have long been a feature of geopolitical crises, with wartime propaganda and the language of Empire permeated by a Manichean discourse that de-humanized and 'de-civilized' the 'enemy'. As more scholars address the centrality of religion in American civilizational discourse and foreign relations, the pre-twentieth century global aspirations of the United States become increasingly apparent (Preston 2012). Christian churches, movements and missionaries were implicated in such processes.[1] Religious faith was an 'essential ingredient in the formation of American internationalism' (Walls 1991, pp. 147–72). A great deal is already written about Christian missionaries and how they were at the forefront of American internationalism, particularly after the First World War. They were forerunners for America's informal model of imperialism that sought to re-make the world in its own image and preferred indirect control through corporate-economic, military and cultural ties rather than territorial acquisition and direct rule.[2]

Christian antipathy toward communism long predated the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. Christian indictments of communism, along with other political doctrines with roots in the Enlightenment, emerged in part as a counter to the problem of secularization and the challenge of modernization. Certainly, churches were touched by Enlightenment thinking in other ways and experienced movements for internal reform (Guilhot 2017). The ecumenical movement, whose roots reside in the late 19th century, had wide ranging concerns, of which Marxism was but one (Lehtonen 1998, pp. 9–20). The insidious appeal of socialism to the lower orders most concerned Leo XIII. In 1878, he warned against what he called a 'deadly plague that is creeping into the very fibers of human society and leading it on to the verge of destruction'.[3]

2. Catholicism and Communism

There have been suggestions that the Vatican was the fore-runner to the Cold War, making the shift between the obsessively anti-Soviet papacy of Pius XII to the changes initiated by John XXIII via the Second Vatican Council profoundly significant. Understanding the Vatican move from anti-Communism to Ostpolitick to a wide variety of political and socio-ethical concerns requires a grasp of the historical politico-religious calculations that influenced the Catholic church's behavior in the political and spiritual arenas.[4] Following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution the Vatican signaled its willingness to agree a concordat (Becker 2006). Indeed, the Bolshevik separation of Church and State was welcomed by the Roman Curia. This blow to Russian Orthodoxy revived Vatican aspirations to convert Russia to Roman Catholicism.[5] The 1922 Conference of Genoa witnessed the Bolshevik Foreign Minister, Georgy Chicherin and the pope's representative, the Archbishop of Genoa, toasting one another in public (Manhattan 1965). The pope also made a global appeal for famine relief for Soviet Russia and sent a mission of his own (Stehle 1981, pp. 27–44).

Yet, it should be noted, it was Evangelical Christians that most benefitted from Bolshevik religious policies, increasing their adherents from about 100,000 to over a million in the first decade of Soviet rule (Steeves 1989, pp. 85–86). Throughout the 1920s there was a tacit alliance between Protestants and Bolsheviks wherein important Soviet officials viewed with favor Protestant energy and sobriety. Notably, 'In turn, many Baptists and Evangelical Christians (the two largest groups of 'sectarians') presented themselves as partners in the building of socialism' (Foglesong 1997, p. 67). All changed by the 1930s with Stalin's vicious attacks on religion. No longer was the Bolshevik revolution part of God's plan for global evangelization, it was now depicted as a satanic conspiracy: 'Pentecostals and other fundamentalist Christians now firmly identified Russia as the locus of evil in

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[1] There is a vast literature on missionaries and the European Empires. American churches also had large networks of missionaries that facilitated American commerce, including in vital parts of the Middle East. (Makdis 2008).

[2] For a detailed analysis of this trait as it relates to Russia, see (Foglesong 2007).

[3] Leo XIII, *Quod Apostolici Muneris,* 28 December 1878.

[4] See (Casarella 2015).

[5] American Protestant missionaries also had visions of converting Russia; (Foglesong 1997).

their apocalyptic visions of the future Armageddon'.[6] It was a worldview that would become consequential during the Cold War as conservative evangelicalism prospered and reinforced Vatican depictions of an evil regime.

Talks between the Vatican and Moscow about the position of the Catholic Church in the Soviet Union and the possibility of diplomatic relations took place in Berlin in early 1924. Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pius XII, was the Vatican negotiator. The papal relief mission was withdrawn in August 1924 as the talks ended in failure (Dunn 2004, pp. 84–85). However, it was not until the ascendancy of Stalin and the abandoning of any prospects for improving the position of Catholicism, that Pius XI, on 8 February 1930, protested the 'horrible and sacrilegious outrages' and called for a day of prayer. The Vatican was, significantly, moved to further action in 1933 when America accorded diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union.

Following his election to the presidency of the only major power withholding diplomatic recognition from the Soviet regime, Franklin Roosevelt sought to establish diplomatic relations for a mix of strategic and commercial reasons. He confronted opposition over the issue of religious liberty. With a shrewd understanding of the nexus between politics and religion, Roosevelt persuaded Moscow to grant certain religious and legal rights for US citizens living in the Soviet Union.[7] Following Roosevelt's personal exchange of letters in November 1933 with Maxim Litvinov, then the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, the Soviets undertook to maintain appropriate religious institutions.[8] Albeit a symbolic rather than a substantive achievement, as an example of how to build consensus around polices relating to the Soviet regime, it was to prove an important precursor. Moreover, the inclusion of religion as a bargaining tool in the diplomatic arena was an important lesson for Stalin, who had already revealed a degree of sensitivity about how Soviet treatment of religion alienated world public opinion.[9] The 1934 Comintern Congress accepted the policy of popular front governments and collaboration with Christians 'of revolutionary temper'. The 1936 Soviet Constitution theoretically allowed full civil rights of citizenship for priests and freedom for the conduct of religious cults.[10]

Given that religious liberty had been linked to US foreign policy from the early days of the Republic, Roosevelt's recognition of a regime it had indicted as sacrilegious alarmed the Vatican.[11] Following strenuous American Catholic protests during 1933, in 1934 a direction came from Rome via Father Ledochowski, the father general of the Society of Jesus, calling American Jesuits to concerted action against communism in America. It signaled the beginning of a massive, organized anti-communist campaign, with Father Edmund Walsh of Georgetown University swiftly implementing a fourteen-point program.[12] Although at the time it failed to mobilize support beyond the Catholic community, it would later reach its apotheosis in the McCarthy era (Frank 1992, pp. 39–56). McCarthyism reflected the hallmarks of Catholic anti-communism and reflected the way in which the Christian struggle against secularization, the *bête noir* of the church in the nineteenth century, became merged in the twentieth with that against communism.

In 1936 Cardinal Pacelli, then Vatican secretary of state, arrived in America carrying a warning that the greatest threat to the future and to America was the Soviet Union. Importantly given Harry Truman's subsequent attempts to bring the churches together in a united front against the Soviet Union, Pacelli proclaimed that a time would come when all the churches would need to combine to

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[6]   Ibid, p. 72.

[7]   *Foreign Relations of the United States*, (henceforth *FRUS): The Soviet Union, 1933–39*, 16 November 1933, 28–34.

[8]   Steinhardt to Secretary of State, 17 February 1941, *FRUS*, 1, 1942, 995.

[9]   The only foreign church functioning in Moscow on the eve of the war was a Catholic church, Saint Louis des Francais, presided over by an American citizen, Father Leopold Braun and attended by American embassy members and other diplomats. Steinhardt to Secretary of State, 17 February 1941, *FRUS*, 1, 1942, 996.

[10]   'The New Soviet Constitution and Religion', 4 April 1938, 10; Lambeth Palace Library (henceforth LPL), Papers of the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations, (henceforth CFR Papers), OC 191.

[11]   (Chen 2003, pp. 121–39). Previously recognition was granted to governments ostensibly in control of a country. Woodrow Wilson's refusal of recognition implied a new standard, the United States would determine the moral right to legitimacy. (Filene 1967, pp. 89–90).

[12]   (Frank 1992). See also (Gallagher 2018).

resist and defeat atheistic communism.[13] In 1937, with only four Catholic churches remaining in the Soviet Union, Pius XI, in his famous encyclical *Divini Redemptoris,* declared that Moscow's struggle 'was against Christian civilization' and credited the papacy with having called attention to its perils more frequently and effectively than any other public authority.[14] Nonetheless, the organized Catholic anti-communist drive made little headway in non-Roman America, rather challenging popular assumptions that 1930s American society was informed by what Michael Parenti called 'the anti-Communist impulse' (Parenti 1969; Frank 1992, pp. 39–56). In fact, as Robert L. Frank has pointed out, the published literature on American anti-Communism provides meagre evidence of any such impulse between the post–Great War 1919–1920 Red Scare and post–Second World War McCarthyism (Lens 1964, p. 17). Certainly, Roosevelt dismissed the notion of a Communist America.

With the outbreak of war, Roosevelt looked for papal support, conscious of the Vatican's legitimizing and indeed mobilizing, potential with Catholics at home and abroad (Flynn 1976). Following waves of immigration, by the 1930s Catholics constituted over 20 percent of the American population. The defeat of Al Smith in the 1928 election reminded Catholics that they resided in an essentially Protestant nation. However, the power of the Catholic vote had been demonstrated by Roosevelt's 1932 victory. There were correspondingly warm relations between his administration and the Catholic Church.[15] Catholic leaders remained aware of lingering suspicion that their Church was a Trojan horse instructed by the Vatican to create a Catholic state. In 1919, the first Catholic national organization, the NCWC (National Catholic War Council, subsequently National Catholic Welfare Conference), adopted 'For God and Country' as its motto. The Catholic hierarchy revealed a discernible preoccupation with demonstrating that Catholicism was not an obstacle to Americanism (Neuhaus 1987). Catholics viewed their church's 1930s anti-communist campaign as attacking the shared foe of democracy and Christianity, affirming from their perspective their faith and patriotism. The campaign was viewed differently by Protestants. The pages of the liberal and nondenominational *Christian Century* repeatedly warned Protestants against the 'Catholic Anti-Red Campaign'.[16] It was a sentiment that persisted into the early Cold War with telling repercussions for US-Vatican relations (Kirby 2012).

Truman saw a Cold War alliance with the Vatican as a strategic move that would morally justify containment and reinforce the claim that the Soviets were to blame for it (Kirby 1997). However, suspicious Protestant leaders considered it a breach of the Constitution and opposed 'any kind of diplomatic relationship that seems to unite Protestantism with Catholicism in a common war against Russia' (Kirby 2001). The same sentiments influenced European Protestant thinking. Cyril Garbett, archbishop of York and Britain's leading ecclesiastical Cold War warrior, despite being virulently anti-communist still railed against a US-Vatican 'Holy War'. As late as June 1948 he was to be found warning against 'using political and spiritual weapons indiscriminately', expressing concern that such a strategy would create 'a breach with millions of Orthodox and other Christians'. He also thought, correctly, that such would prejudice 'their position with their Communist rulers', leading to a 'resumption of persecution on the ground that Christianity is a danger to the State'.[17]

Truman's efforts to mobilize religion for political purposes was part of a process that Jonathan Herzog has called 'the spiritual-industrial-complex', made up of politicians and statesmen, business

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[13] Meeting with Protestant Clergymen', 20 October 1947, Myron C. Taylor Papers, Harry Truman Library.

[14] Pius XI, *Divini Redemptoris*, 19 March 1937. Interestingly, the term 'terrorism' appeared seven times in *Divini Redemptoris*, solidifying the Catholic position that communism was interchangeable with terrorism, which remained the official teaching on communism until the 1960s. See (O'Shea 2011, p. 158).

[15] Whilst there is agreement that Cold War anti-Communism helped the acculturation of Roman Catholics into American society, the cessation of immigration and the disruption to the social order caused by the Depression, the New Deal, the Second World War and the post-war industrial revolution more than normalized the Catholic minority and removed the perception of them as immigrants and of Catholicism as an 'immigrant faith'. See (Woolner and Kurial 2003).

[16] "The Catholic Anti-Red Campaign," *Christian Century*, 30 September 1936, 1275; "Shall Protestants Accept the Pope's Invitation?" *Christian Century*, 25 November 1936, 1550–52; "Stay Out!" *Christian Century*, 9 December 1936, 1646–48.

[17] *The Guardian*, Church of England weekly newspaper, 4 June 1948, 274.

and media moguls, even military men and industrialists. A beneficiary of state sanction and commercial talent that 'worked to foment a religious revival that was conceived in boardrooms, rather than camp meetings, steered by Madison Avenue and Hollywood suits rather than travelling preachers and measured with statistical precision (Herzog 2011, p. 7). Significantly it adopted Catholicism's theological anti-Communist doctrine as outlined in *Divini Redemptoris,* giving rigor to, and complementing, the evangelical fervor historically a feature of American political movements. These, of course, had a tendency toward 'an ideological world view that explains everything in terms of conspiracy; that reduces complex issues to a struggle between good and evil and that exaggerates the evil to the point of paranoia; that prompts a self-righteousness on the part of the faithful; and that ultimately rests on a blind faith' (Brenner 1984, pp. 230–60). The combination of Catholic and Evangelical anti-radicalism during the Cold War was to have severe consequences for progressive forces and reform movements within the mainstream Christian community.

3. The historical East-West Divide

The Cold War perspective of Europe is a continent divided by an Iron Curtain. However, the division can be dated back to the end of the third century and the administrative decisions of the Roman Emperor Diocletian (284–305). Before it became a fault-line separating the Communist bloc from the 'Free World', it was a division that separated Catholic and following the Reformation Protestant, from Orthodox. Catholicism and Orthodoxy had been drifting apart for centuries before the official split of 1054 when the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople mutually excommunicated each other.[18] Doctrinal divisions and disagreements between the Catholic West and the Orthodox East did not, however, preclude cordial church relations up until the Crusades. The great adventure of the Crusades began as a shared initiative between East and West. It ended by sharpening what had been mutual antipathies into a hatred that quashed any hopes of reconciliation. Latin occupation of the Orthodox capital of Constantinople, which involved an orgy of pillage and destruction along with the imposition of a Latin Patriarch for fifty-seven years, entrenched hostility between the two branches of Christianity that remains still a vivid memory for the Orthodox (Binns 2002, pp. 201–31).

Tensions were further exacerbated by Roman Catholic missionary activity and the expansion of Roman Catholic states into Eastern Europe, where a corporate conversion strategy was deployed: the establishing of Church communities that preserved local liturgy and tradition but accepted the authority of Rome. The combining of Eastern tradition with Roman authority led to the formation of what have been called the Uniate Churches or Greek Catholic or Eastern Catholic Churches. The 1946 reunification of the Uniate Church in Western Ukraine fulfilled a long-cherished aim of the Russian Orthodox Church, the revocation of the 1596 Union of Brest. More importantly, it reflected Stalin's intent to make use of the Russian Church, which prior to the war he had taken to the brink of extinction, for domestic and foreign policy purposes. Western propaganda was to portray churches in the Soviet bloc as either tools of communism or victims of persecution. In fact, church-state relations varied tremendously throughout the Soviet sphere and did not fit neatly into either category. The importance accorded church-state relations by communist regimes, not to mention the state support they received, demonstrated that there would be no 'withering away' of religion according to the Marxist formula (Kirby 2009, pp. 203–30). It also highlighted Stalin's anxiety about Catholicism, regarded as an anti-Soviet religion. Reports on the Uniate Church, of which there were 1754 in Ukraine, and the Vatican were sent directly to Stalin, who was also concerned about the 347 Roman Catholic churches in Belorussia and the 246 in Lvov (Dickinson 2003, pp. 23–36).

The war drew to a close with Pius XII acting as the locus of ideological opposition toward the Soviets. In response, the chairman of the Council for Russian Orthodox Affairs, Georgii Karpov, set out a strategy for weakening the control of the Catholic Church in the liberated areas and reducing Vatican influence. Significantly, Karpov was influenced by his conviction that the history of the

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[18]   (Nichols 1992). The excommunication decrees were not withdrawn until 1965 by Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I.

Roman Catholic Church was a struggle to seize both religious and temporal power. To counter it he suggested that the Russian Orthodox Church call a World Council of Christian churches, 'In order to withstand the claims of the Vatican for pre-eminence in the world'. The plan was for invited church leaders to discuss a series of issues, including: 'the total groundlessness of the Catholic dogma that the Roman Pope is God's representative on Earth', 'the Vatican as a patron of Hitler during the war' and 'the attempts of the Vatican to interfere with the post-war structure of the world'. Karpov's strategic plan was informed by the hope that: 'The resolutions of the Conference shall be in the form of a grave protest of the whole Christian (non-Catholic) world against the activities and intentions of the Vatican, which would certainly play a positive role in isolating the Vatican and decreasing the prestige of the Pope' (Dickinson 2003, pp. 23–36). This ambitious plan reflected not only Soviet concern about internal stability owing to the large Catholic populations within the Soviet sphere of influence but also its perceptions that the Vatican was an obstacle to better relations with the rest of the world.

4. The Second World War

Anthony Eden recalled how, at the Tehran summit with Franklin Roosevelt and Josef Stalin in late November 1943, Churchill stated: I believe that God is on our side. At least I have done my best to make Him a faithful ally (Eden 1965, p. 427). Their efforts included effecting a Moscow-Rome modus-vivendi. During the war Britain and America appealed to the pope to speak out in support of the Allies. Stalin also made overtures to the Vatican in his apparent readiness to accommodate Christian concerns. The war had emphatically impressed upon him how authoritative cultural and religious systems of belief and practice were powerful determinants, especially when the nexus between religion and national identity remained strong. Talks between Vatican and Soviet officials took place throughout 1944. The Vatican was clearly wary of any deals. The Catholic Church stood to gain concessions to build its largely demolished base in Russia. However, the Vatican considered the Soviet Union would be the major beneficiary as the communist government's most vocal critic would be muted.[19]

That same year, still trying to convince the pope of the necessity of maintaining the wartime alliance to secure the post-war peace, the British ambassador to the Vatican, D'Arcy Osborne, bluntly told Pius XII that the Russian Orthodox Church would be the representative of Russian Christianity. Osborne declared that 'a distinction must be drawn between the rejection and the oppression of Christianity and of the Catholic Church'.[20] The distinction was rendered obsolete by the Cold War. Osborne reported to the Foreign Office that he had spoken quite bluntly to the pope and felt his point had been well taken. In fact, Pius XII felt Britain and the US alike were blind to the dangers not simply of the Soviet Union and communism but to the folly of the way in which the wartime alliance had legitimized the regime, particularly in the religious realm. Vatican fears were articulated in the British Roman Catholic newspaper the *Tablet* in 1943:

> We should do well to recognize that the radical changes which Russian Communist ideology has undergone and its transformation into a fiery national patriotism, have narrowed the gulf separating the messianic spirit of Communism from the messianic spirit of the Orthodox Church. The tradition of 'Holy Russia' with an inspired mission toward mankind is ancient and ingrained. Under the stress of some intense emotion such as that of the present moment the Orthodox conception of a messianic Russia might well merge with the Marxist conception of a messianic proletariat, effecting a fusion of ideas the consequences of which would be incalculable.[21]

Protestant leaders also had concerns about the post-war impact of the Soviet Union. In November 1944, important American, European and British ecumenical leaders came together to discuss the post-war crises they anticipated as they sought to renegotiate their claims to moral truth

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[19]　Kirby, 'From Bridge to Divide'.

[20]　Public Record Office (henceforth PRO), Osborne to Foreign Office, 25 September 1944; FO 371 44213.

[21]　*The Tablet*, 18 September 1943, 138.

and political authority.[22] Present was the Dutch theologian W.A. Visser 't Hooft, who from 1948 to 1966 was to serve as the first secretary general of the World Council of Churches, the institutional expression of the ecumenical movement. The question of 'Russia' was naturally on the agenda. In 1944 continued post-war co-operation remained official Allied policy and Visser 't Hooft drew an important distinction between '(1) the question of Communism and (2) the question of Russia as a nation and State'. He suggested Stalin's support for the communist party was not guaranteed, relating 'the well-known and true story of the French Minister to Russia who complained about the trouble caused by Communists in France, Mr. Stalin replied, "Why on earth don't you arrest them."' Visser 't Hooft was well aware of the dual fear of Soviet communism that presided in church circles: 'fear because it means dynamite in the social realm' and 'fear for the emergence of a powerful Russia as an imperialist nation'.[23]

There was some understanding within the churches of Soviet concerns and acknowledgment that the Soviet authorities had many reasons for a deep distrust of Christians outside Russia vis-à-vis internal plans for their country. Herbert Waddams, an Anglican clergyman who during the war worked for the Religions Division within the British Ministry of Information, conceded that, generally speaking, Christian opinion had been universally hostile ever since the revolution. He felt that Christian hostility was a key obstacle to better East-West relations. He suggested:

> The paramount consideration is that confidence should be established in the minds of the Soviet authorities that Christians outside Russia have no counter-revolutionary intentions of any kind. … The Soviet authorities must first be convinced that a spiritual alliance with worldwide Christianity is entirely to their advantage. When that conviction is established everything else will follow as a matter of course.[24]

The benefits of an alliance with Christianity were recognized as early as 1942 by George Kennan. The 'father of containment' thought it should be 'evident to anyone that a greater real tolerance of religious life in Soviet controlled territories would be in the interests of the Soviet Government itself, both now and in the future'. He considered such sentiment 'already present in the minds of the Soviet leaders and is finding expression in the reported present relaxation in their hostility toward religion'. Kennan felt that: 'understanding and cooperation in the religious field would present one of the best means of bridging the psychological gulf which two decades of Communist education and intellectual isolation have created between the present mature generation of Russia and the countries of the outside world'. Notably, like Waddams he believed that future cooperation and understanding:

> would be possible only if it could be proved to the Soviet leaders that religion need no longer constitute a challenge to their political authority. Of this they will not be easily convinced. They are extremely suspicious of all suggestions from foreign quarters and fearful—as Russian rulers have always been—of foreign influence of any sort on the Russian popular mind … the present rulers tend to feel that any foreign influence, religious or otherwise, challenges the security of their rule.

Nevertheless, Kennan was convinced that, 'If these preoccupations could be overcome and if the Kremlin could be induced to tolerate religion at home and to receive the proffered cooperation of western religious movements in the spirit of friendliness and confidence, I believe one of the greatest barriers to a sound future peace would have been removed'.[25]

Whether or not it was an insurmountable barrier, it was certainly a considerable one. Pius XII's obsessive fear of communism was but one example. He so feared communism that during the war he asked first the Germans and then the Americans for an increased presence in Rome to ensure the

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[22]   'Peace Aims Group', 7 November 1944, LPL, Papers of Bishop George Bell: vol. 26, pp. 234–43.
[23]   Ibid.
[24]   PRO, Waddams, 'Notes on the Question of Religion in Russia and its Bearing on Allied Propaganda', 25 June 1942; INF 1 790.
[25]   George Kennan to Taylor, writing from Lisbon 2 October 1942, 'Memorandum', PSF Diplomatic Box 52, Myron C. Taylor Papers, Franklin Roosevelt Library.

suppression of potential communist revolutionary activity between 1943 and 1947 (Phayer 2003, pp. 153–61). Christian fear of communism was a factor in Hitler's wartime calculations. In an important study, Arne Hassing shows how the rise of National Socialism cannot be understood without acknowledging its Manichean claim to be struggling against evil. The simple concept of good versus evil carries extraordinary power in Christian thinking. Fear of communism, routinely depicted as evil, was critical in the constellation of causes making the German Lutheran Church ill equipped to resist the Nazi state.

Hassing's study of the role of the churches in occupied Norway during the Second World War explains the advantageous position Christian leaders were placed in vis-à-vis the Nazi state when Josef Goebbels, head of the Ministry of Public Information and Propaganda, presented Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union, as a Christian crusade. Norwegian media, subjected to Nazi propaganda, emphasized the threat to Christianity and the church by a Soviet victory, meaning that Nazi officials were significantly constrained in implementing measures against the churches that could be construed as religious persecution, supposedly the preserve of Soviet Communism. Most Norwegian clergy held the conviction that Nazism was as incompatible with Christianity as was Communism. Nonetheless, wherever Norwegian Christians supported the Nazis a key factor was pre-war fear of Soviet Communism with its appalling religious record. Whilst the majority of Norwegian Christians opposed the Nazi state, those that supported it did so owing to its enmity toward Soviet communism.

Interestingly, Hassing's research provides critical insights into the importance churches attach to good relations with the state, whatever its nature. During the Second World War, the Nazis' primary target for the 'New Order' in church affairs in Norway was the state church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church to which 96.5 per cent of the Norwegian population belonged. The Norwegian Church's resistance to Nazism distinguished it from its German mother church, yet it remained willing to 'risk its entire moral and political capital for the sake of retaining state ties, even to a Nazi state' (Hassing 2014, p. xiii).

5. Hopes and Plans for a Christian Post-War Order

In the Great War, all the belligerents claimed to have God on their side and most of their respective churches behaved as if this was indeed the case, a damaging attitude they came to regret. This did not prevent secular leaders during the Second World War looking to their ecclesiastical counterparts for support. Transforming the war into a crusade was, however, a secular rather than a Christian preoccupation. Churchmen regretted their sanctification of the First World War and come the Second were reluctant to use the term crusade or to caricature the enemy. Versailles remained a bitter memory. Gerald L. Sittser's research presents a detailed and compelling portrait of American churchmen's 'cautious patriotism', a sentiment replicated in Britain (Sittser 1997; Kirby 2000).

British and American Churchmen were committed to an Allied victory but they remained convinced that a lasting and meaningful peace required a Christian foundation, as did democracy. Increased church attendance during the war meant Christian leaders anticipated post-war spiritual renewal. Sittser emphasizes the extent to which American churchmen saw the war as the church's hour and opportunity. His study revealed that: 'One word kept appearing over and over in the religious literature—"opportunity"' (Sittser 1997, p. 244). The sense of opportunity, of resurgent Christianity, was shared by churchmen everywhere. Albeit Protestant and Catholic church leaders alike aspired to be part of the new social and political order promised during the war, the Vatican's focus was on a post-war reconciliation of the Christian churches to counter the spread of communism, for which it sought western state support (Chadwick 1986; Graham 1959; Coppa 2003, pp. 50–66; Kent 2002).

Stalin and Roosevelt, supported by the British, attempted to make Christianity a bridge between their two nations that would help consolidate and continue their alliance into the post-war period.[26] Roosevelt's Vatican conduit, Myron C. Taylor, was heavily involved in American post-war studies

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[26]　Kirby, 'From Bridge to Divide'.

and part of his remit was to acquaint Vatican officials with American policies and thinking, including the importance of 'Russia' to America's post-war plans. Pius XII always made clear that he would never approve, or further, a peace that gave 'free reign to those who would undermine the foundations of Christianity and persecute Religion and the Church'.[27] Moreover, as the war had drawn to a close the Vatican was linked to defending and in some cases aiding, the escape of war criminals, often failing even to enquire as to the nature and extent of the atrocities committed by those they sought to protect (Lawson 2006; Phayer 2008). Whilst some Protestants were similarly implicated and most neither liked nor trusted Stalin, they disliked more the prospect of a Third World War. Most American church leaders felt that for the sake of an enduring peace, 'the United States had no choice but to cooperate with Russia' (Sittser 1997, p. 241).

Whilst Pius XII remained preoccupied with excluding the Soviet Union from the post-war order, other churchmen were more concerned to secure a place in it for the churches. Having witnessed the Great War, the depression and the emergence of the new totalitarian states, the outbreak of the Second World War generated a sense in the churches of western civilization in crisis (Robbins 1985, pp. 279–300). At the same time, the widespread conviction that a new social and political order should emerge from the Second World War provided conditions in which Christian leaders felt the churches could reassert their influence. One example was a manifesto by a group of European Catholics living in America that included Jacques Maritain, 'the outstanding Catholic philosopher of our time'. Published in August 1942, this claimed that the issue at stake in the war was 'the very possibility of working toward a Christian civilization' (Nurser 2005, p. 87). Key leaders from within the ecumenical movement made clear their conviction that the church could provide the common moral code required for a just and humane world order.[28] Moreover, they 'boldly asserted the right of the church as an institution to occupy itself with the problems of this world' (Hudson 1969, p. 3).

The dilemma confronting the churches was that to assume the meaningful roles to which they aspired, they needed access to the corridors of power. The post-war planning that preoccupied churches either side of the Atlantic was often undertaken with government support. This was true of the American Federal Council of Churches' 'Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace', intended to 'clarify the mind of our churches regarding the moral, political and economic foundations of an enduring peace'.[29] John Foster Dulles was invited to chair the commission. Dulles, best known for his later role as Secretary of State under President Dwight Eisenhower, was also involved with a variety of political groups concerned with shaping the post-war world, including a secret Council on Foreign Relations project addressing post-war issues for the State Department (Pruessen 1982, p. 186). The parallel organization in Britain was the London-based 'Peace Aims Group'. It emerged from a foundational meeting in January 1940 in Edinburgh at the headquarters of the International Missionary Council, committed to explore whether from the chaos of war there might emerge 'a rebirth of Christendom'. Its closeness to the Foreign Office enabled it to sustain international contacts during the war.[30] It included Sir Alfred Zimmern and Geoffrey Wilson from the Foreign Office, as well as Arnold Toynbee, director of studies at Chatham House, funded by a Foreign Office grant to operate the Foreign Research and Press Service (Keyserlingk 1986; Parmar 1994, pp. 199–318). Convinced that religion was central to the historical development of world order, Toynbee stressed the necessity of a shared religious ethos as a basis for political order.[31]

The Second World War strengthened the existing bonds between church and state on both sides of the Atlantic, demonstrating the advantages of working together. Britain's wartime Ministry of Information had within it a 'Religions Division'. Staffed by churchmen who largely resisted Ministry

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27   Pius XII to Taylor, 22 September 1942, Myron C Taylor Papers, 1942, Truman Library; Memorandum of conversation between Maglione and Taylor, 25 September 1942, MCT Papers, PSF 51, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

28   Bell, 'The Christian Church and World Peace', 22 July 1957, LPL, Bell Papers, vol. 349, pp. 44–62.

29   Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, *Biennial Report*, 1940, pp. 182–4.

30   For a full discussion of the Peace Aims Group, its make-up and activities, see (Coupland 2006, pp. 14–39).

31   A. J. Toynbee. Notes on "The Responsibility of the Churches for a New International Order". IMC26.11.46/8. Archives of the World Council of Churches. WCC Library, Geneva.

pressure to make God a national, indeed Allied champion, they still believed closer church-state relations would make for a better post-war order. Anglican clergyman and future advisor to the archbishop of Canterbury, Herbert Waddams, advised the Peace Aims Group that the problem of postwar reconstruction could legitimately be termed a spiritual problem:

> Our experience in this war has conclusively shown how political objectives are related to religious beliefs. For purposes of work the two may be separated but they must go hand in hand and must not be allowed to be contradictory in any particular. The religious and the political must be two aspects of the same activity.[32]

Kenneth Maclennan, a former General Secretary of the Conferences of British Missionary Societies and director of the Religions Division, emphasized the importance of church networks for aiding British policy in the post-war world: 'the Christian Church, Catholic and Protestant, is the oldest international society in existence and although its fabric has been partly weakened by the acids of modernity there remains throughout the world a network of religious contacts of very considerable importance'. He argued for strengthening the international networks emanating from Rome and Geneva, plus various denominational and missionary contacts.[33]

Ecumenically-minded churchmen saw the war as seemingly offering the opportunity to promote global peace grounded in socio-political and economic justice. However, secular maneuvering to secure Christian sanction for Cold War policies forced the movement to choose between endorsing America's narrative or adhering to its ecumenical and prophetic aspirations. The former promised access to the corridors of power and public approbation. The latter threatened a variety of costs, in terms of political influence, adherents and finances (Gill 2012). The division and difficulties confronting the World Council of Churches at its foundational meeting in Amsterdam in 1948, can only be fully understood by taking into consideration its wartime aspirations and attitudes, along with its drive for Christian unity, all rendered problematic by the onset of the Cold War. Matters were further complicated by the Cold War partnering of Truman and Pius XII that heightened Protestant suspicion of the Vatican. Sittser's study of Protestant leaders reveals how many already viewed the Catholic church as propagandistic, opportunistic, power hungry and 'one of democracy's greatest enemies'. The Cold War US-Vatican alliance appeared to be a manifestation of their wartime fears:

> that Catholics were poised to pounce on democracy while it was weak and destroy it. They believed that Catholicism was essentially totalitarian, the arch enemy of democracy and of its principle guardian, Protestantism.[34]

As it turned out the Cold War facilitated the rise of other and more potent rivals to America's mainstream Protestant churches, civil religion and Christian fundamentalism, which each had significant historical roots influencing their post-war evolution.

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[32]   Waddams, Confidential Memorandum, 11 February 1944; LPL: CFR Papers,
[33]   PRO, Maclennan, Director of Religions Division, June 1944: INF 416
[34]   (Sittser 1997, p. 107). There were of course Protestants who defended Catholics and accused their Protestant brethren of launching another anti-Catholic crusade. At the other extreme were Protestants who claimed that in addition to destroying democracy the Roman Church aspired to eventual world domination. (Sittser 1997, p. 109).

6. Civil Religion and Christian Fundamentalism

The merging of American power and promise, characteristic of the post-1945 period, along with the exaggerated representations of a satanic Soviet foe, facilitated the construction of a particularly potent civil religion. A rich body of work addressing American civil religion followed Robert Bellah's important essay on the subject published in *Daedalus* in 1967. Much of it blamed civil religion's sacralization of American ideals and morality, forged in the process of sustaining support for its assumption of a global role, for allowing the US to indulge in foreign policy ventures across the world citing good intentions. More recently Raymond Haberski identified the ideological flexibility of American civil religion, which he defines as 'a hybrid of nationalism and traditional religion' (Haberski 2012, p. 5). Western nationalism, of course, has long shown an affinity with rather than an opposition between Christianity and nationalistic feeling.

America's distinctive civil religion has a millennialism at its core that subscribes to biblical visions of the final battle when good will triumph over evil. From the 19th century religion was a determining force in American identity and international engagement, [35] providing a solid foundation for the civil religion promoted by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.[36] The first two Cold War presidents purposefully promoted a brand of civil religion that led to an atavistic representation of what was, in essence, a clash of two rival models of modernity. Presenting the rivalry as a life and death struggle between the forces of good and evil gave moral superiority to the American model and elevated anti-communism to pseudo-doctrinal status. However, if American civil religion was strengthened and reinforced by the potency of Christian themes, symbols and metaphors in American Cold War discourse, so was Christian fundamentalism.

The question of the emergence of America's 'religious right' is a matter of historiographical contention and likely to remain so for many years to come. Matthew Avery Sutton persuasively argues that the anti-statist ideology at the core of the modern religious right originated with the beginnings of fundamentalist political mobilization, which 'developed among fundamentalists during the 1930s, parallel to and corresponding with the birth of modern liberalism' (Sutton 2012). Sutton's identification of the Depression-era origins of evangelical anti-liberalism and political mobilization in a variety of forms is important because the way in which politics and religion intersected in the 1930s set the trajectory for many features of the religious cold war. During this decade fundamentalists linked global crises with biblical prophecy and end times. They also developed a powerful critique of New Deal liberalism as communist and totalitarian. It was a decade when fundamentalists redefined their politics and built the structures that facilitated their post-war growth, confident that 'the rise of the antichrist was imminent and that it was never too late for revival'. Billy Graham, a Cold Warrior pastor to America's post-war presidents, was a product of 1930s fundamentalism. Graham's Cold War popularity reflected the increasing influence of evangelicals (Sutton 2012). The 1930s marked the beginning of an important shift in religious demography and the decline in mainline churches as fundamentalism grew. It was a shift subsequently exacerbated by the climate of the Cold War.

Notably, Mark Juergensmeyer portrays nationalism and fundamentalism as complementary. Juergensmeyer sees nationalism, like fundamentalism, as providing an overarching framework of moral order that commands ultimate loyalty. He argues that the rise of secular nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries constituted an assault on religion. Fundamentalists sought to re-link religion to the nation state, which was considered not only to have marginalized 'real' religion but to have co-opted its key elements via the construct of 'civil religion' to legitimize the state's societal legitimacy (Juergensmeyer 1993).

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[35] (Stephanson 1995). See also (Mead 2002).

[36] For a sympathetic, indeed supportive, approach to America's instrumentalisation of religion, see William Inboden who argues that presidents Truman and Eisenhower instinctively recognised the inherent evil of the Soviet Union. He also accords religion significant weight as a causal factor in the Cold War, stating that the various arguments previously put forward to explain the origins of the Cold War are insufficient because: 'They ignore God'. (Inboden 2008, p. 4).

The process of instrumentalizing civil religion to define the meaning of the conflict with the Soviet Union, unify Americans of diverse religious affiliations and appeal to non-Christian peoples world-wide was to have a profound impact on American Christianity far beyond mainstreaming forms of fundamentalist theology. In 1952 the Supreme Court, which in 1931 used the word *Christian* to describe the nation, switched to the term *religious*: 'We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being'. It was a distinction Eisenhower clumsily confirmed in his 1954 declaration that: 'Our government makes no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith—and I don't care what it is'.[37] In the same period a Christian amendment to the Constitution was easily defeated: 'Adhesional religious symbolism was what Congress wanted, not invidious distinctions among the God-fearing' (Silk 1988, p. 107). The identification of Christianity with imperialism in many areas of the developing world, particularly in countries in which non-Christian faiths were in the majority, made Christianity sufficient of a strategic liability in the global south that 'the nation with the soul of a church' switched to identifying itself as a religious rather than a Christian nation (Mead 1967).

Again, it was a process with roots in the interwar years, in the emergence of the 'invented' Judeo-Christian tradition.[38] Mark Silk's pioneering work on the Judeo-Christian concept illustrated how its formulations were arrayed against fascism. In the late 1930s the anti-fascist left combined with Protestant neo-orthodoxy to emphasize the shared heritage of Christianity and Judaism via the concept of 'Judeo-Christian'. In America, the concept was part of the opposition to Catholic demagoguery as espoused by Father Coughlin's Christian Front and those seeking a Christian American identity that expressed fascist sympathies and anti-Semitism. Silk noted how 'Judeo-Christian' operated as 'a catchword' versus 'Fascist fellow travelers and anti-Semites' (Silk 1984). The concept served to highlight similarities and continuities between the two monotheistic faiths, bringing them together in opposition to totalitarianism, helping distance Jews from communism and Christians from anti-Semitism.

K. Healan Gaston has shown how from the 1930s on the concept was used to attack communism and secular liberalism (Gaston 2012), easing the Cold War transition to it becoming part of America's anti-communist campaign. Healan Gaston has identified two strands of Judeo-Christian discourse in the 1930s. Firstly, Judeo-Christian pluralists who celebrated religious diversity, at least theoretically and emphasized tolerance as the center-piece of democracy. Secondly, Judeo-Christian exceptionalists, 'who endorsed a narrower conception of America's religious diversity and regarded belief in a Judeo-Christian God as democracy's indispensable foundation' (Gaston 2012). The exceptionalists were strongly opposed to Marxist atheism and what they regarded as the secularizing tendencies of the New Deal at home. Fascism was regarded as an outgrowth of secularism with no regard to its affinities with Christian nationalism. As Healan Gaston shows, Judeo-Christian formulations served a range of cultural and political functions but they also obscured deep divisions about the cultural foundations of American democracy. These were to come to the fore during the Cold War era.

Judeo-Christian discourse paralleled the emergence of the term totalitarian, identified as the problem of modern evil (Cohen 2010). A traditional part of the religious framework used against the Soviet Union, dating back to shortly after the Bolshevik revolution, was the claim that communism is a religion. The political religion thesis initially mobilized in the thirties to attack fascism and Bolshevism became a critical component of Cold War propaganda seeking to equate Nazism and Stalinism. The Swiss theologian and socialist, Karl Barth, famous for openly rejecting Nazism and being the principle author of the Barmen Declaration, opposed the lumping together of communism and Nazism in the same totalitarian package. Barth considered the West to have an unhealthy 'fear of Bolshevism and communists'. His concern about the West's 'rabid anti-communism' led him to regard:

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[37] *Christian Century*, 71, 1954.

[38] It can of course be argued that all traditions are invented or socially constructed to use a sociological term. See (Hobsbawm 1983).

anti-communism as a matter of principle an evil even greater than communism itself ….
Have we forgotten that what is at stake in this 'absolute enemy' relationship … is a typical
invention (and a heritage from) our defunct dictators—and that only the 'Hitler in us' can
be an anti-communist in principle (Jimenez 2013).

Barth's warnings went unheeded and during the early Cold War the Judeo-Christian concept
captured the public imagination, kindled and popularized by the writings of former communists
such as Whittaker Chambers in the United States and Douglas Hyde in Britain.[39] Preceding these two
important contributors was the publication of *The God that Failed*. Critical recollections from former
communists turned anti-communist, it conveyed the sense that adherence to communism reflected a
misguided faith in a dogmatic and totalitarian ideology. A powerful analogy in the context of the
religious cold war, it became a prevalent mode of thought in anti-communist circles, including
amongst even the most intellectual of Christian thinkers (Cohen 2010).

Reinhold Niebuhr, one of America's foremost theological thinkers, with a former commitment
to socialism, endorsed the view that communism possessed the moral power of a utopian creed, that
it was an evil religion, 'a foe who embodies all the evils of a demonic religion' (Dorrien 2018).
Following American entry into the Second World War, Niebuhr anticipated with dread how those
who had opposed American involvement would be the very ones erecting around it a moral
framework. Niebuhr was acutely conscious of the American tendency to moralize their wars of self-
interest and occupation. Nonetheless, initially Niebuhr supported containment, until the advent of
the Vietnam War. Subsequently discerning moral equivalency between the Soviet Union and the
United States, he called for co-existence, too late however to counter the view he helped establish of
Soviet Communism as a perverted religion.

As a means of analysis through which to understand communism, the political religion thesis
has limited utility. Gidon Cohen has cogently remarked: 'what is specifically distinctive about
communism is not its resemblance to religion but the specific forms of religion to which it is likened
… a church militant rather than retreatist sect …' (Cohen 2010).

Emilio Gentile has argued that civic religion is a democratic analogue of the totalitarian political
religion identified with communism (Gentile 2006). It is surely no coincidence that the well-
established concept of communism as a religion was particularly promoted in the 1950s at the very
time that American civil religion was coming to the fore as part of America's Cold War arsenal.
Certainly, there is validity in discussing communism as a religion from the Durhkheimian
perspective, which posits that such a concept requires not only sacred elements but must function to
unite its adherents into a single moral community. It is a formula, however, that highlights the
functional importance not only of communism but of all forms of secular religion to the stability of
the modern political regime, a feature of which is the separation of church and state. Hence it can be
argued that both the Soviet Union and the United States usurped the political and religious functions
of the churches. In the Soviet Union, it was a process that began amidst revolution and civil war and
incurred conflict and violence before leading to differing forms of alliance (Chumachenko 2003). In
the US, the process was more one of alliance and elision, albeit not devoid of degrees of coercion and
oppression (Kirby 2017b, pp. 67–84).

7. Conclusions

Throughout Europe and America, Christian hopes for post-war spiritual renewal and the return
of Christendom proved no match for the secular ambitions of the dominant states. Where churchmen
were given access to the corridors of power, it was to serve Cold War ambitions, most particularly in
depicting communism as evil. Evil, of course, cannot be redeemed. It must be destroyed. There were
costs and consequences in promoting such a world view in terms of lives lost, resources squandered,
ubiquitous fear, toleration of anti-communist tyranny and the constant threat of nuclear annihilation.
Nonetheless, as noted historian Tony Judt's assessment of the ending of the Cold War reminds us:

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[39]   (Chambers 1952; Hyde 1950). Both books became best sellers and both men turned from communism to
Christ.

'The great reforming projects are gone …'. (Judt 2015, pp. 81–83). The attraction of Soviet communism derived not from what it might destroy but from what it promised to build. The promises of communism inspired many projects for social and economic justice, East and West. Such projects have been rolled back in the absence of an alternative model of modernity and the ascendance, indeed triumphalism, of conservative Christianity. The militant religions that are a feature of the 21st century politico-religious landscape pre-date the Cold War. However, its religious dimension facilitated their rise. Secular Cold Warriors gave insufficient attention to how the religious can and will transgress the boundaries between the sacred and profane to assert their own political, social and economic agendas. Inherent in all religions is the potential to be a force for political dysfunction, subversive of wider societal values in the pursuit of their own ambitions (Kirby 2011, pp. 91–112; George 2008). The roots of the religious cold war can be traced back in time, its legacy remains with us still.

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