THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

TROPING PROTESTANT DESIRE:
PATTERNS OF TIME AND SPACE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ALISON TYNER DAVIS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 2018

For Will

and Robbie James

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project began in a two-quarter seminar sequence with Catherine A. Brekus: the first course, in Winter 2014, was an ambitious foray into "The American Religious Historical Canon"; the second part explored more recent scholarly efforts toward "Revising the Canon." It was in this class that I first learned about Robert Baird, Daniel Dorchester, and L.W. Bacon. That same year, in a course sequence with Richard A. Rosengarten, we studied a selection of American novels in reverse chronology: beginning with Phillip Roth's *The Human Stain* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* we traced our way back through an assembled literary canon to "the beginning"—that is, to *The United States Constitution.* Together, these three courses on American religion and literature ignited my first attempt to write and assemble a project; they propelled me to explore—in much greater detail than I could have imagined then—the repetition of visual patterns, national spaces, and temporal rhythms across a collected canon of historical texts. I am deeply grateful to Professor Brekus and Professor Rosengarten: for their inspiration, for their examples as scholars, writers, and teachers.

As advisor to this project, Professor Rosengarten deserves a multitude of thanks. In our conversations and in the handwritten remarks he offered on chapter drafts, he seemed to always bring to light the recurrent themes and persistent questions. He was an excellent conversation partner for this project and a gracious mentor through the writing process.

To my committee members, W. Clark Gilpin and Curtis J. Evans, I owe a debt of gratitude. Their incisive feedback sharpened the argument, and inspired new approaches to the material. Special thanks to Professor Evans for reading many messy first drafts; his detailed comments in those early stages helped me to shift through material and decide what sections needed to be saved, expanded, cut, or condensed. Thanks also to my colleagues in the Religions in America

Workshop, and to the Religion and Literature writing group; I am grateful for our shared conversations and for the thoughtful feedback you offered as the project unfolded.

Thanks to my friends and family, for the countless ways they have supported this work. Thank you for the breakfast meetings, the coffee shop work sessions, the mid-day swim breaks, the afternoon walks, the hikes and picnics and pasta dinners, the game nights, the weekly meals and holiday meals. Thanks to Waew for her steadfast care. Thanks to my dad for the music; thanks to my mom for her stories. And to Will and Robbie James: let's color big and high.

Introduction:

Measuring Time, Negotiating Space, and the Interpretation

of Nineteenth-Century American Religious History

> One always risks becoming tedious in talking about books
> that are no longer much read.
>
> **R. Lawrence Moore**
> *Religious Outsiders and the Making of America* (1986)

In 1986, Martin E. Marty published an article in *Social Research* entitled "The American Religious History Canon."[1] Based on a survey of twenty-five scholars of American religion, the article presented sixteen books judged to have "had a determining influence on the field of American religion."[2] At the top of the list was Sydney E. Ahlstrom's "magisterial" *A Religious History of the American People*.[3] Marty described the book as "the most impressive summation of the canon ever achieved," and suggested that, especially for historians "beyond the discipline" of American religion, Ahlstrom's volume served as a valuable reference guide: "It was his achievement to show how tentacular, encroaching, and suffusive religion has been, and still is, in a putatively secular culture."[4] However, because "specialists deal more with technical monographs than with syntheses," Marty claimed, "books of this synoptic sort have limited impact on the discipline [of American religious history]." As the remaining fifteen books on

[1] Marty, Martin E. "The American Religious History Canon." *Social Research* 53, no. 3 (1986): 513-28, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40970429.
[2] Marty, "The American Religious History Canon," 514.
[3] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972). "Magisterial" is a common descriptor, see for example: Thomas A. Tweed. *Retelling U.S. Religious History*. (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997), 13; Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), xvii. Heath W. Carter; Labor and the Politics of the Church. *Labor* 1 May 2014; 11 (2): 13–16, 13.
[4] "The American Religious History Canon," 515.

Marty's list illustrate, after Ahlstrom, the discipline moved toward producing "technical monographs" like George Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870*-1925, Albert Raboteau's *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, and Jay Dolan's *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience 1830-1900*.[5]

Significantly, R. Lawrence Moore also published his influential book, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, in 1986. His collection of essays aimed to "shake up the denominational hierarchy that governs the way in which American religious history generally gets told."[6] To this end, Moore traced a canon of a different sort: rather than beginning with Ahlstrom, his survey concluded with Ahlstrom and contemporaries like Marty and Catharine Albanese. Until at least the 1960s, Moore argued, the discipline had long been shaped by a "historiography of desire": governed by providential narratives and bias toward New England Protestantism, nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical writing was fundamentally motivated by the desire to preserve an "American national character" that was pervasive enough to construct unity out of diversity and consensus amidst religious conflict. According to Moore, this historiographical fixation on consensus began with Robert Baird's *Religion in America* (1844) and roughly ended with Sidney Mead's *The Lively Experiment* (1963).[7] Ahlstrom, Marty,

[5] Marsden, George M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1980, 2006.); Raboteau, Albert J. *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, 2004.); Dolan, Jay P. *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience, 1830-1900*. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978).
[6] Moore, R. Laurence. *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).
[7] Baird, Robert. *Religion in the United States of America, Or, An Account of the Origin, Progress, Relations to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States: With Notices of Unevangelical Denomination*. (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1844); Mead, Sidney Earl. *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963); *The Nation with the Soul of a Church*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); *The Old Religion in the Brave New World: Reflections On the Relation between Christendom and the Republic*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

Albanese, and Gaustad offered a corrective to this trend, Moore argued, by "calling attention to the huge areas of American religious experience, especially in the nineteenth century, that have received not nearly sufficient attention—black churches, immigrant churches, and the uncountable number of independent churches."[8]

Historiographical critiques like Moore's have continued to the present: they have traced the remarkable persistence of Baird's consensus narrative and strategically intervened to address the looming gaps left by these early narratives. Jon Butler's *Awash in a Sea of Faith* (1990), for instance, challenged the "Puritan interpretation of America's religious origins" by "reconstructing a more complex religious past."[9] Butler cited Baird, along with Stephen Colwell, author of *The Position of Christianity in the United States* (1853), as peddlers of a "myth of the American Christian past, one of the most powerful myths to inform the history of both American religion and American society."[10] In 1992, the second edition to Catherine Albanese's *America: Religions and Religion* was released (the first edition was published in 1981); in the preface, Albanese leveraged what was, by now, a familiar critique:

> When we look at America's history books—and more to the point here, America's religious history books—we find that they generally tell one major story, incorporating the separate stories of many peoples into a single storyline arranged chronologically. Telling one story is possible only at a considerable cost—that of losing touch with the richness and texture of American pluralism.[11]

In like manner, Thomas A. Tweed's edited volume, *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (1997), argued that "the narrative surveys of American religion since Robert Baird's *Religion in*

[8] Moore, *Religious Outsiders*, 20.
[9] Butler, Jon. *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 2.
[10] Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 285.
[11] Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion,* xv-xvi.

America...have been positioned in ways that obscure important dimensions of America's religious past."[12] In response, Tweed's volume aimed to reframe historical writing by including a wider cast of characters, a more diverse geographical terrain, and a range of analytical methods. William Westfall wrote from the Canadian border, Joel W. Martin from the Deep South, Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp from the Pacific Rim; Roger Finke applied supply-side economics to the interpretation of the field and Ann Braude's widely influential essay demonstrated the ways in which women—and women's history—is central to the narrative of American religious history.

Recently, literary critic Tracy Fessenden and historians Catherine A. Brekus and W. Clark Gilpin have highlighted the ways in which these nineteenth and twentieth-century surveys—including Baird's *Religion in America,* Philip Schaff's *America* (1854), Daniel Dorchester's *Christianity in the United States* (1888), and Leonard Woolsey Bacon's *American Christianity* (1898)—have contributed to the hegemony of Protestantism, Euro-centrism, and androcentrism in historical scholarship and public discourse. In her book, *Culture and Redemption* (2007), Fessenden argues that the disestablishment clause "created the conditions for the dominance of an increasingly nonspecific Protestantism over nearly all aspects of American life, a dominance as pervasive as it is invisible for exceeding the domains we conventionally figure as religious." Writing on the conditions of this religious voluntary system, historians like Baird "figure[ed] America as a de facto Protestant nation" and united Protestant churches against "'the errors of Rome' and 'other aberrations from the true gospel.'"[13] Citing Baird, Daniel Dorchester, Winthrop Hudson and Sydney Ahlstrom, Brekus argues in her introduction to *The Religious History of American Women* (2007) that "American religious historians assumed that

[12] Ann Taves, Tamar Frankiel. Ann Braude, Roger Finke, Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, Joel W. Martin, William Westfall, Catherine L. Albanese, and Tweed, *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, 10.
[13] Fessenden, Tracy. *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 63-63.

their main task was to explain how religion (usually Protestantism) had influenced American political and civic culture." American religious history had long been in service of "understanding the American nation-state," she argues, and women's history offers an important corrective to this narrow focus on defining religious vis-à-vis American politics and popular culture.[14] Brekus and Gilpin also cite Baird and Dorchester in their introduction to *American Christianities* (2011) as "scholarly ministers" who took up the practice of writing histories that "excluded and homogenized in order to fabricate a semblance of Christian unity from the already numerous and rapidly proliferating denominations."[15]

Since Moore's critique in 1986, scholarly discussions of Baird and his nineteenth- and twentieth-century counterparts—including Bancroft, Schaff, Dorchester, Bacon, Sweet, Mead, and Ahlstrom—have generally focused on the ways in which these early narratives constricted "American religion" to the figuration of white, Protestant clergymen and the various institutions that these American men built. Conventionally, Baird and his company are invoked by religious historians to symbolize the state-of-the-field before the turn, in the 1970s, toward critical race studies, gender studies, social history, and the consequent proliferation of micro-histories. To this end, Baird et al. typically appear only briefly in volume introductions and chapter introductions; their voluminous histories are excerpted and recited as background to inform the telling of new, more inclusive, stories. Baird's *Religion in America* has become a symbol of nineteenth-century Providential history, even though, to date, there has been no large-scale study of the text. To be clear, my point is not that scholars have misrepresented these early histories; rather, my critique is that we have barely studied them at all. Since 1986, only brief fragments of Baird's *Religion in*

[14] Brekus, Catherine A. *The Religious History of American Women: Reimagining the Past*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 14-15.
[15] Brekus, Catherine A., and W. Clark Gilpin. *American Christianities: A History of Dominance and Diversity*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 6-7.

America have appeared in our history books. In reiterating Moore's significant critique of these "histories of desire," few scholars have failed to press beyond it to analyze the underlying tropes and narrative patterns that inform these works.

As a consequence, our understanding of these early surveys remains limited. These histories have come to symbolize a problem—a category of texts that demand us to "rethink" or "reshape" the way stories are told—and yet, I argue here, we have not fully reckoned with the logic that substantiates these early narratives. If Baird, Schaff, and their counterparts write histories that privilege Anglo-American Protestant men as actors—and assume the ultimate dominance of the institutions these men create—we have not fully studied the ways in which this religious dominance has been figured through narrative tropes, specific chronologies, and spatial metaphors. To neglect this kind of study limits our ability to recognize the ways in which these narrative logics continue to permeate not only scholarly surveys of American religious history—but also public debates over the "soul" of America, its legacy, its institutions, and its lands.

Thus, rather than relegate Baird, Schaff, Dorchester, and Bacon to the introductory pages, this project investigates their histories—that is, Baird's *Religion in The United States* (1844), Schaff's *America* (1854), Daniel Dorchester's *Christianity in the United States* (1888), and Leonard Woolsey Bacon's *American Christianity* (1898)—as the central objects of concern. By centering my analysis on these texts, I aim to destabilize their status as symbols and offer a more nuanced understanding of how nineteenth-century church histories constructed unity and consensus in a period of increasing religious diversity, national instability, and rapid industrial change. Through Moore, we have adopted the schema of "insiders and outsiders" as a way to understand the limitations of these early surveys; through Tweed's volume we have imagined the ways in which the canonical "cast of characters" and standard geographical reference points have

restricted the kinds of stories we can tell. This study aims to press further, to analyze the chronologies and spatial tropes that pattern historical narrative in the nineteenth century.

In the chapters that follow, I analyze the temporalities and spatialities that inform these histories. I ask how, for instance, the passing of time is conveyed: do scenes mark change as slow and plodding, or do they acknowledge change at all? When and how is historical time accelerated? How do these texts fragment or distort the passing of time? When chronologies are fragmented, what subjects do they elide or causalities do they obscure? How are historical chronologies informed, or shaped by, a particular beginning or end point—and how are cosmology and eschatology mapped onto history? In a similar way, I ask how space is construed. Frontier space and waterscapes, Atlantic "seed plots" and the missions of the Mississippi Valley, contested urban spaces and the World's Parliament of Religions—all these images of wild landscapes and nationalized places are not randomly assembled within a Providential narrative but, I argue, are patterned, coded, and marked in order to convey a particular formulation of religious progress and of American Protestant destiny. Drawing upon work in narrative studies and in historiographical studies of religion, this project argues that understanding how time and space operate in these formative texts not only deepens our knowledge of nineteenth-century consensus histories—it also furthers our understanding of the often-hidden logics that continue to inform historical thinking and writing today.

Structuring Time in Historical Writing

In order to better understand these foundational texts, this project argues that we must analyze the multiple and contradictory chronologies that substantiate nineteenth-century writing about American religious history. Historians such as Moore and Butler have highlighted the clear

rhetorical aim of these narratives: Baird and his contemporaries aim to reassure their readers that Protestant dominance is not merely possible under a system of religious voluntarism—but that it is predestined. To press this analysis further, this project analyzes the formal possibilities and constraints of this rhetoric. I argue that in the historical projects of Robert Baird, Philip Schaff, Daniel Dorchester, and Leonard Bacon, this rhetorical goal is both enabled and undercut by the persistence of multiple, irreconcilable chronologies. Historical time becomes stratified; what is more, it bends and pauses in order to accommodate the circular logics of progress and return, cosmology and eschatology.

To investigate the operations of time in these narratives, this project works from Paul Ricoeur's claim that historical texts are structured by "heterogeneous temporalities and contradictory chronicles."[16] In the first volume of *Time and Narrative,* Ricoeur argues that in the writing of history, discrete historical events are logically interconnected through emplotment. Further, these chains of brief events are given significance through their shared reference to the "long time-spans" of historical movements and epochs. These narratives are structured and interpreted through the interplay between multiple temporal rhythms and mimetic modes: historical events are selected, emplotted, and integrated within an extended story-line; the audience brings their own temporal experiences to bear upon these constructed temporalities and thus the chronologies of the narrative intersect with the temporal world of the reader or hearer. Through the cycle of the "threefold mimesis," Ricoeur points to the ways in which the chronologies of historical writing both imitate the action, events, and characters of the past—even as these imitations are informed by (and *inform*) the perception of time in the present.

[16] Ricœur, Paul. *Time and Narrative, Volume I.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 216.

This claim has significant consequences for interpreting macro histories like Baird's *Religion in the United States* or Dorchester's *Christianity in the United States*. Ricoeur prompts us to ask not only how the construction of time in these narratives was influenced by contemporary formulations of time and change—Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802), for instance, or Charles Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859)—but it also cues us to consider how these figurations of American religious history might have changed the ways its nineteenth-century readers spatialized time and the expanding nation. Further, we might wonder to what extent Baird's *Religion in the United States* has influenced the ways in which subsequent scholars—professional historians like Hudson and Ahlstrom, or Marty and Moore—have rendered historical chronologies and religious change in America. While these questions lie beyond the present scope of this project, I name them to underscore the extent to which a careful analysis of these texts—and the temporalities that structure them—attunes us to the structures of time and space that pattern our thinking even today. Further, these questions prompt us to consider how our current temporalities and patterns of discourse enable the telling of some stories and restrict our sense and understanding of others.

Applying these techniques of narrative analysis to the present historiographical study, I begin here with a brief reflection on the study of time in narrative by comparing two significant metaphors of temporality. These metaphors—one of time "stratified," and the other of temporal rhythms "colliding"—are used, respectively, by Paul Ricoeur and literary critic Caroline Levine to visualize, categorize, and analyze the ways in which temporal structures exert power in the world. To begin: in the first volume of *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur identifies three levels on which historical narrative operates; these three levels—which he identifies as the history of events, social history, and geographical history—are differentiated through their structuring of

time in different rhythmic patterns. His system of a triadic, stratified temporality is based on an analysis of Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. For Ricoeur, the most superficial level of Braudel's history (the chronology of events) is concerned with "the dimension of individuals," most notably Philip II. On this uppermost level, temporality is conveyed through "short, sharp, and nervous vibrations." On the intermediary level, social history moves with a "gentle rhythm" through the slow movements of "long time spans." Finally, on the deepest level, geographical history moves at a rate so slow it is almost imperceptible.[17]

As Ricoeur points out, Braudel characterizes the short time-span as a "clamorous drama" that tends to mislead readers and distract them from the "ponderous" and "silent" history of the long time-span.[18] Drumming a staccato beat of episodic movement, the short time-span is fundamentally deceptive. Braudel uses "a whole group of metaphors," to point to "the misleading character of the short time-span: sorcery, smoke, caprice, glimmers without clarity, the short term of our illusions." By contrast, the long time-span is characterized by its ability to illuminate and clarify something deeper: "to the smoke of events is opposed the rock of endurance," Ricoeur writes.[19] "By means of the slowness, the weightiness, the silence of the long-lasting time, history reaches an intelligibility that belongs only to the long time-span, a coherence that belong only to durable equilibriums, in short, a kind of stability within change."[20] And yet, Ricoeur argues, even this long time-span is still contingent upon a beginning and ending: it makes no claims to timelessness.[21]

---

[17] Ibid., 103.
[18] Ibid., 104.
[19] Ibid., 105.
[20] Ibid., 104.
[21] Here, Ricoeur argues that Braudel marks a clear line of distinction history and the social sciences; he writes, "As soon as social mathematics proposes to apply its achronlogical structures and its atemporal models to the long time-span," historians step in "as the guardians of change" (p.105). Historians, in other words, are always concerned with

Ricoeur carefully restricts his analysis to the temporalities that structure Braudel's narrative; significantly, the object of his inquiry is always history *per se*. In the above excerpts, he writes that the long time-span enables *history* to reach a heightened point of intelligibility; the *longue duree* does not, in Ricoeur's precise locution, make *what happened in the past* more intelligible. Throughout the entire volume, Ricoeur systematically parses "history" from the events or social movements which the historical narration aims to represent; in fact, he explicitly refers to this methodological choice in the conclusion to the first volume:

> By bracketing history's ambition to attain the truth, I have set aside any attempt to thematize, in and of itself, the relation of history to the past... In this way, when I have discussed the concept of event, I have carefully dissociated the epistemological criteria currently associated with this notion (unity, singularity, divergence) from the ontological criteria by which we distinguish what is only feigned from what actually took place (occur, make happen, differ in novelty from every reality that has already taken place). With this stroke, the relation between history, as the guardian of humanity's past, and the whole set of attitudes by which we relate to the present and to the future, is left in abeyance.[22]

His justification for doing so is primarily pragmatic: the three-volume argument first requires Ricoeur to demonstrate that "history belongs to the narrative field." "This relation," he writes, "revealed itself to be extraordinarily complex" and so Ricoeur circumscribed his analysis in order to focus precisely on those structures which reveal Aristotle's thesis that works of art "imitate action" through emplotment.[23]

And yet as others have argued, these formal structures of historical writing—what Ricoeur in this instance identified as the "epistemological criteria"—are themselves worthy of sustained scholarly attention. Hayden White, for instance, argued that "the soul of discourse" is

---

the question of change—or endurance—over time; what differs in each of the three levels is "the range of the [temporal] model," (ibid.).

[22] Ibid., 226.

[23] Ibid., 227.

"troping"; through metaphor and figures of speech, tropes become embedded within texts such that without them, "discourse cannot do its work or achieve its end."[24] More recently, Caroline Levine has argued for a renewal of formalist studies that would direct analysis of the "*longues durees* of different forms" and "their portability across time and space."[25] While Ricoeur's hermeneutical study focused almost exclusively on modes of textual interpretation, Levine's formalist methods extend not only to texts, but also to the forms that structure social experience. One of the major aims of the book, she writes, is "to show that forms are everywhere structuring and patterning experience, and that this carries serious implications for understanding political communities."[26]

Through his analysis of Braudel, Ricoeur drew attention to the multiple levels of temporality encoded within a single work of narrative history; time here is stratified, and the deeper one drives into the narrative crust, the slower time seems to move. Reading, Ricoeur argued, "teaches us to unite" the three strata by subordinating events to geographical time or, conversely, subordinating the Mediterranean geography and giving primacy to the episodes of Philip II's life.[27] Through the act of interpretation, the three levels are combined to illicit different points of emphasis and different patterns of meaning; however, because time is segmented differently in each of the three levels—from short, evanescent episodes to the glacial

[24] White, Hayden V. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 2; See also: Certeau, Michel de. *The Writing of History*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) White, Hayden V. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Chartier, Roger. "History, Time, and Space." *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 2, no. 2 (2011): 1-13.
[25] Levine, Caroline. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), 13 See also: Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990); Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Munro, Martin. *Different Drummers: Rhythm and Race in the Americas*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Zerubavel, Eviatar. *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
[26] Levine, Caroline. *Forms*, 16.
[27] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume I*, 216.

change within vast, geographic eras—the three levels remain separate and distinct from each other.

Where Ricoeur investigates the hermeneutical power of temporal structures, Levine's project is motivated by an interest in the political consequences of forms: she asks how structures compete in the social and political world—and how the "collision" of forms amplifies, modifies, and dilutes power structures. Like *Time and Narrative*, Levine's book prompts readers to spatialize the ways in which rhythmic structures unfold and interact in texts and in the world. Levine also characterizes temporal patterns as "multiple and heterogeneous": communities are structured, for instance, by "seasonal changes, religious ritual, kinship norms, the demands of labor, reproduction, war, and changing technologies." However, where Ricoeur seeks to "unify" these heterogeneous temporalities, Levine aims to preserve them as "plural and colliding, jumbled and constantly altered"; in this network of temporal systems, no one rhythm is "[capable] of imposing its own dominant order."[28] This spatialization of the *collision of forms* upends Ricoeur's stratified image of historical chronologies: her interpretive method argues against the critical attempt to "unify" heterogeneous chronologies and rather prompts us to imagine and examine the infinite ways these rhythms "thwart," "compete," interfere with, and transform each other.[29]

Traditionally, scholars have interpreted nineteenth-century surveys of American religion as texts that are controlled by a singular, overarching agenda. However, Ricoeur's analysis of historical narrative points to the ways in which these seemingly unified plot lines might be trisected and stratified into the contrasting rhythms of episodes, social movements, and geographical time. Pressing further against the notion of unity, Levine emphasizes the

[28] Levine, Caroline. *Forms*, 81.
[29] Ibid., 51.

persistence of a kind of temporal chaos—a complex network of "jumbled" temporalities that impinge upon and collide with each other in surprising ways; here, Levine argues, cultural criticism might make sense of this chaos through analyzing the pressure points—the collision points—that occur in texts and in the world. Both methods—one that spatializes time in stratified layers, the other as a network of colliding rhythms—argue that formal analysis of narrative can aid in clarifying the ways in which rhetorical structures exert power in the world.

While Ricoeur extracts his analysis from Braudel's depiction of stratified temporalities, Levine assembles a vast range of materials—from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poetry, to the institutionalized rhythms of English literature departments, to public school schedules in the United States—in order to demonstrate the ways in which temporalities collide. Constructing a different canon, this project analyzes temporality and space in four narratives of American religion published between 1844 and 1898. Because of the kinds of stories these surveys tell—and the kinds of stories they omit—this project seeks to highlight a different pattern in narrative temporality: namely, I want to analyze the points at which temporalities become broken, fragmented or disjointed. Or, to use a different metaphor, this project highlights narrative frames where the beat pauses, and rhythms are silenced. Or again, to take up a metaphor from visual media: I explore the ways in a text renders a scene as a "still life" image. In Bacon's history, for instance, an image of the World's Parliament of Religions is suspended above the ongoing action of the plot. In this way, this project aims to understand the ways in which these stories of American religion are told not only through concordant plot lines—but also through the ruptures, pauses, and still-frames in the plot.

Structuring Space in Historical Writing

In order to understand how these historical narratives have exerted pressure upon the discipline of American religious history, I argue that an analysis of temporality must account for the ways in which time is spatialized—and space is temporalized—via representations of the North American landscape.[30] This argument is not new to narrative studies; M.M. Bakhtin (1981), for instance, applied the term "chronotope" to refer to "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically connected in literature." As a narrative unfolds, Bakhtin writes, time "thickens [and] takes on flesh" while space "becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history."[31] David Herman, in his study entitled *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative* (2002), used the term "narrative domains" in order to "emphasize that narratives should be view not just as temporally structured communicative acts but also as systems of verbal or visual prompts anchored in mental modes having particular spatial structure." "More exactly," he wrote, "narratives represent the world being told about as one having a specific spatial structure."[32]

[30] For studies in the politics of representing space, see: Mitchell, W. J. T. *Landscape and Power*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Peter Clark and Jussi S. Jauhiainen --, et al. *The European City and Green Space: London, Stockholm, Helsinki, and St. Petersburg, 1850-2000*. (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006).

[31] Bakhtin, M. M. (Mikhail Mikhaĭlovich), and Michael Holquist. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84. It is worth noting that Bakhtin's analysis of chronotope is organized according to genres of the novel. Each genre reveals a different spatio-temporal structure: the "Greek Romance," for instance, "abstracts space" in the hastening of "adventure time" (86-69); the "novel of everyday life" features a hero's "movement through space" and thus space becomes "more concrete and saturated with a time that is more substantial" (111-120); the biographical novel enacts a "real life chronotope" through which interiority of an individual is revealed to the public (131-136).

[32] Herman, David. *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 264. See also: Herman, David. *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012); Mink, Louis. "Narrative Form as Cognitive Instrument." In Canary, Robert H., and Henry Kozicki. *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983); Zoran, Gabriel. "Towards a Theory of Space in Narrative." Poetics Today 5 (1984): 309-35.

Terms like "chronotope" and "narrative domains" attempt to account for the relationality between time and space—and the ways in which readers process the creation, maintenance, dissolution, and destruction of narrative worlds. In like manner, this project uses the term "episode" to designate its approach. Although the term perhaps most immediately connotes a sense of time—episodes are strung together to form a plot—the term also invokes a sense of setting: each episode is tied to a place or series of places, it is enacted by bodies that move throughout space. An episode is defined by its location in time and space. Thus, each of the following chapters are organized around a reading of three exemplary episodes: these episodes are chosen not only because they are central to the configuration of plot—but also because they are fundamental to the representation of space in each narrative.

In these histories, configurations of space are inflected by several significant territorial conflicts taking place in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Between 1845 and 1848, in years immediately following the publication of Baird's 1844 *Religion in the United States,* the U.S. annexed Texas, the Oregon Territory, and a large portion of Mexico. These acquisitions were eventually organized into the states of Texas, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, California, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and portions of Montana, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico. As the national horizon was expanding, new boundary lines were being drawn: the Oregon Treaty set the 49th parallel as the border between the U.S. and Canada; earlier, in 1820, the 36.5 north parallel was used in the western territories to designate the northernmost limit of slavery. Natural markers, such as rivers, also designated important distinctions in these conflicts. In 1830, the Indian Removal Act authorized the seizure of Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole lands and the forced relocation of these tribes to territory west of the Mississippi River.

Indeed, the Mississippi, St. Lawrence, and Ohio Rivers constituted significant boundaries in the context of slavery and the forced removal of Native peoples.[33]

Baird, Dorchester, and Bacon write in the midst of these conflicts; in fact, their narratives place considerable symbolic weight the Great Lakes, the Mississippi River, and its Valley. In Baird's history, for instance, the Mississippi Valley constitutes the focal point of the opening episode. In the logic of this text, the divine order of Creation and the predestined nature of European occupation are demonstrated through the accumulation of visual details: the particular sloping of the "Central Valley"; the mountain ranges that function as "the backbone" of the continent; the silence that "reigns everywhere" over the newly-created landscape. Dorchester's narrative likewise places the Mississippi Valley at the center of his account: it is here, in what he terms the "mystic center" of the continent that Catholic and Protestant missionaries struggle to determine the religious character of the nation. Bacon's narrative shifts the symbolic weight of his narrative away from the frontier and toward the city center and World's Parliament of Religions; while for Baird and Dorchester, the "Central Valley" makes the strongest case for Christian unity and Protestant dominance, for Bacon the image of the Parliament holds the best possible hope for the future of Christianity in America.

In this way, I argue that each of these grand surveys elevates particular spaces in North America in order to pattern an image of Protestant destiny. Mircea Eliade's notion of the cosmic center and the *axis mundi* is an especially useful schematic here: Eliade argues that in the logic of "archaic" myths, the "celestial archetypes" of territories, temples, and cities are predictably mapped as symbolic centers; these places are situated at the intersection of the natural and

[33] For narratives that depict the of crossing these boundaries to escape slavery in the United States, see: 134-137 in Ward, Samuel Ringgold. *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro*. (New York: Arno Press, 1968); 44ff in Goings, Henry. *Rambles of a Runaway from Southern Slavery*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012); and Douglass, Frederick. *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Chicago: Johnson Pub. Co., 1970).

supernatural worlds, and at the axis of mundane time and eternity. Thus, the construction of these central spaces—territories and cities, missions and frontier borders—both reifies the boundaries between the "profane" and "sacred" worlds even as it links mundane, political acts to the architecture of the cosmos. Eliade writes: "the construction of a sanctuary or a sacrificial altar repeats the cosmogony, and not only because the sanctuary represents the world but also because it incarnates the various temporal cycles."[34] Here, Eliade highlights the ways in which myths enact visual patterns and temporalities: an episode of "sanctuary construction" is assembled within a larger narrative by signaling to similar events in the past, by anticipating similar events in the future, and by pointing toward to cosmic versions of itself. Thus, the sanctuary is patterned as "the cosmos," and its founding is located at the beginning of time—at the nexus of time and eternity, the mundane and the sacred.

My use of the term "episode" aims to capture the dimensions of time and space that Eliade classifies in "archaic" ontology: in establishing the fundamental unit of analysis as the narrative episode, I argue that each of these discreet units participates in temporal and visual patterns that expand and contract as the narrative unfolds. A pattern contracts when the narrative intensifies attention toward the present episode: when, for instance, the discovery of the Mississippi River is portrayed as an individual and precise moment in time—with characters and conditions that are unique and unable to be replicated. Time contracts and vision becomes shortsighted as readers are, "caught up in the moment," so to speak. However, because these episodes replicate a larger pattern that extends throughout the narrative, each episodic unit also

[34] Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Or, Cosmos and History.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), 77. For subsequent studies of discourse, myth, and history, see: Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth.* (New York: Columbia, 2011); Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions.* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978); Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship.* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999), and *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth and Classification* (New York: Oxford, 2014).

has the potential to expand the readers vision: in these modes, the Mississippi represents not only the "mystic center" of the continent—but the nation as a whole—and the discovery and naming of the river becomes an act of nation-founding.

In arguing that these patterns contract and expand as the narrative unfolds, my account implies and points toward the experience of a reader. Thus, a more precise locution of this thesis might position the reader as subject. In order to make sense of these expansive survey histories, *readers* not only *see* the repetition of visual symbols and historical events—in the founding of church buildings, the recurrence of planting metaphors, in the pattern of a "first" and then "second" Great Awakening—but *they also experience* these patterns as expanding and contracting as an episode unfolds. Certain episodes—and certain scenes within in each episode—intensify the experience of an in-the-moment reverie or discovery, while others draw long, sweeping parallels that connect the present episode to past or future events and conditions. In this way, readers experience episodes as both intensifying a kind of "present-ness" within a particular moment and also as expanding the vision of the reader such that the pattern extends itself over a broad, narrative horizon.

Recourse to Ricoeur again proves helpful here: my emphasis on the expansion and contraction of temporal and visual patterns points to Ricoeur's analysis of the *distentio animi* in the first two chapters of *Time and Narrative, Vol. I.* Here, Ricoeur positions Aristotle's notion of *muthos* or emplotment as a direct response to Augustine's fundamental problem of the *distentio animi*. As Richard A. Rosengarten argues, Ricoeur's formulation of narrative time is "crucially and decisively an expression of the Augustinian *distentio.*"[35] According to Augustine's *Confessions*, the human experience of time both "distends" and "engages" the soul: the soul

[35] Richard A. Rosengarten, "The Recalcitrant Distentio of Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*." *Literature & Theology,* Vol. 27, No. 2, June 2013, 172.

becomes extended as it experiences time as always in "transit" from the future, through the present, and into the past; even so, the soul attempts to "engage" time as it passes, through the three-fold acts of expectation, attention, and memory. This doubled experience of intention and distention constitutes what Ricoeur names "the supreme enigma": "the more the mind makes itself *intentio*, the more it suffers *distentio*."[36] In Ricoeur's account, Aristotle's notion of emplotment responds directly to this enigma: through the structures of concordance and discordance, narratives organize time into patterns of unity, coherence, and logical necessity. Ricoeur argues this point explicitly the beginning of chapter two:

> Augustine groaned under the existential burden of discordance. Aristotle discerns in the poetic act par excellence—the composing of the tragic poem—the triumph of concordance over discordance. It goes without saying that it is I, the reader of Augustine and Aristotle, who establishes this relationship between a lived experience where discordance rends concordance and an eminently verbal experience where concordance mends discordance.[37]

Here, Ricoeur highlights the primacy of "lived experience": an experience wherein readers, with Augustine, "groan under the existential burden" of distentio—therefore yearn for [and compose] narratives that "mend discordance." Indeed, this Augustinian experience of time, as Rosengarten argues, is fundamental to Ricoeur's account of narrative.[38]

In my analysis of nineteenth-century historical narratives, I argue that *time and space together* are patterned in ways that attempt to "mend the [ontological] discordance" of American religious history, and the national "soul" these histories attempt to posit. The spatio-temporal patterns expand and contract in the text and, as they do so, they allow readers to experience a mode of historical vision that is at once expansive—signaling backward and forward in time—and intensive, through freeze-framing a particular historical moment and reflecting upon its

[36] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume I,* 21.
[37] Ibid., 31.
[38] Rosengarten, "The Recalcitrant Distentio," 172, 175.

significance. The two modes imply each other: a single moment, after all, is found to be significant only through its relationship to a past and to a possible future. And the significance of the *longue duree*, Ricoeur reminds us, is linked to the discreet moments and spatial parameters of episodic history. In this way, the expansive narratives of these surveys rely heavily upon troping—the repeated invocation of the Mississippi River, for instance, or the likening of Christianity scattered "seed plots"—to root Christianity in national time and space.

Philip Schaff's *America*: The Chaos of Church History and the Middle Kingdom

Philip Schaff looms large in nineteenth-century American religious historiography. As Henry Warner Bowden writes, "It was largely due to the eloquence, erudition, and stamina of Philip Schaff that some leaders in American religious circles slowly came to recognize the legitimate place of historical knowledge in theological education."[39] Schaff, as Bowden and others have argued, essentially founded the discipline of religious history within the American theological academy. As the third chapter of this study demonstrates, Schaff's vision of history—progressive in its shape and ecumenical in its teleological form—extended beyond his own publications and teaching at Union Theological Seminary; his ecumenical vision motivated and shaped Bacon's *American Christianity*—the concluding volume of the American Society of Church History Series, which was published under the editorial leadership of Schaff.

A brief study of Schaff's 1855 *America* will demonstrate the ways in which the historian's narrative of American religion organizes patterns of Christian time and national space. As the title indicates, the volume published in English as *America* is a collection of two

[39] Henry Warner Bowden, *Church History in the Age of Science: Historiographical patterns in the United States, 1876-1918.* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 42.

lectures delivered in Berlin "Before the German Church Diet at Frankfort-on-the-Maine."[40] Perry Miller, editor of the 1961 reprint, notes that Schaff's European audience was likely wary of an "American scene" that "loomed as a reversion to bedlam": "There appeared to be a riot of sects, and an unholy competition among them. All this was frightening enough... but in addition there were horrendous narratives of the American revivals, wherein hysterical enthusiasts barked like dogs, writhed in sawdust." In 1854, many among Schaff's audience likely viewed the United States as a "religious chaos."[41]

Given this, it is all the more interesting to discover that Schaff himself took up the language of chaos, fermentation, and "perpetual excitement" to characterize what he called "the ecclesiastical *Thohuvavohu* of the New World."[42] Americans, Schaff writes, "are a people of the boldest enterprise and untiring progress—Restlessness and Agitation personified. Even when seated, they push themselves to and fro on their rockingchairs."[43] He continues: "They live in a state of perpetual excitement in their business, their politics, and their religion, and remind one of the storm-lashed seas, which here: 'Seethes and bubbles and hisses and roars, / As when fire with water is commixed and contending / --it will never rest, nor from travail be free, / Like a sea that is laboring the birth of a sea.'"[44] Through a string of metaphors, Schaff describes Americans as the embodiment of perpetual movement; "even when seated" they rock back and forth as if in a state of contemplation—or perhaps, as if in the throes of labor. This trope is further solidified

[40] Schaff, Philip. *America: A Sketch of the Political, Social, and Religious Character of the United States of North America, in Two Lectures, Delivered at Berlin, with a Report Read Before the German Church Diet at Frankfort-on-the-Maine, Sept., 1854*. (1855) (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1961); For previous studies of Schaff's work, see: Graham, Stephen R. (Stephen Ray), and Martin E. Marty. *Cosmos in the Chaos: Philip Schaff's Interpretation of Nineteenth-century American Religion*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1995.); Schaff, Philip, and Henry Warner Bowden. *A Century of Church History: The Legacy of Philip Schaff*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.
[41] Perry Miller, "Editor's Introduction," viii.
[42] Schaff, *America*, 213. *Thohuvavohu* roughly translates from the Hebrew as "without form and void."
[43] Ibid., 210.
[44] Ibid., 210-211.

through lines excerpted from Frederick Schiller's "The Diver": America is like "a sea that is laboring the birth of a sea."

A paragraph earlier, Schaff personifies the nation as "The Young Giant," who "has not yet, so to speak, sown all his wild oats." In contrast to the metaphor of the woman in childbirth, here Schaff depicts the United States as a mischievous, young boy: "Along with many heroic deeds," Schaff writes, the boy "commits also some wanton and extravagant pranks, which prove, however, the exuberant vigor of his youthful powers."[45] Both the laboring woman and the mischievous boy represented, for Schaff and his audience, the possibility that the current state of chaos might yet give way to a more perfect religious creation.

In fact, in the opening remarks of his address, Schaff points toward this very possibility. He begins his lectures by describing the geographical contours of the nation from the viewpoint of a vast, aerial distance. In doing so, these stilled depictions link the position and structure of the North American continent with tropes of visual symmetry and stability. Here, the chronology of the narrative pauses in order to showcase a continent that is quiet and still:

> The Atlantic coast, which is the most populous part of North America, and has thus far been the chief theatre of its history, and already has cities of half a million inhabitants and more, is yet very thinly settled in comparison with the countries of Europe. The Pacific coast—Oregon and California—has hardly yet risen into the view of the world, and has room for whole kingdoms. And the Mississippi valley, the immensely rich river tract between the Alleghany and Rocky Mountains, which forms the proper body of the United States, and contains now hardly ten million inhabitants, will itself, it is thought, conveniently support a population of more than a hundred millions [sic].[46]

The nation is viewed in whole, as Schaff directs the attention of his audience first east, then west, then toward the center of the continent. As Winthrop Hudson notes, Schaff "drew heavily" on Baird's *Religion in the United States* as he composed his lectures; Baird opens his voluminous

[45] Ibid., 210.
[46] Ibid., 29.

survey with a sweeping portrait, similarly detailed and grand.[47] In Schaff's address, the Atlantic coast is described as "the chief theatre" of national history, while the Pacific coast "has hardly yet risen into the view of the world." So, too, did the Mississippi Valley—which forms the "proper body" of the nation—invite Schaff's audience to carry forward the drama of Christian history onto the stages of the West. Schaff uses this metaphor of the theatre three more times in his address; in each instance, he uses it to point toward a global, Christian drama unfolding in nineteenth century. In one of the more striking passages, for instance, he describes America as "the theatre of the last decisive conflict between faith and infidelity, between Christ and Antichrist; of the greatest collision between the various Christian nations and confessions and also of their final reconciliation."[48]

The entire opening discourse on "the size and growth" of the nation pursues this vast, topographical analysis from an aerial viewpoint. In the concluding paragraphs of the section, Schaff adopts this heightened view to underscore the historical and global centrality of the new nation. America, he argues, will play a pivotal role in the next act of the unfolding drama of Christian history: "In view of the extent and growth of the United States, thus briefly sketched... nothing but stupidity can be indifferent, and nothing but narrow-mindedness can deny these states a future." In this first sense, Schaff argues that the nation is firmly rooted in the timeline of Christian history; European churches, he presses, "cannot deny" that their sibling churches in the United States have a place in history—and an influence that extends both forward and backward in time. In addition to arguing for its past and future relevance, Schaff argues for the central position of the United States on the map: "Even geographically," he claims, "America stands as in some sense the 'Middle Kingdom.' The people of the United States, these Americans in the

[47] Winthrop Hudson, *Religion in America.* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), 132.
[48] Ibid., 272.

emphatic sense of the term, have control of a whole continent and of two oceans, one arm outstretched towards Europe, the other towards Asia."[49]

Taken together, these opening sketches emphasize the stability and endurance of the nation through slow-moving time and visual cues that place the United States at the center of the globe, and at the center of time. In this way, Schaff positions America at the cosmic center—in Eliade's terminology, at the *axis mundi*—of the narrative. Even the North American continent itself is trisected into three parts—with a central valley in the middle, and mountain ranges and two oceans that mirror each other on east and west. As the following chapters illustrate, this trifold, spatial patterning organizes the narratives of Baird, Dorchester, and Bacon's as well: the Mississippi Valley, as Dorchester describes it, occupies the "mystic center" of the continent.

On a global scale, Schaff argues that the United States sits at the center of the globe, pivoting the story of Christianity from east and west, and from "past progress" toward its "future history." In at least three separate instances, Schaff reiterates this "general law" that guides "the geographical march of history both secular and sacred" from east to west. He writes, "thus far civilization and Christianity have followed in the main the course of the sun from East to West. The East, the land of the morning, is not only the cradle of mankind and of civilization, but also the birthplace of the church..."[50] Schaff continues to trace the spread of Christianity "from Asia to Greece and Rome" and then further west until it "struck deepest root in Germanic soil." Germany, Schaff admits, once held the central place in Christian history: the country, "lying geographically in the centre of Europe, was commissioned in the age of the Reformation to furnish the heart's blood for the modern history of the world and church."[51] But the future of

[49] Ibid., 30.
[50] Ibid., 85.
[51] Ibid., 86.

Christianity, Schaff's lectures insist, is inevitably linked to the future of the United States. As he argues in the concluding remarks:

> In short, if anywhere in the wide world a new page of universal history has been unfolded and a new fountain opened, fraught with incalculable curses or blessings for future generations, it is in the Republic of the United States with her starspangled [sic] banner. Either humanity has no earthly future and everything is tending to destruction, or this future lies—I say not exclusively, but mainly—in America, according to the victorious march of history, with the sun from east to west.[52]

America holds the promise of a new episode in the annals of Christian history, and this pivot in the Christian story occurs, Schaff argues, "according to the victorious march of history" that arches with the sun from east to west.

These opening sketches emphasize the centrality of the United States through drawing out the timeline of Christian history, and through pausing narrative time to describe the geographic contours of the nation. In these episodes, time moves slowly—if at all—and Schaff invites his audience to view the timeline of history, and the coastlines of the new nation, from a vast, omniscient view point. Through Schaff's deft interweaving of metaphors, the progress of history is linked to the more predictable patterns of nature: the march of the sun from east to west, the heart pumping blood to the body's extremities, a tree taking root in the soil. In this way, Schaff implicitly argues, the story of American Christianity is both utterly logical—that is, it follows a "general law"—and fundamentally natural, in that it mimics the patterns and rhythms of the sun and earth, trees, bodies, and organs.

In sharp contrast to the enduring echoes of biological time, or the silence and pause of a heightened view, the rhythms of chaos and religious revival sound a steady and staccato beat. In these episodes of mundane life, Schaff emphasizes the "untiring" activity of human energies that

[52] Ibid., 212.

"swarm" and "jostle" each other.[53] Schaff notes, for instance, that Americans "invented the magnetic telegraph, or at least perfected it, and are far advanced in the useful arts. For there the car of the world's history moves swifter on the pinions of steam and electricity, and the 'the days become shortened.'"[54] Even the days themselves "become shortened" in this day-to-day experience of time; in these day-to-day chronologies, people experience time in short, ecstatic bursts, as they bustle through cities and across continents, powered by steam and electricity. "For these Americans," Schaff argues, "have not the least desire to rest on the laurels of the past and comfortably enjoy the present."[55] They are constantly in motion toward the future.

Significantly, Schaff reserves the language of chaos for his concluding remarks. Throughout Part I and II, he works to establish the connection between America, its geographical and historical centrality, and its stability in time and space. Only toward the end of the second lecture does Schaff make dramatic reference to "the chaotic fermentation" brewing in America:

> American church-history is still in the storm-and-pressure-period. Its roots, with all their living fibres, are in Europe, especially in England. It draws its life from the past, most of all from the conquests of the Reformation of the sixteenth century... Meanwhile it is all merely the labor of preparation, the heaping up of materials and plans, the chaotic fermentation that precedes the acts of creation. But the prolegomena are laid out on the most comprehensive scale; the cosmos lies in the chaos, as man in embryo, and He who in the beginning said: "Let there be light!" lives and rules with his Divine Spirit, brooding over the ecclesiastical *Thohuvavohu* of the New World.[56]

Drawing upon the earlier tropes of center and symmetry, this passage combines the early metaphor of America as "rooted" in Europe with that of a nascent nation that is brewing in "the chaotic fermentation that precedes the acts of creation." Piling metaphor upon metaphor—"the labor of preparation," the "heaping up of materials," the "prolegomena laid out," "the cosmos in

[53] Ibid., 210.
[54] Ibid., 211.
[55] Ibid., 210.
[56] Ibid., 213.

the chaos," the human "in embryo"—Schaff argues that this religious chaos is divinely intended, in keeping with the rhythms of the cosmos, and is working toward a new act of creation.

Here, the *longue duree* of Christian history—and connected the tropes of symmetry and stability—collides with the "jostling," and "swarming" American religious chaos. In doing so, this collision of temporalities redefines the meaning of "chaos" and "America": it flips the association of chaos from threatening upheaval—or, in Miller's terminology, "reversion to bedlam"—to *Thohuvavohu*, and to the long and rooted history of the European church. What is more, the impact of the colliding rhythms creates a long and dramatic pause in the narrative: the "Divine Spirit" "broods," and history awaits the unveiling of a new chapter. In this moment, brimming with "materials and plans" stored up from the past, time is full. The tree is deeply rooted; the "prolegomena" written. As the narrative pauses, it makes space for this new representation of American religion to crystallize in the minds of the audience. As the remaining sections of Schaff's lecture anticipate, this dramatic pause also motivates the audience to wonder how they might participate in this new episode of ecclesiastical history. In this final part of his address, Schaff both prompts his readers to ask—and offers an argument that directly responds to—how the church in Germany might uphold its "duty" to "her daughter in America."[57]

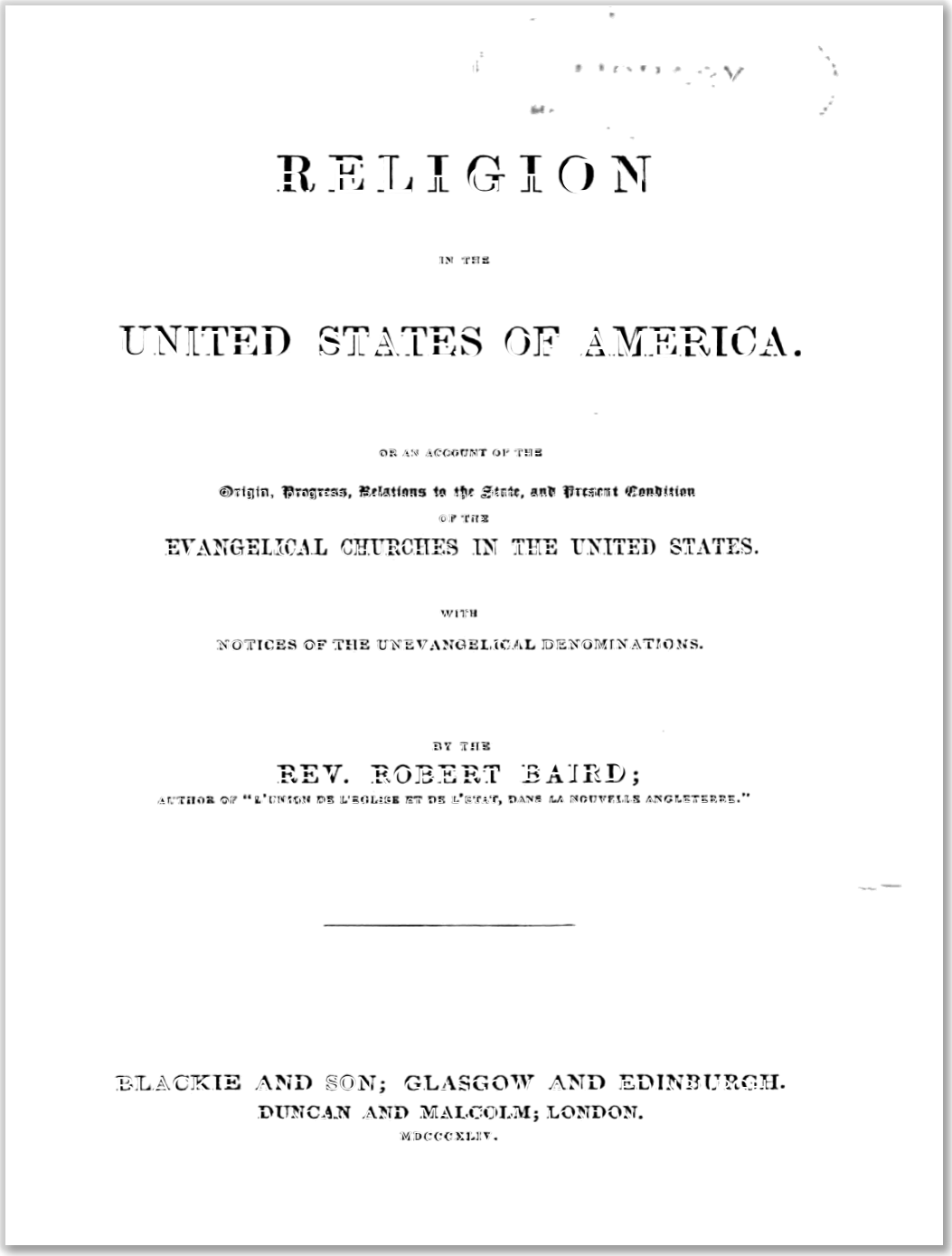
My aim has not been to offer a comprehensive analysis of the entire work and rhetorical context of Philip Schaff's *America*. Instead, my goal here is to re-open discussion of these early texts of American religious history with particular attention to the ways in which these narratives structure competing notions of time and national, or global, space. As we have seen, Schaff adopts some of the structural features of Baird's history—opening with a sketch of the topography, for instance, and moving the eyes of his audience from east to west; the foregoing

[57] Ibid., 227.

analysis will reveal similar troping and chronologies across each of the four histories. To be sure, Baird, Schaff, Dorchester, and Bacon constructed histories of desire that mapped Protestant destiny onto time and space; this project demonstrates the ways in which they did so by portraying conflicting chronologies, temporal pauses, and portraits of national landscapes.

In this way, I argue that in analyzing what I term the spatio-temporal logics of these texts we are able to better understand the ways in which the power of white, Protestant Christianity has been mapped and mythologized in and beyond nineteenth-century history. In each of the three chapters that follow, this dissertation aims to animate the tropes and chronologies that inform three additional texts of nineteenth-century American religious history. Robert Baird (1798-1863), publishing his magnum opus in 1844, constructed a *Genesis*-like myth of North America that fundamentally roots "evangelical religions" in the enduring forms of the Mississippi Valley. In this first chapter, I argue that understanding the centrality of the Mississippi Valley in Baird's *Religion in the United States* reveals complex negotiations of time and space in his construal of American voluntarism. In the second chapter, I show how Daniel Dorchester (1827-1907), publishing his *Christianity in the United States* in 1890, constructs a tension between "impermanent" and "permanent" formulations of religion, ultimately arguing that only Protestantism is able to leave a "lasting mark" on the landscape of American religious history. Leonard Woolsey Bacon (1830-1907), who published *American Christianity* in 1898, emphasizes not only the continual transplantation of religions—but also the persistent adaptation of religions to an idealized American type. The third chapter demonstrates how Bacon intertwines the logic and rhetoric of Schaff's "living organism" of church history with "The Parable of the Sower" in order to construct a unified ecosystem of American Christianity. Further, Bacon—in dramatic departure from Baird and Dorchester—counterbalances portrayals

of the frontier spaces of the Mississippi Valley with idealized representations of the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago.



RELIGION

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

OR AN ACCOUNT OF THE

Origin, Progress, Relations to the State, and Present Condition

OF THE

EVANGELICAL CHURCHES IN THE UNITED STATES.

WITH

NOTICES OF THE UNEVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS.

BY THE

REV. ROBERT BAIRD;

AUTHOR OF "L'UNION DE L'EGLISE ET DE L'ETAT, DANS LA NOUVELLE ANGLETERRE."

BLACKIE AND SON; GLASGOW AND EDINBURGH.
DUNCAN AND MALCOLM; LONDON.
MDCCCXLIV.

Figure 1. Title Page to Robert Baird's 1844 Book

Religion in View the Valley:

The Significance of the Mississippi in Robert Baird's

Religion in the United States

> No man ought, if he could avoid it, sit down to read a *newspaper* without having good large maps of our country, and if possible of the world, hanging up within the range of his eye.
>
> ***View of the Valley of the Mississippi* (1834)**

> It appears that nearly two-thirds of the whole territory of the United States lie in the valley of the Mississippi, a fact which shows the vast relative importance of that section of the country.
>
> ***Religion in the United States* (1844)**

Introduction

In the spring of 1829, Robert Baird accepted a call to serve as General Agent of the American Sunday School Union. Shifting his ministerial focus from New Jersey—where he fought to establish a common school system—to the expanding nation in the West, the new General Agent undertook a series of national tours that eventually led him south and westward, through the Mississippi Valley. Over the next six years of Baird's tenure, the Sunday School Union would see dramatic growth; according to his biographer and son, Henry Martyn Baird, the union's revenue jumped from $5,000 to $28,000 and from "five or six" to "fifty laborers" under the leadership of General Agent Baird.[1]

[1] Henry Martyn Baird, *The Life of the Rev. Robert Baird, D.D* (New York: A.D.F. Randolph, 1866), 68-86.

During Baird's service, the American Sunday School Union (ASSU) began to strategically pivot toward recruiting funding and planting schools in the West and later, South: aided in part by the enthusiasm and donations of New York merchant, Arthur Tappan, the ASSU formalized a "Mississippi Valley Enterprise." The ASSU resolution was adopted at an anniversary meeting in May of 1930; it proposed to "establish a Sunday School in every destitute place, where it is practical, through the Valley of the Mississippi."[2] The next month, at a joint conference organized by Baird, the American Home Missionary Society pledged its support to the same cause, resolving "to establish one thousand Sabbath Schools in the Valley of the Mississippi, within two years."[3]

Throughout his travels as General Agent, Baird took copious notes, publishing them first in the *New York Observer* as "Letters from the Valley of the Mississippi," and "Letters from the West," and later—in substantially revised and expanded form—as *View of the Valley of the Mississippi*.[4] The 372-page volume opens with an overview of North and South America, then designates the boundaries of what he names the "great Central Valley in North America" before describing the particular geographical and physical characteristics of the Mississippi Valley, and the "manners, customs, and pursuits of its inhabitants." In chapter eleven, the book begins to organize itself according to states: first "Western Pennsylvania," then Ohio and Indiana, progressively working south and east.

---

[2] Ibid., 69.
[3] Henry Martyn Baird, *The Life of the Rev. Robert Baird, D.D.,*71-71; For a broader understanding of the American Sunday School Union, and the Mississippi Valley Enterprise in particular, see pp. 69-82 in Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1990).
[4] Robert Baird, *View of the Valley of the Mississippi, Or, The Emigrant's and Traveller's Guide to the West: Containing a General Description of That Entire Country; and Also Notices of the Soil, Productions, Rivers, and Other Channels of Intercourse and Trade; and Likewise of the Cities and Towns, Progress of Education, &c. of Each State and Territory* (Philadelphia: H.S. Tanner, 1834).

Although perhaps most widely recognized among scholars of religion for his 1844 book, *Religion in the United States of America*, Robert Baird's legacy has generally been bisected among two different audiences: on the one hand, many historians of nineteenth-century evangelicalism cite his involvement in not only the American Sunday School Union, but also The American Foreign Christian Union, The Evangelical Alliance, and The American Bible Society.[5] Peter J. Wosh, for example, traces Baird's ascension from the "local particularism" of the New Jersey Missionary society to increasingly national and international missionary organizations like the ASSU and The American Bible Society. Wosh places Baird within the larger trend of increasingly global organizations that seek to establish schools and distribute printed materials among Catholic and Native populations in cities and on the un-evangelized frontiers. Wosh and other historians of evangelicalism tend to emphasize the familiar lines of Baird's *curriculum vitae*: his education, his progression toward the global stage, his related projects in advocating for temperance and fighting to end the practice of dueling.[6] To the extent that these historians reference *Religion in the United States*, they do so only as a matter of biographical interest, or perhaps as a source for intuiting Baird's opinions on a certain issue.[7]

By contrast, Baird's legacy as a church historian has been preserved almost exclusively through debates surrounding *Religion in the United States*; these historiographical projects seek to destabilize trends inherited from nineteenth-century historians like Baird. Alternatively critiqued as constructing a "myth of the Christian past," a "consensus narrative," or a history of

[5] For example, see Michael R. H. Swanson, "Robert Baird and the Evangelical Crusade in America, 1820-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1971) and pp. 84-88 in Peter J. Wosh, *Spreading the Word: Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America*. (New York: Cornell UP, 1994).
[6] On dueling, Henry Martyn Baird notes that his father began to write against the practice in his college essays; the biography also includes an episode in one of Baird Sr.'s travels where he witnesses the death of two government officials engaged in a duel. See pp. 78-79 in *The Life of the Rev. Robert Baird.*
[7] For example, see footnote 62 on p. 203 in Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880.*

"Protestant dominance," Baird's history is largely invoked as an example of what R. Lawrence Moore famously calls "histories of desire": "Historians [like Baird] assigned significance to groups in ways that misrepresented their importance. They were wrong about the past, the present, and the future. Some religions were given a more significant part to play in God's plan than others; those became the mainline denominations."[8] Jon Butler credits Baird and his Presbyterian contemporary Stephen Colwell with "evolving a myth of the American Christian past, one of the most powerful myths to inform the history of both American religion and American society."[9] And, as Tracy Fessenden pointedly states, Baird's *Religion in the United States* exemplifies the nineteenth-century consensus narrative which "portrays an American population united by a common Protestant faith into a single, freedom-loving people, even as nine in ten African Americans were then in bonds, Native Americans were being forcibly driven from their lands, white congregations in the South had begun to secede from their national communions in defense of slavery, and native-born Protestants in northeastern cities rioted in the streets against the Catholic immigrants who would soon outnumber them."[10] Save for Fessenden's chapter, on "The Nineteenth-Century Bible Wars and the Limits of Dissent," the majority of these critiques fail to situate Baird's historical writing in the larger context of his professional life, his travels on the Western frontier, and his service as an agent for the American Sunday School Union and the American Bible Society.

[8] R Lawrence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986), 13, 5-7.
[9] Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990), 285, 248.; See also p.14ff in Catherine A. Brekus, *The Religious History of American Women*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
[10] Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007), 17.; see also pp.62-64.

This chapter argues that in order to destabilize the symbolic status of *Religion in the United States,* these two approaches to Baird—and the legacy of his work—must be integrated. It claims that Baird's travels on behalf of the ASSU are central to his formation of American religious history and that reconciling these two pieces of Baird's work allows us to uncover the temporal and spatial logics that undergird his canonical historical narrative. Indeed, a careful reading of *Religion in the United States* suggests Baird's travels on behalf of the ASSU figure prominently in his account: the Mississippi Valley functions not only as Baird's central object of concern—it also frames and organizes Baird's sweeping account of national religion. Published in 1844, one year before John Sullivan coined the term "Manifest Destiny, the volume's fascination with the Mississippi Valley should not be all that surprising. Especially when considering works like Lyman Beecher's *A Plea for the West* (1835) and, at the end of the century, Josiah Strong's *Our Country* (1885), Baird's emphasis on claiming the Valley "for Civilization" and for Protestantism stands as another example of rising nativist sentiment in the mid- to late-nineteenth century.[11]

This chapter proposes to make Baird's portrayals of the Mississippi Valley central to an interpretation of *Religion in the United States*. In particular, studying Baird's representations of the Mississippi Valley—and the "evangelical" and "unevangelical" religions that seek to plant themselves upon it—elucidates a fundamental tension in his narration of religious progress: Baird's account pivots between a linear narrative of progress toward the modern and a circular timeline that seeks to recover the foundational forms of early Christian history. When read in this

[11] Lyman Beecher. *A Plea for the West* (Cincinnati: Truman & Smith, 1835); Josiah Strong, and Congregational Home Missionary Society. *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: Published by Baker & Taylor for the American Home Missionary Society, 1885).

way, *Religion in the United States* reveals not only oppositional modes of narrating history but also dramatic representations of continuity and disjuncture in the unfolding, and refolding, of national, historical time.

In highlighting these moments of continuity and disjuncture in Baird's history, this chapter draws upon the comparative religious and narrative studies of Mircea Eliade and Paul Ricoeur. In *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Eliade's study of "the conceptions of being and reality" in premodern societies, he argues that cultures re-enact the moment of world-creation through myths and rituals. According to Eliade, these reenactments always found the newly-created place—the new civilization, the cornerstone of a building—at "the center of the world." Because Eliade's conception of cosmogonic ritual and the "Center" will be important to my reading of Baird, I will quote Eliade in full here:

> The center is pre-eminently the zone of the sacred, the zone of absolute reality. Similarly, all other symbols of reality (trees of life and immortality, Fountain of Youth, etc.) are also situated at a center. The road leading to the center is a 'difficult road,' and this is verified at every level of reality…The road is arduous, fraught with perils, because it is, in fact, a rite of passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life, from man to the divinity. Attaining the center is equivalent to a consecration, an initiation; yesterday's profane and illusory experience gives place to a new, to a life that is real, enduring, and effective.[12]

As this passage implies—and as Jonathan Z. Smith explicitly argues in his essay, "The Wobbling Pivot"—the Center is most accurately understood in relation to what Smith calls "the periphery."[13] In Eliade's definition above, the Center is necessarily connected to a wider plane of ritual and meaning via roads, and the perils, temptations, and signs that mark them. Further, as Smith argues, the discussion of the "Center" ought not to be confined to geographical terms; the

[12] Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 17-18.
[13] Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Wobbling Pivot," *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978), 99.

concept has also been productively used to explore significant points in space *and time* such as "an enclave against the forces of chaos, the vertical and horizontal center of space, the center of time and history, and a center of value."[14]

As Smith demonstrates, Eliade argues that "archaic" cultures tend to enact a circular view of history—a perpetual return to the mythic—and more "modern" cultures tend to "express a more 'open' view in which the categories of rebellion and freedom are to the fore; in which beings are called upon to challenge their limits, break them, or create new possibilities."[15] In response, Smith argues that this dichotomy tends to oversimplify otherwise "rich patterns of temporal significance" constructed in various cultural forms.[16] My study of Baird's narrative reaffirms this temporal complexity; as I will argue, his narrative employs multiple formulations of time and history, where both circular and progressive patterns of history operate in tension with one another as they extend American religion forward and backward in time.

In tandem with Smith's invocation of "rich patterns of temporal significance," Ricoeur's analysis of the experience of time and its formulation in narrative helps to elucidate and interpret instances "discordant concordance" in Baird's history. The first volume of *Time and Narrative* brings together a reading of Augustine's *Confessions* and Aristotle's *Poetics* to argue that the significance of narrative lies in its ability to imitate—and perhaps reconcile—the temporal conditions of the human experience. As Ricoeur writes in the opening page of the book, "time becomes human to the extent that it is organized after the manner of narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays features of temporal existence."[17] Richard Rosengarten, in his explication of volume 1, argues for the restoration of "Augustine as truly and

[14] Smith, "The Wobbling Pivot," 98.
[15] Ibid., 101.
[16] Ibid., 100-102.
[17] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Volume 1*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3.

fully Aristotle's counterpart in an incipiently dialogical project"; consequently, Rosengarten suggests, we might better understand "discordant concordance" not only as "the effect of narrative emplotment, but of the ontological fact of the *distensio*."[18] I argue that the tension of "discordant concordance" can be found in multiple formulations of time and that this tension is not simply internal to the narrative itself—but also external to it, in the sense the narrative conveys an inherent tension in the project of making a unified, national history.

In order to highlight these temporal and spatial tensions, the following discussion brings to the fore three central, and often neglected, episodes from *Religion in the United States.* I begin with the first chapter, entitled "A General Notice of North America," and interpret its focus on the Mississippi Valley in coordination with the map that immediately precedes the chapter. Here, Baird establishes the central place of the Mississippi in the origin and subsequent progressive history of the Protestant church. Employing a suspended viewpoint, Baird interweaves multiple narrative modes that gesture backward (to the cosmogonic moment) and forward to present and future iterations of the Mississippi Valley. His second chapter, "The Aborigines of North America," implies the ways in which a linear, progressive history is ruptured by the violence of "civilization itself." I take Baird's commitment to Native American missions on the frontier to be central to his ministerial work and historical writing; as such, I argue that his account of Native American languages and cultures—and the conversion of these languages and cultures—is directly linked to his project of representing "the origin and progress" of the American churches. Finally, I turn to Baird's later depictions of the Mississippi Valley and interpret his depiction of the landscape these in coordination with his account of plain-style preaching as a progressive, simplified form of religious language. In each of the three episodes, terms such as "simplicity"

[18] Richard Rosengarten, "The Recalcitrant Distentio," *Literature & Theology* (Vol. 27. No. 2, June 2013), 171.

and "complexity" signal to trajectories of cultural advance and stagnation, and to the consequent need to "return" to the original conditions of creation and the early church. When read together, these three episodes—a "general notice" of the Mississippi, an account of Native American cultures and language, and an account of evangelical plain-style preaching on the American frontiers—reveal both the centrality of the Valley in Baird's account, and the conflicting notions of time and progress that undergirds the conversion of North American land, languages, and peoples. The conclusion of this chapter assesses the ways in which the rhetoric of *Religion in the United States* patterns the varieties of landscape, human language, and civilization in terms of static categories, and original, divinely-given forms. Baird, writing at the middle of the nineteenth century—and crucially, before the in-breaking of Darwinian theory—represents religious species as somewhat fixed. What is more, his account relies upon a theory of progress that equates simplicity with civilization, arguing that the most advanced forms of religious expression are more likely to mirror the patterns of speech and practice of the early church.

A General Notice of *Religion in the United States*

Before turning to Baird's first chapter, this section offers a brief overview of the volume in order to contextualize the three selected episodes. I argue that the Mississippi Valley holds a central place in Baird's construction of American religion: this focus is illustrated in microcosm in each of the three selected episodes, and it is also illustrated in the organizing structures of the volume. In full, the title of Baird's volume reads: *Religion in the United States of America. Or, An account of the origin, progress, relations to the state, and present condition of the evangelical churches in the United States. With notices of unevangelical denominations.* Due to the variance in script font and size, the original image of the title page gives a slightly different impression.

The title itself is divided into three distinguishable sections: the first part, comprised of the words "Religion" and the "United States of America," is the most outstanding part of the title; from here, the eye quickly skips down to the final line of the second part, where "Evangelical Churches in the United States" is highlighted in large print. "With notices of evangelical denominations" constitutes the final line; it hangs in diminutive size below the first two sections. As recent scholarship routinely point out, although *Religion in the United States* proposes to study "religion" writ large—the volume itself is mostly preoccupied with Evangelical Christianity. The title page illustrates this very tension: "Religion in the United States" is modified by the two sections beneath it; both "evangelical churches" and "unevangelical denominations" point to the particularism of Baird's account. What is more, this dualism of American religion—evangelical and unevangelical—provides the controlling categories for the entire account.[19]

The title page also points to another, crucial feature of the book: namely, the temporal emphasis of the book is not—as we might expect—located in historical representations of past, but rather in a full accounting of the "present conditions." In the middle of the title page, cast in dark, heavy script, the book proposes to offer "an account of the origin, progress, relations to the state, and present condition" of the evangelical churches. In a single line, Baird lays out the ambitious timeline of the project: it begins at the founding of Christianity in North America—and it ends, emphatically, with the present.

[19] As Brekus and Gilpin note, Baird above all favored the Presbyterians, "believing his own denomination was responsible for the best features of America's religious character, and he praised the 'evangelical' churches for being part of 'one great Presbyterian family.'" See pp.6-7 in Catherine A. Brekus and W. Clark Gilpin, *American Christianities: A History of Dominance and Diversity* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

A brief study of the volume's "Contents" reveals the ways in which Baird unfolds his account from the "origin" of Christianity in America to its present condition. Book I, which Baird names "Preliminary Remarks," gives an overview of several subjects related to his account: after his descriptions of the North American content and the Native peoples found there, he briefly describes European discovery and colonization—with reference to the "peculiar qualifications of the Anglo-Saxon race for the work of colonization"—as well as formal items such as The Royal Charters and a rather lengthy defense of the voluntary System.[20] Books II and III follow the "Colonial" and "National Era," followed by an entire book, a full 126 pages, dedicated to "The Voluntary System Developed." Books V, VI, and VIII are each devoted to various aspects of evangelicalism; Book V, which we will turn to at the end of this chapter, is exclusively devoted to "The Church and the Pulpit in America." Only Book VI, which runs a total of 53 pages, is devoted to "unevangelical denominations."

Implicit in these "Contents" are at least two important claims: first, Baird proposes that the progress of the evangelical churches in America—and the consequent success of the voluntary principle—can be measured on the frontiers in the proliferation of home missionary organizations (310), grammar schools and Sunday Schools (330, 340), Temperance Societies (388), and in the balance of discipline and revival in evangelical preaching (414ff)—as well as by the extension of these societies abroad. Second, in terms of the number of pages dedicated to each subject, the "present conditions" receive far more attention than the colonial and national periods *combined*; what is more, Baird devotes an inordinate number of pages to defending the perpetual outbreaks of revival in America. Implicitly, Baird argues that the progress of

[20] Robert Baird, *Religion in the United States of America: Or, An Account of the Origin, Progress, Relations to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States. With Notices of Unevangelical Denomination* (Glasgow and Edinburgh: Blackie and Son, 1844), xiii.

Christianity in America depends not only upon the common origin of the American evangelical churches, but also upon the present character and activities of these churches as they extend themselves upon the frontiers.

Although Baird's lengthy study of revivalism and evangelical preaching might at first appear tangential, when considered within this larger context, his treatment of revival preaching becomes integral to his grand narrative of Westward progress. What is more, in studying the internal organization of the volume, the intersection between Baird's ministerial service and historical writing becomes strikingly clear: just as Henry M. Baird traces his father's service from local movements in New Jersey to the global arms of extensive evangelical organizations, so too does Robert Baird's account of American religion seek to trace progress in evangelicalism's growth from local particularism to united efforts in the conversion of the world. In both the biography and the history, the Mississippi Valley occupies the crucial ground wherein the missionary and the local church might first make this pivot toward global influence.

Given a timeline that skews toward the present, and a volume that concerns itself almost exclusively with the substance and growth of "evangelical" churches, especially on the Western frontiers, it ought not be surprising that the image that immediately precedes the first chapter is a map of "The Three Great Divisions of the United States." The map, as the narrative that follows in "A General Notice of North America," emphasizes the fundamental centrality of the Mississippi Valley.[21] The three "Great Divisions" are demarcated by two parallel mountain

[21] As we have already seen, this construal of the continent is not unlike Philip Schaff's introductory sketch in his collection of lectures, "America." There, he writes: "The Atlantic coast, which is the most populous part of North America, and has thus far been the chief theatre of its history, and already has cities of half a million inhabitants and more, is yet very thinly settled in comparison with the countries of Europe. The Pacific coast—Oregon and California—has hardly yet risen into the view of the world, and has room for whole kingdoms. And the Mississippi valley, the immensely rich river tract between the Alleghany and Rocky Mountains, which forms the proper body of the United States, and contains now hardly ten million inhabitants, will itself, it is thought, conveniently support a population of more than a hundred millions [sic]" (29). Further, Schaff imagines the United States as holding a central geographical position in the world: "…Even geographically, America stands as in some sense the "Middle

ranges: in the upper northwest corner lies the area of the "Pacific Slope"; on the eastern side of the continent lies the "Atlantic Slope." Between the western and eastern slopes lies the expansive "Valley of the Mississippi." In both the nomenclature and in the impressive image itself, the two "slopes" seem to function as secondary supports to—rather than independent areas of—the valley. In the narrative that follows, the Mississippi Valley and its namesake river maintain this central place of significance; Baird's first chapter positions a narrative of American *Genesis* in the rivers, mountains, and grand Valley of the Mississippi.

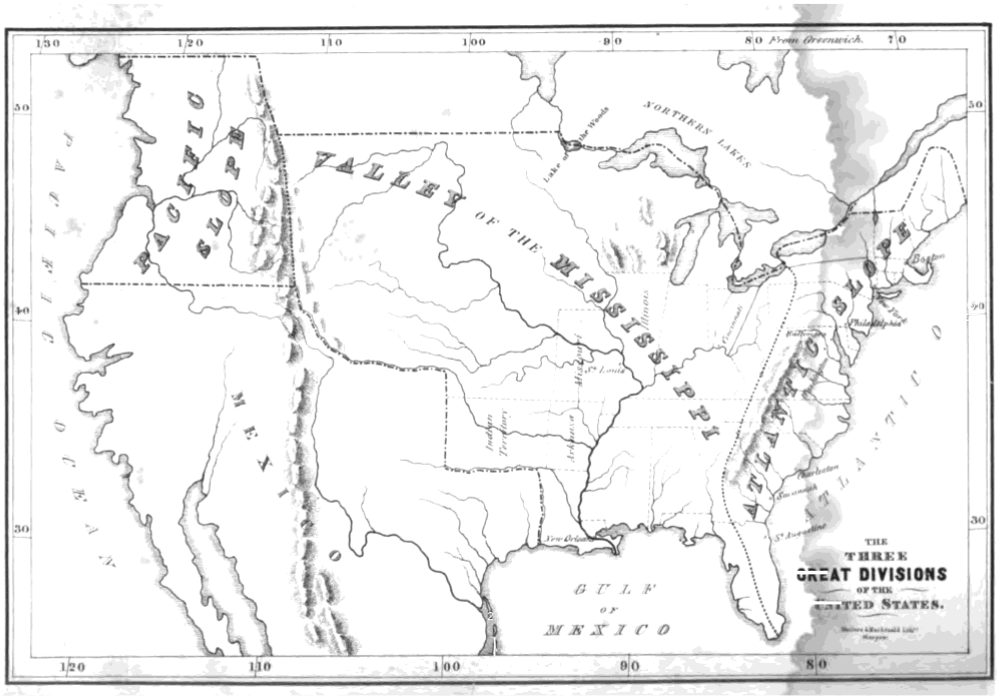


Figure 2. "The Three Great Divisions of the United States"
Robert Baird, *Religion in the United States* (1844)

Kingdom" (30). Philip Schaff, *America: A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character*. Edited by Perry Miller (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961).

A View of the Valley of the Mississippi

"A General Overview of North America" sketches a detailed portrait of the continent: this account emphasizes the continent's symmetrical construction, its grand simplicity, and the absence of human life. At first glance, this opening narrative might be read as simply a geological and topographical survey of the continent: he outlines the shape of the continent, highlights the major mountain ranges, plateaus, and rivers.[22] Mirroring the map that precedes it, the chapter designates east from west and describes the buffalo grass and prickly pear that "clothe" the northwest plains.[23] However, these preliminary remarks have an important rhetorical significance: the detailed description, with its attention to the formations of land and water, roots Baird's account of American Christianity in a narrative of sacred, cosmogonic beginnings. The opening scene, in fact, gestures toward the fifth day of creation in the *Genesis* accounts: the waters and lands have been separated, animal life roams upon the grass, and humans have not yet begun to disrupt the natural sounds and movements of nature. Upon this unmarked landscape, Christianity establishes itself anew in the sacred beginning—and at the sacred center—of the North American continent.[24]

---

[22] Perhaps as Baird intended to imply by his choice in title, *Religion in America* bears striking congruencies with Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America.* In particular, the first two chapters of Baird's history parallel the overall structure of de Tocqueville's first chapter: both open with a vivid depiction of the continental landscape, both locate native civilizations within these natural portraits. What is more, Baird seems to have mirrored some of the exact sentence structures of *Democracy in America.* For instance, de Tocqueville writes, "North America presents in its external form certain general features, which it is easy to discriminate at the first glance"; while Baird, mirroring the sentence with only slight alternations in structure and word choice, writes, "The configuration of the Continent of North America, at first view, presents several remarkable features." Or, both write that the Native Americans, "in their pompous language," gave "the Mississippi, or Father of Waters," its name. However, these similarities aside, *Religion in America* is expressly concerned with challenging de Tocqueville's study of American religion—an account that Baird sees as "unsupported by facts" (56). See: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Cambridge: Sever and Francis, 1863).

[23] Robert Baird, *Religion in the United States*, 6.

[24] For further reading on this subject: Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

Taking cues from Smith, my interpretation of this first chapter draws upon Eliade's theorization of cosmogony and "the Center" with at least two crucial amendments: first, as the map of the "Three Great Divisions" suggests, the centrality of the Mississippi operates in direct relation to the two "slopes" or mountain ranges that define it; the central importance of the Valley can only be understood by way of the natural forms—the paralleling of the Rocky Mountains and the Appalachians, the weaving and dominance of the St. Lawrence and Mississippi—that lie on the periphery and extend within and beyond the frontier. Second, in the cosmogonic narrative that Baird constructs, the iteration of time cannot be accurately understood in simple categories of "circular" and "linear." Instead, Baird's account embeds multiple constructs of time within a single narrative: for instance, he unfolds an image of North America within a long pause (a perpetual "Sabbath" as he at one point describes it); he narrates history from the vantage point of the continent's origin; and, at points, his chronology lurches forward "two hundred years or more," leaving the timeline fractured and open.[25]

Crucially, Baird narrates this chapter from a suspended point of view: the map designating the "Three Great Divisions" conditions the reader adopt an aerial view of its subject; likewise, the first chapter elevates the reader's eye in order to view the continent from a vast distance. As a consequence, he reader, in cooperation with the narrator, can view the entirety of the continent in one sweeping glance. From god-like heights, the reader can parse the interlocking of rivers and mountains and can hear the grand silence that "reigned everywhere" at the beginning of time.[26] Likewise, this heightened vantage point—and its seeming removal from the negotiations of historical time—allows the narrative to maintain multiple temporal modes that interchangeably pause, sweep forward, and gesture back. To the eye of the god-like

[25] *Religion in the United States*, 7.
[26] Ibid.

observer, the continent "spreads out like an open fan"; to the west one might catch sight of herds of buffalo meandering across the Great American Desert.[27] Readers are again invited to view both sides of the Mississippi River, and to notice the mountain ranges which parallel each other along the western and eastern coasts. Spanning the entire length of North and South America, the western range functions like "the backbone in large animals, to give it unity and strength."[28] Spread out before the viewer like a body, the entirety of the North American continent—North and South—appears to have the symmetry, the distinguishing marks, and the sinuous strength of an animal.[29]

Baird eschews human presence in the opening scene of history. Hardly any mention is made of Native peoples, and those references which do appear are coded in terms of Nature: Native presence is shuffled into the natural shape and activities of the wilderness. Remarking on the vegetation of the plains, Baird writes: "Not a tree, and scarcely a bush, is to be met with in many places for miles. Herds of buffalo sometimes traverse it, and a few straggling Indians are occasionally seen upon its outskirts. With these exceptions, the whole portion of North America

[27] Ibid., 1, 6.
[28] Ibid., 9.
[29] Here Baird's account echoes the logic of William Paley's *Natural Theology*. Originally published in 1802, *Natural Theology* presents an inductive argument for the existence and characteristics of God: the unity of nature—across species, within a single human body—point to the unity of the Deity. In the particular example that Baird highlights, the complex design of the animal spine points to a skilled architect of nature. Of the spine, Paley writes: "Bespeak of a workman a piece of mechanism which shall comprise all these purposes, and let him set about to contrive it; let him try his skill upon it; let him feel the difficulty of accomplishing the task, before he be told how the same thing is effected in the animal frame. Nothing will enable him to judge so well of the wisdom which has been employed; noting will dispose him to think of it so truly" (68). The spine is firm, stable, and flexible; it performs several vital functions, including transporting spinal fluid from the brain through the trunk of the body and providing a fulcrum for the body's movement. Baird adopts the animal spine as a metaphor for describing the unity and strength of the mountain ranges and, by extension, the entire North and South American continent. Like Paley's animal spine, the mountainous spines perform several functions for the continent: they unify the continental body; they distribute and transport and water into valleys and river conduits. But most significantly, the backbone of the North American continent inductively argues for the existence and goodness of a divine Creator. The unified forms of the continent point to a unified deity; the carefully placed mountains and rivers suggest a skilled architect. By invoking the language and logic of natural theology—a tradition which extends well beyond Paley's important text—Baird extends the constructive argument to argue for the unity of the American continent and American nation. See: William Paley. *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity: Collected from the Appearances of Nature* (London: [s.n.], 1830).

which is now either occupied or claimed by the people of the United States, was, when first visited by Europeans, and for more than a century afterward, one vast wilderness."[30] The plains are desolate: no plant or animal life inhabits it, according to Baird. Further, the parallel structure of the second sentence—herds of buffalo traverse, a few Indians are seen—collapses the distinction between human and animal in this vast wilderness.

In contrast to the "natural inhabitants" of North America, Europeans and "the people of the United States" are depicted as substantive actors: they visit the wild continent, they "occupy" and they "claim." In this way, the first chapter of *Religion in America* constructs a causality that both allows for the innocence of European people and religion in the colonial history of North America—even as it makes room for their eventual claim to and occupation of the "one vast wilderness." The suspended point of view is crucial to this rhetorical aim: it prevents the traveler historian from becoming mired in conflicts, and it allows the narrator and his audience to imagine themselves as god-like observers of a sacred, pre-historical Nature.[31]

This suspended view continues as the narrative turns its focus toward the center of the continent. "Parallel to [the Atlantic and Pacific] coasts," Baird writes, "and at almost equal distances from them, there are two ranges of mountains. The eastern range, called the Alleghany or Apalachian [sic], runs from south-west to north-east, at an average distance of 150 miles from the Atlantic." He continues:

> We may remark, in passing, that although this mountain range apparently separates the waters which flow into the Atlantic Ocean from those which fall into

[30] Ibid., 11.

[31] This narratological tactic is akin to what Mary Louise Pratt calls strategies "anti-conquest," that is "the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony." The protagonist of the anti-conquest narrative is also referred to as "the seeing man," or "he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess." By opening his account in the language of anti-conquest, Baird removes himself—and, importantly, his historical subject—from the "on the ground" reality of imperial violence and the transcultural exchange of the contact zones. The American religious genesis is founded in a pure state of nature: innocent, passive, removed from human conflict. See p.7ff in Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation.* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

> the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence, such is not really the case. These mountains simply stand, as it were, on the plateau or elevated plain on which those waters have their origin. Rising in the immediate vicinity of each other, and often interlocking, these streams are not in the least affected in their course by the mountains, the gaps and valleys of which seem to have been made to accommodate them, instead of their accommodating themselves to the shape and position to the mountains. In a part of its northern extensions, this range of mountains seem to detach itself entirely from the plain where those streams have their source, and lies quite to the east of it, so that the streams that fall into the Atlantic, in making their way to the southeast, as it were, cut through the mountain range, in its entire width.[32]

Notice that Baird presents two conflicting interpretations of the mountain range and the rivers intertwined within its peaks. First, he remarks upon the "apparent" causality: at first glance, the Appalachians seem to actively separate and direct the flow of water through the continent. On the east, the mountains direct water down its back and into the Atlantic Ocean; on the west, it moves water into the Mississippi and St. Lawrence. But then, Baird reframes this causality: "such is not really the case," he argues; in fact, the mountains "simply stand," "accommodating themselves" to the activities of the streams and rivers. The waters are so powerful, Baird writes, that at one point they "cut through the mountain range in its entire width." Even a god-like distance from these subjects cannot offer a reliable understanding of the natural world; our passing observations deceive us.

If this depiction of the valley creates distance between the reader/observer and the subject of study, it also detaches the landscape from its implied creator. In the paragraph above, the narrator invokes a divine creator only obliquely: the valleys "seem to have been made to accommodate" the mountains, he writes. Although for Baird and his nineteenth-century audience God is the implied creator, the text emphasizes—and in this passage, explicitly negotiates—a kind of natural causality that unfolds upon the North American landscape. From its god-like

[32] *Religion in the United States*, 9.

vantage point, Baird's "imperial eye" carefully traces the forms of mountains and rivers, and their interlocking arrangement, in order to discern the order and regularity of nature—and how this same order might manifest itself in the unfolding of a national religious history.

In other places within the first chapter, the narrator explicitly names the intentions of a creator; but even in these direct references, the activity of God is mostly relegated to the original moments of creation. For instance, the ceaseless activity of newly-created rivers is used to illustrate the interplay between Nature and the divine: of the St. Lawrence River he exclaims, "Wonderful display of wisdom and beneficence in the arrangements of Divine creation and providence!"[33] Or a few sentences later, remarking upon the sloping plains that descend toward the Mississippi River, he writes that "the Creator has, in his wisdom, given to [the Mississippi valley] a peculiar configuration."[34] As he continues to argue, due to the precise designs of God, water is able to continually replenishes itself in lakes and rivers; further, the flow of water is carefully regulated so as not to exceed certain natural boundaries. Baird's God of the St. Lawrence and Mississippi is a deist god: because the divine clockmaker has formed the world perfectly and secured its ongoing operation with natural laws, God need not continually intervene in Nature.

In these opening passages, Baird constructs a portrait of the Mississippi Valley that is suspended in time, operating outside of—or beyond—the intervention of humans or of God. In the penultimate paragraph of the chapter, this suspension of time becomes explicit:

> Thus did the work of preparing it to be the abode of millions of civilized men go silently and steadily on; the earth gathering strength, during this long repose, for the sustentation of nations which were to be born in the distant future. One vast and almost unbroken forest covered the whole continent, embosoming in its sombre [sic] shadows alike the meandering streamlet and the mighty river, the retired bay and the beautiful and tranquil lake. A profound and solemn silence

[33] Ibid., 10.
[34] Ibid.

> reigned everywhere, save when interrupted by the songs of birds which sported amid the trees, the natural cries of the beasts which roamed beneath, the articulate sounds of the savage tribes around their wigwams, or their shouts in the chase or in the battle. The work of God, in all its simplicity, and freshness, and grandeur, was seen everywhere; that of man almost nowhere; universal nature rested, and, as it were, kept Sabbath.[35]

In this scene, the narrative stands still, preserving the forms of a newly-created world: the earth "rests" during "a long repose," "solemn silence reigns everywhere," and "universal nature" "keeps Sabbath." The emphatic pause is further dramatized by the silences—and silencing—of slumbering Nature: the rivers and forests "goes silently and steadily on" as a "solemn silence reigns everywhere." The movement of the waters— "the meandering streamlet and the mighty river, the retired bay and the beautiful and tranquil lake"—seemingly dampens the "interruptions" of birds, beasts, and "savage tribes." In mirroring the *Genesis* stories, Baird's iteration of the American myth makes a significant alteration: rather than maintaining Sabbath on the seventh day—after humans are created—Baird freezes time on the fifth day.

Only in the final paragraph of the chapter is this long pause broken; the narrative seemingly lurches forward from pre-history to present day. The slumbering Sabbath is now broken by land and waterways peopled with cities and ships:

> Two hundred years or more pass away, and how widely different is the scene! Along the coasts, far and wide, tall ships pass and repass. The white sails of brig and sloop are seen in every bay, cove, and estuary. The rivers are covered with boats of every size, propelled by sea or oar. And in every water the steamboat, heedless alike of wind and tide, pursues its restless way, vomiting forth steam and flame. Commerce flourishes along every stream. Cities are rising in all directions. The forests are giving way to cultivated fields or verdant meadows. Savage life, with its wigwams, its blanket-coverings, its poverty, and its misery, yields on every side to the arts, the comforts, even the luxuries of civilization.[36]

[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 11.

The machinery of civilization contrasts sharply with the sounds and rhythms of Nature that "reigned everywhere" in the previous paragraph. Their industrious activity is seemingly endless: "tall ships pass and repass;" "the white sails of brig and sloop" are seen everywhere; rivers are overwhelmed with "boats of every size, propelled by sea or oar."[37] Strikingly, this account of American religions makes no mention here of church buildings, meeting houses, or bustling missionary circuits. Instead, Baird focuses on the vehicles of commerce: the waterways of the continent, perfectly designed, are now transformed into conduits of trade and "the luxuries of civilization." By the conclusion of the chapter, the North American continent has been claimed by "millions of civilized men." The forms and habits of Nature, once steady in their production and persistence over time, now "accommodate themselves" to the activities of industrial and agrarian cultures: rivers are covered by boats; forests are bowed to farmland; steamboats "vomit forth steam and flame" as it "pursues its restless way" upon the water. And in like manner, Baird suggests, the habits of Native American life "yield on every side" to civilized culture.

With few exceptions, the narrator frames the cultivation of the Mississippi Valley in language that avoids naming human or divine actors. At the beginning of the chapter—in Baird's depiction of pre-history—the agents of activity are primarily natural: mountains stand, rivers rise, interweave, and cut through rock. Nature propels itself throughout the duration of one, long Sabbath. The forms of Nature hold their shape and maintain regular movements, indebted to a Divine Architect for their original and perfect formation. At the end of the chapter, the machinery of agriculture and commerce become the primary agents: the rivers are now depicted as a grand but passive stage upon which the drama of civilization is played out. Crucially,

[37] This nineteenth-century American trope of machinery interrupting the silence and stillness of Nature was first identified by Leo Marx in his influential study, *Machine in the Garden*. See: *Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

colonization is represented not by European peoples, but rather symbolized in the personification of ships: not people, but sails and steamboats dominate the Mississippi.

The entire case made by *Religion in the United States*—the exceptional voluntarism, the diversity of religious expression, America's ability to expand the reach of Protestant empire—rests upon this opening, foundational chapter. Baird argues that the North American continent was formed, in the very beginning, for the project of European colonization. The rivers, made strong enough to cut through mountain ranges, now speed the production and travel of agrarian goods and sustain the "millions of civilized men" who have arrived upon the shores of the United States. The original forms of Nature persist, seemingly suspended and untouched by human activity, until European civilizations expand upon the continent.

Native Cultures and the Fragmenting of Narrative Time

If the first chapter of *Religion in the United States* places central emphasis upon the mountain ranges and waterways that designate and intersect upon the Mississippi Valley, so too are subsequent chapters inflected by the frontier space and its creation at the "beginning" of Christian history in America. The conflicting timelines that constitute the cosmogonic narrative of the Valley—stagnant, progressive, cyclical, and even fragmented—are rendered visible through the heightened view of a god-like perspective: from this viewpoint, Baird and his readers are able to witness the unfolding and refolding of time during the "long repose" of Nature. Similarly, when Baird turns to an analysis of human cultures on the frontiers, his narrative of progress and primitivism folds and unfolds in complex ways as his account tries to negotiate the continuity of a sacred Christian past and the often-disjointed leaps forward into the modern.

While the first chapter relies upon a suspended view of the continent, the second chapter draws upon Baird's travels "on the ground" as an agent of the American Sunday School Union: here, the author describes minute details of architecture, the regularity and irregularity of languages, and the cadences of plain-style preaching. Although the first chapter presents the most comprehensive overview of the pre-historical frontier landscape, his account of Native languages and religious practices—as well as his extensive study of revivalism, voluntary societies, and evangelical preaching—construct a portrait of "the present conditions" of evangelical churches on the American frontier.

The second chapter, entitled "The Aborigines of North America," opens with a general overview of Native Americans and emphasizes both the apparent unity and variety of some "great number" of tribes. Baird writes that "North America, when discovered by Europeans, was in the occupancy of a great number of uncivilized tribes; some large, but most of them small, and although differing in some respects from one another, yet exhibiting indubitable evidence of a common origin."[38] When he compares the skin tone, facial features, and bone structures of Native peoples, he writes that they share "a striking similarity of organization" and yet "are not wanting considerable varieties."[39] Native Americans were not only unified by a "common origin" and a shared state of un-civilization; as Baird describes them, their shared features also emphasized a clear difference—and historical distance—from the "millions of civilized men" destined to inherit the Mississippi Valley.

This depicted difference and constructed historical distance also characterizes the volume's account of Native languages and "civilized languages." Drawing on the work of Alexander von Humboldt, John Heckewelder and Peter Stephen Du Ponceau's studies in

[38] *Religion in the United States*, 8-9.
[39] Ibid., 8.

philology, Baird argues that human languages simplify as they advance: they shed unnecessary complexity and streamline complex patterns of communication into increasingly simple and efficient modes of speech and writing.[40] For instance, Baird writes, "The Old English was much more clumsy [sic] than the modern." The same is true of "every cultivated language": early, primitive languages—the rudimentary forms of Old English, French, and German—are inefficient and exceedingly irregular. "The civilized mind tends to simplify language," Baird later writes.[41]

In his study of Native languages, Baird argues that each family of tribes possess their own distinct collection of languages and yet, because the language families are "marked by strong grammatical affinities," they can be united by their shared linguistic traits. He continues:

> All the language of the aborigines of America are exceedingly complicated, regular in the forms of verbs, irregular in those of nouns, and admitting of changes by modifications of final syllables, initial syllables, and even, in the case of verbs, by the insertion of particles, in a way unknown to the languages of western Europe… Synthesis, or the habit of compounding words with words, prevails, instead of the more simple method of analysis, which a highly cultivated use of language always displays.[42]

According to Baird, all Native languages as "exceedingly complicated." Using western European languages as the standard, he judges the irregular nouns of Native languages—and the complex

---

[40] See, for instance: Alexander von Humboldt, *The Travels and Researches of Alexander Von Humboldt: Being a Condensed Narrative of His Journeys in the Equinoctial Regions of America, and in Asiatic* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1855); John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder, *An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations, Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States* (Philadelphia: A. Small, 1819); Heckewelder, *A Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren Among the Delaware and Mohegan Indians* (Philadelphia: McCarty & Davis, 1820); Heckewelder, *Names Which the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians, Who Once Inhabited This Country, Had Given to Rivers, Streams, Places,* (Philadelphia, 1834); Peter Stephen Du Ponceau. *Mémoire Sur Le Système Grammatical Des Langues De Quelques Nations Indiennes De L'Amerique Du Nord* (Paris: A. Pihan de La Forest [etc.], 1970). For secondary criticism see: Sarah Dees, "An Equation of Language and Spirit: Comparative Philology and the Study of American Indian Religions," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion 27, 2015),* 195-219.; Sean P. Harvey, "'Must Not Their Languages Be Savage and Barbarous Like Them?': Philology, Indian Removal, and Race Science." *Journal of the Early Republic, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Winter 2010),* 505-532.

[41] Ibid., pp.12-13

[42] Ibid. p.12

patterns of modification that define them—to lack cultivation and methodological sophistication. Those who speak the language, he concluded, "have never been a highly civilized people."[43]

However, Baird argues, some Native languages are showing signs of significant change. In particular, evidences of linguistic modification are most noticeable on the frontier: "The languages of the tribes bordering upon the frontier settlement of the United States, begin to exhibit visible evidences of the effect of contact with civilization. The half-breeds are also introducing modifications, which show that the civilized mind tends to simplify language."[44] As border languages come into contact with each other, they intermingle and producing new locutions and patterns of speech. In this way, frontier spaces—in particular, the border points where Native and Euro-American peoples meet—become the central place in which civilization is reborn in the West. For Baird, the "evidences" of linguistic change illustrate the conversion of the Mississippi Valley into the culture, language, and sounds of a Protestant America.

As Baird tell it, in these contact zones only Native languages are changed, or converted: only Natives "exhibit evidences" of "contact with civilization." The narrative Baird constructs about linguistic conversion is a familiar one, and it is easily translated into religious terms: in periods of cultural contact and exchange, only Native religions are influenced to change. Contrastively, European Christianities—like their languages—provide the "uncivilized" with reliable and stable models of modern religious expression. In both the modification of language and religion, the process of civilizing effectively updates old, primitive forms into more modern ways of thinking, communicating, and building culture.

In just this way, Baird's analysis of Native American religions and cultures parallels his account of languages on the Western frontier: he directly links Native cultures with the ancient

[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid. p.12-13.

past, implicitly and sometimes explicitly arguing that the European models of culture and religion offer a more modernized, simplified alternative. For instance, in a sweeping summary of Native religions, Baird writes: "They are not without some notions of a Supreme Power which governs the world, and of an Evil Spirit who is the enemy of mankind. But their theogony and theology are alike crude and incoherent."[45] He continues:

> They have no notion of a future resurrection of the body. Like children, they cannot divest themselves of the idea that the spirit of the deceased still keeps company with the body in the grave, or that it wanders in the immediate vicinity. Some, however, seem to have a confused impression that there is a sort of Elysium for the departed brave, where they will for ever [sic] enjoy the pleasures of the chase and of war. Even of their own origin they have nothing but a confused tradition, not extending back beyond three or four generations. As they have no calendars, and reckon their years only by the return of certain seasons, so they have no record of time past.[46]

In this passage alone, Baird uses the adjective "confused" twice to describe a Native understanding of the afterlife and of their own "origin" and history. Although not stated in explicit comparison, Baird seems to suggest that these "confused" notions are much more complicated—or simply "incoherent"—when compared with the mature theologies of European Christian monotheism and its subsequent understanding of history and the afterlife.

Notably, Baird's criticism of Native theology focuses almost exclusively on the temporal dimensions of those beliefs: they do not believe in the resurrection of the body, he laments, but instead have the "confused impression" that the body and spirit remain united even after death. As for their sense of history: they live only in the repetition of seasonal cycles, and are unable to keep record of events "beyond three or four generations." Drawing out a timeline that together maps ancient, cultural traditions and eternity, Baird argues that Native cultures are seemingly stuck in cyclical time—unable to extend into the past and retrieve a full sense of cultural history,

[45] Ibid., 10.
[46] Ibid.

unable to progress forward from childhood, and ultimately unable to transcend death through the resurrection of the body.

Like his study of Native language, Baird's representation of Native religion is broadly construed and almost exclusively conveyed in the present tense. His account only rarely admits variation between Native societies or changes in patterns of language or belief over time. Although the chapter on "The Aborigines of North America" precedes the chapters on the "discovery" and "colonization" of the continent, his study is almost entirely focused on the present. What is more, even in presenting an account of "the present conditions" of Native societies, he still relegates these linguistic and religious forms to an ancient, or at least pre-modern, past. In his account of Native theology, for example, he remarks that "like children" they believe in the continued union of the soul and the body after death; Baird implicitly, but unmistakably, portrays Native belief as being stuck in infancy—it represents a less-mature form of the Christian understanding of death.

When discussing Native architecture, however, the narrative does not maintain a present-tense account. Although Baird still relies upon implicit cues to displace Native cultures into an ancient past, he also constructs this temporal distance through a disjointed and ambiguous timeline. For instance, of Native architecture, he writes:

> Their manner of life, *when first discovered*, was rude and barbarous. They had nothing that deserved the name of houses. Rude huts, mostly for temporary use, of various forms, but generally circular, were made by erecting a pole to support others leaning upon it as a centre, covering these with leaves and bark, and lining the interior with skins of the buffalo, the deer, the bear, &c. A hole at the top permitted the escape of smoke; a large opening in the side answered the purpose of a door, a window, and sometimes of a chimney.[47]

[47] Ibid., 8 (emphasis added).

Native architecture—primitive and temporary—is deemed undeserving of "the name house." Baird goes on to describe these homes (generally circular) in some depth; what is more, his depiction emphasizes the ways in which these human-made constructions maintain a visible link to the natural world. Leaves and bark, buffalo, deer, and bear skins—all these immediately reveal the original, natural sources that provide the materials for Native homes.

Structuring this account of Native culture is a strange, disjointed timeline: unlike Baird's account of Native languages and theology (which both read almost entirely in the present tense), his account of Native architecture and sweeping judgment of "their manner of life" as "rude and barbarous" repeatedly jumps backward and forward in time. In the paragraph above, the description renders their "rude huts" at the time of initial European and Native contact: he writes of their houses "when [they were] first discovered." Only a page later, however, he hearkens to the present: "But all who know anything of the aboriginal tribes of North America, even in the present times, when the Indians that border upon the abodes of civilized men live far more comfortably than their ancestors three hundred years ago, are well aware that their existence is a miserable one."[48] One need not study Native American history to understand his assessment, Baird claims; by simply comparing Native homes with the bordering homes of "civilized men," any observer can conclude that "their existence is a miserable one." Baird also invokes his first-hand experience: "I have seen various tribes of Indians; I have travelled among them; I have slept in their poor abodes, and never have I seen them under any circumstances without being deeply impressed with the conviction of the misery of those especially who are not yet civilized."[49]

[48] Ibid. 9.
[49] Ibid.

Each of these excerpts not only links "uncivilized" with a state of "misery"—it does so by locating "the uncivilized" in the distant, murky past. Unlike his narration of European history, which includes specific dates, the names of historical actors, and locations, Baird's narration of "The Aborigines of North America" avoids articulating a precise timeline, naming specific actors, or precisely defining the places in which these "rude huts" once dwelled. The only markers that define shifts in time are imprecise, at best; what is more, these temporal markers are often defined by events in European colonial history—as, for example, his opening descriptions that begin with "when first discovered by Europeans."

Perhaps most disturbing is the ambiguous temporal language that concludes the chapter, which admits only "*the gradual wasting away* and *disappearance* of tribes which once occupied the territories of the United States."[50] Here again, Baird fails to locate these events in specific times and places; although he does name a few tribes—the Catawbas, the Uchees, and the Natches—he fails to note the names of specific historical actors. This pattern continues throughout the final pages of the chapter:

> Nothing can be more certain than that the tribes which once occupied the country now comprised within the United States, were at the great epoch of the first settlement of Europeans on its shores, gradually wasting away, and had long been so…[51]
>
> A year or two before the Pilgrim Fathers reached the coast of New England, the very part of the coast where they settled was swept of almost its entire population by a pestilence. Several of the tribes which existed when the colonists arrived from Europe, were but remnants, as they themselves asserted…[52]
>
> It is not easy, indeed, to estimate what was the probable number of Indians who occupied, at the time of its discovery, the country east of the Mississippi and south of the St. Lawrence, comprising very nearly what may be called the settled

[50] Ibid., 13 (emphasis added).
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

> portion of the United States; and from which the Indian race has disappeared in consequence of emigration, or other causes.[53]

In his accounting of Native and European contact—and the subsequent forced displacements, wars, and genocide—Baird replaces the specificities of historical time with broad gestures toward European landing on the continent: "the great epoch of the first settlement of Europeans," "a year or two before the Pilgrim Fathers reached the coast," and "at the time of [the continent's] discovery" only sketch vague markers in relation to European settlement. Similarly, through his use of temporal signifiers, Baird both diminishes the violence of colonization even as he exaggerates the "gradual wasting away" and "disappearance" of Native Americans.

In Baird's analysis of Native languages, religion, and architecture, he constructs a timeline that is at once fragmented and sweepingly general, both present-focused and yet resolved to displace Native cultures in a murky and pre-historical past. What is more, Baird's depiction of Native cultures—which is almost exclusively contained in this short chapter at the beginning of the volume—reflects a rigid typology that distinguishes peoples based on regional affiliation, language group, and visible, cultural markers. Like the analysis of European cultures that follows in later chapters, Baird's understanding of Native cultures relies upon stable categories of race, language, and culture that migrate seemingly unchanged across space and time. And yet, the frontier offers an important exception: here, under the sway of Protestant missionaries, Native communities exhibit striking evidence of "contact with civilization."[54]

---

[53] Ibid., 14.

[54] For a comparative example of what German nationalists labeled the *Sprachgrenze*, or "language frontier" see Pieter M. Judson's study, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontier of Imperial Austria.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006. Judson's study shows the ways in which nationalist indifference and widespread bilingualism frustrated German, Czech, Slovene, and Italian attempts to designate nation groups based on the idea of a "mother tongue." In doing so, Judson "rejects the very concept of frontier or borer as an adequate description of this world and contends rather that most inhabitants of such regions rarely viewed themselves specifically as 'frontier people' or their regions as frontiers between nations" (3).

"Carrying Civilization and Religion into the Vast Plains of the West"

In contrast to his account of Native American language and culture, Baird's rendering of American Protestantism places plain-style preaching squarely within the arc of progressive history: it is religion and language modernized, simplified, and streamlined. For Baird, American Evangelical preaching—above all other cultural forms—enables the most direct access to "gospel truths." In shedding complexity, embellishment, and indirect rhetorical styles, plain style preaching links linguistic efficiency with the distilled essence of theological "truths." Thus, Baird argues in a later chapter describing "theological opinion" in America, "the progress of religious opinion will be found to be towards the simplest and most scriptural view of the gospel."[55] Importantly, this "progress of opinion" is maintained not only through a particular orientation to sacred Christian texts—but also through a form of simple and direct preaching that grants religious people immediate, direct access to these fundamental truths.

However, even as Baird heralds American Evangelicalism as advancing more simplified and modern forms of Christian theology and language, he also firmly roots his account in the Biblical narratives of the early Christian apostles. As a result, the timeline that structures Baird's unfolding account of "Evangelical Religion" is both circular and progressive: in its attention to the fundamental forms of apostolic creeds and preaching, it parallels the opening sketch of the North American *Genesis*; in its claim to epitomize the "progress of religious opinion," the account seeks to place "evangelical" traditions at the horizon of the American religious future.

Significantly, the expansion of this evangelical timeline—both forward and backward into myth and history—unfolds as missionaries claim and convert territories and "wild" spaces to Christianity. This chapter has argued that the Mississippi Valley occupies a crucial space in

[55] Ibid., 661.

Baird's account of *Religion in the United States*; to this end, the final section will demonstrate the ways in which Baird's representation of progressive "evangelical" churches is explicitly tied to the expansion of these churches on the frontier. In his discussion of the "Voluntary Principle" (Book IV), in his description of "The Church and Pulpit in America" (Book V), in his analysis of "evangelical" churches (Book VI), and in the concluding book, "Efforts of the American Churches for the Conversion of the World" (Book VIII), Baird emphasizes the ways in which established churches on the Atlantic coast extend their missions westward across the Appalachians and Mississippi River.

In order to link his account of the "evangelical churches" to the Mississippi Valley, Baird employs many of the familiar tactics: he argues that Providence reserved the territory for New England colonists until they "were better fitted to carry civilization and religion" into the wild and rugged frontiers of the West; he emphasizes the silence and stillness of the Mississippi Valley as it awaits the occupation of these "better fitted" colonists; and he maintains that his present moment—the middle of the nineteenth century—represents a significant shift in the history of religion in America, as those New England churches gather strength and turn their attention to the newly-acquired territory in the West, and even to the world. In this way, the timeline that structures these latter accounts of the Valley—and those denominations that track preaching circuits and raise schools and churches upon it—shifts forward and backward: from the pre-historical "Sabbath-keeping," to the present forms and effects of plain-style preaching, to the extension of American missions into the future and around the world.

As the map of "The Three Great Divisions" illustrates, Baird imagines the Mississippi Valley as spatially separate from the two parallel slopes that border on the east and west: The Valley has its own unique history and character and it also, as the organization of Baird's volume

seems to suggest, operates under a different timeline, and perhaps under a different Providential dispensation. In a series of chapters that describe the "obstacles" faced by the voluntary system in America, Baird writes of the "kind and wise Providence which kept the great valley of the Mississippi from the possession, and almost from the knowledge of the colonists of the United States, for more than one hundred and fifty years." Whereas the first chapter, with its aerial view of the entire continent, points toward the preservation of the entire continent for European Christians, here Baird points toward the specific destiny of the Mississippi Valley. He continues:

> By that time they had so far occupied and reduced to cultivation the less fertile hills of the Atlantic slope, and there had acquired that hardy, industrious, and virtuous character, which better fitted them to carry civilization and religion into the vast plains of the west. So that, at this day, the New England and other Atlantic States, whilst all increasing in population themselves, serve at the same time as nurseries, from which the West derives many of the best plants that are transferred to its noble soil.[56]

Just as the opening account depicted the Mississippi Valley at rest—"keeping Sabbath" for "two hundred years or more"—so does this interlude here argue that a "kind a wise Providence" kept these hardy and industrious New England colonists from crossing the Mississippi too soon. Only after they had been properly fitted with the resources to "carry civilization and religion" to the West, did Providence bestow upon these colonists a new and wild territory. With the Mississippi in view, the Atlantic Slope now functions as a "nursery" that generates "many of the best plants" which are then transplanted and thrive in the "noble soil" of the West.

Earlier in Book I, Baird pauses to briefly describe, from the vantage point of the present moment, the "interior colonization of the country." Emphasizing both the boundlessness and the newness of the Valley, Baird depicts this scene as if he—and his readers—arrived on the crest of the hill at the moment of European discovery. He writes:

[56] Ibid., 69.

> It is now (1842), about sixty years since the tide of emigration from the Atlantic States set fairly into the valley of the Mississippi… When this emigration westward first commenced, all the necessaries that the emigrants required to take with them from the east, had to be carried on horseback, no roads for wheeled carriages having been opened through the mountains. On arriving at the last ridge over-looking the plains to the west, a boundless forest lay stretched out before those pioneers of civilisation [sic], like an ocean of living green. Into the depths of that forest they had to plunge.[57]

The road to the Mississippi Valley was grueling—evoking an Eliadean understanding of journey to the center—and had to be traveled on horseback, rather than carriage. In this narrative, Baird marks both the commencement of emigration to the continental center and the moment when these "pioneers of civilisation" reach the summit of "the last ridge." With the plains in sight, these colonists are also able to view "a boundless forest." Here, on the mountainous periphery, Baird's historical actors are able to survey the long-kept secret of the Mississippi Valley; only after pausing at the overlook do they then plunge forward into the depths.

This depiction echoes a similar passage in his *View of the Valley of the Mississippi*, where Baird also seems to argue that this Mississippi Valley has long been—and still is—in a primeval state of Nature. There, he writes:

> In a state of nature, in which almost this whole Valley still is, it was a vast forest of trees, save where its lakes expand their waters, or where the prairies in the southwest prevail. This interminable forest was, and still is, the home of the Buffalo, the Elk, the Deer, the Bear, the Panther, and a vast variety of other species of animals, which I cannot here undertake to describe, or even enumerate. But what is infinitely more interesting and affecting, this vast region long was, and is still, the abode of many tribes of ignorant, degraded, benighted men, who deserve our sympathy, and our aid in furnishing them with the means of civilization, and of conversion to true Christianity.[58]

Here again, Baird emphasizes the "vast forest of trees" and "interminable forest" in which buffalo, elk, deer, and bear roam. But what Baird makes explicit in this passage from his travel

[57] Ibid., 32.
[58] Robert Baird, *View of the Valley of the Mississippi*, 10.

writings is the inherent connection between the interminable "state of nature" and the "tribes of ignorant, degraded, benighted men." Just as *Religion in the United States* opened with a vision of "herds of wandering buffalo" and "a few straggling Indians" populating the Mississippi Valley, so too does this depiction in *View of the Valley* subsume Native Americans in a state of nature.

Interspersed throughout the volume, these representations of the Mississippi Valley are structured by a narrative point of view that flips forward and backward in time. When invoking "kind and wise Providence," Baird retrospectively orders an account of a Valley hidden from New England view—and only later possessed by "better fitted" carriers of the gospel. Even more interesting is his accounting of the colonization of the interior, which relies both on present-tense retrospection and a reenactment of discovery on the crest of the Appalachian Mountains. In both of these passages, Baird depicts the Valley, and the people who first inhabited it, in a perpetual state of nature—seemingly unchanged from the moment of creation.

Unfolding upon this primeval "ocean of living green" are the many missionary societies, voluntary organizations, and church plants that populate Baird's account of "evangelical" Christianity. If in the second chapter Baird argues, along with Heckewelder and others, that Native languages are not only excessively complex—but primitive and *unmodern* in their irregularity and variance—then Baird continues to build upon this linguistic theory in his study of plain style preaching. Here, he argues that American preaching is the modernized language *par excellence*: it is language simplified, direct, and clear. Better than any other form of religious rhetoric, it communicates the "simple truths of the gospel" with precision.

Thus, according to Baird, simplicity becomes a defining mark not only of American religion in particular, but of religious progress in general. Perhaps because of the growing influence of American missionary societies, Baird argues that the model of plain style preaching

will eventually effect global religious progress in the evangelical turn toward "the simplest and most scriptural view of the gospel."[59] Take, for instance, this paragraph in which he expounds upon the benefits of simplicity in preaching:

> The first characteristic of American preaching, I should say, is *simplicity.* It is simple in the form of discourse or sermon, usually adopted by the better educated classes especially of the ministry… The grand aim of our preachers, taken as a body, is to present the true meaning of a text, rather than to produce what is called *effect.* Again, preaching in the United States is simple in the point of language, the plain and familiar being preferred to the ornate and rhetorical. Such of our preacher as wish to be perfectly intelligible, prefer words of Saxon to those of Latin origin, as being better understood by the people. Vigour, too is preferred to beauty, and perspicuity to embellishment.[60]

Baird goes on to use the term "simple" three more times in this paragraph; in each instance the term contrasts direct and unembellished rhetoric with excessive pomp and drama. American preaching emphasizes intelligibility rather than the ornate excess, colloquial language rather than Latin, "perspicuity to embellishment." When used correctly in the pulpit, these simple and colloquial patterns of speech effectively communicate religious truths.[61] Plain style preaching doesn't distract the audience with beautiful phraseology, or draw attention to the skill of the preacher. In Baird's words: "Truth has a better chance, so to speak, of making its way to the hearts of the audience, than when announced with all the fascinations of a splendid address and captivating manner."[62]

In his uplift of rhetorical simplicity, Baird repeatedly invokes the Christian Apostles—or the "Age of the Apostles"—as the model that American preachers imitate. American preachers "imitate the freedom, *simplicity, and directness*, with *which the apostles* addressed the

[59] Ibid., 661.
[60] Ibid., 434-435.
[61] For a history of plain-style preaching, see Kenneth Cmiel, *Democratic Eloquence: The Fight Over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Morrow, 1990).
[62] *Religion in the United States*, 435.

understandings and sensibilities of men."[63] Even written language, when molded to the biblical model, reflects this simplification of creed: Baird praises the progress of the Lutheran Church in America for "think[ing] that a written creed should be short, comprehending like that of the apostles, which was long the only creed in the primitive churches, only the doctrines necessary to salvation."[64] Or, in a section on "the administration of discipline" within the churches, Baird writes that the code of discipline within American evangelical churches follows the "*simple and clear* directions given by our Lord and his apostles."[65] The language of the apostles—both spoken and written in American Evangelical churches—is always simple, straightforward, and practical.

In fact, the landscape of *Religion in the United States* is populated by American apostles: Baird invokes John Eliot's nickname as "Apostle of the Indians" and refers to leaders in the temperance movement as "Apostles of Temperance."[66] Further, he praises the Protestant church in New England for maintaining a "purity of doctrine" for over two hundred years: "A more constant prosperity of spiritual religion [has not] been enjoyed by an equal body of churches for so long a time since the days of the apostles."[67] Or again: Baird argues that "the science and art of interpretation" ask the preacher to study not what Edwards or Luther said—but rather what Christ and the apostles taught. "The tendency of theological science," he writes, "as well as of the popular exposition of Christianity from the pulpit, is towards the primitive simplicity of Christian truth."[68] In interpreting the scriptures, in organizing church bodies, in converting

[63] Ibid., 663.
[64] Ibid., 589.
[65] Ibid., 427 (emphasis added).
[66] Ibid., 688, 391.
[67] Ibid., 520.
[68] Ibid. 661-662.

communities, Baird argues that those most effectively engaged in the work of religious change model the simple teachings of the apostles.

In one sense, Baird's account of American Christian preaching interprets the simplicity and directness of plain style preaching as a mark of religious progress: in contrast to the irregularities and complexities of Native American languages and other "primitive" languages, American preaching privileges simple word choice—Anglo Saxon over the Latin, for example—and straightforward structures. Baird argues that when the preacher adopts plain language, "truth has a better chance… of making its way to the hearts of the audience." Linking this form of rhetoric with the modern, Baird argues that in the American context this "theological science"—this "science and art of interpretation"—tends toward "the primitive simplicity of the Christian truth."

But in another sense, Baird's account of modern, advancing language inherently implies a return to more primitive forms: even the practice of "theological science" depends upon a search for the "primitive simplicity" in scriptural texts and in apostolic models. Baird repeatedly links the advancement of language with a reengagement with the "primitive church": as new apostles rise up on the North American continent, *Religion in the United States* argues that Christianity simultaneously begins anew and lurches forward in the wild spaces of the America. Those "pioneers of civilization" carried only the most basic necessities, Baird reminds us, as they "plunged" into the depths of that primordial "ocean of living green."

Conclusion: Religion in the Mississippi Valley

The Robert Baird commonly featured in our historiographical studies is a proud Presbyterian, quick to criticize Mormons ("cunning in leaders; delusion in their dupes"), and

never "a great admirer of camp meetings."[69] These depictions, culled from the pages *Religion in the United States,* offer a somewhat stock characterization. This chapter argues that by refocusing the critical lens and analyzing the central role of the Mississippi Valley in Baird's magnum opus, a slightly different portrait comes into view. This version of Baird traveled the continent and the world, integrating his travel logs, his theological training, and studies in linguistic theory into a sweeping account of religious progress that is at once deeply dependent upon Christian narratives of world creation and the early church—and, at the same time, clearly inflected by theories of social science, language study, and cartographic attempts at nation-making.

At first, Baird's narrative of Christian consensus—what Jon Butler terms the "myth of the American Christian past"—seems to have a clearly-ordered timeline that progresses forward from the "origin" of Christianity in America to its "present conditions." However, by attending to both the visual representations of an American origin story and the centrality of the Mississippi Valley, the seemingly ordered and progressive timeline begins to fray and bend back upon itself. Indeed, Baird's representation of religion in the Valley relies upon a complex structuring of myth and history, a negotiation of present conditions and future hopes. Natural and human histories maintain continuity, they progress, they return to "primitive simplicity," they fragment, and sometimes, according to Baird, they disappear. If as Butler argues, "the myth of the Christian past invoked 'history' to shape the present," it did so through multiple narrative modes, and by invoking a variety of biblical and even social scientific storylines in order to consolidate a case for Protestant cultural power and destiny.[70]

[69] Ibid., 647, 493.
[70] Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith,* 285-286.

The multiplicity of time in Baird's narrative reflects a tension inherent in the discipline of church history and in the studies of other scientists and social scientists of the mid-nineteenth century. In the mid-century United States, not only did territorial expansion press religious historians, linguists, and other forms of state-supported social science to apply their theories and extend their maps to include new populations and human cultures within the borders of the American nation; what is more, these studies interacted with new chronologies, and shifted the logic of old narratives to accommodate a wide range of social scientific data. By the 1850s, historians were beginning to distinguish their craft from the once popular forms of "romantic history" written by George Bancroft, Francis Parkman, and William Prescott.[71] And crucially, one of the ways in which these new "scientific historians" could distinguish themselves was to adopt different forms of chronology, and to reconstruct the traditional patterns of cause and effect.

Baird writes at the nexus of this shift. In many ways, *Religion in the United States* is clearly informed by the rhetorical patterns of romantic history. Like Bancroft and others, he clearly "judged the past in the light of vague, though widely held, convictions about historical progress."[72] What is more, as we saw in the first chapter of Baird's volume, the historian often makes recourse to Providence as the controlling and efficient cause behind every historical act and consequence; as David Levin writes in *History as Romantic Art*, romantic historians believed in a "dynamic Providence whose infinite wisdom has established the laws of the moral world and controlled the direction of history… History was the unfolding of a vast, Providential plan."[73] As

[71] Henry Warner Bowden, *Church History in the Age of Science: Historiographical Patterns in the United States, 1876-1918* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1971), 3-30. See also: David Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959).; John S. Bassett, *The Middle Group of American Historians* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1971).
[72] Bowden, *Church History in the Age of Science*, 4-5.
[73] Levin, *History as Romantic Art*, 25-26.

we have seen, these "vague notions of historical progress" and overarching Providence directly inform the discordant plotline in the first chapter—as the timeline lurches forward from a long pause to "the sights and sounds of civilization"—and the contrasting accounts of Native languages and plain style preaching.

And yet, Baird carefully cites his sources and weaves into his account a growing body of scholarship on Native languages, North American geology, and comparative church statistics that track institutional growth across space and time. In his account of the great "complexities" of Native languages, he cites Alexander von Humboldt, John Heckewelder and Peter Stephen Du Ponceau's studies in philology. Text is interspersed with tables citing the square mileage of each state, the estimated population of each state, the territory of the United States divided by mountain ranges, rivers, and oceans, and an extensive appendix that cites denominational budgets and the number of "church edifices" possessed by each Christian sect. Further, Baird's account of plain-style preaching reflects his own research travels and careful study of American preaching.

As a consequence, *Religion in the United States* negotiates an ongoing tension in the construction of historical causality and in the plotlines that construe this causality: progress is, at times, defined as the increasing simplification of cultural forms and human languages as ancient patterns become modernized—and, at other times, improvement is linked with a circular return to the early moments of Christian history (the founding of the cosmos, in Eliade's terms). In each move, the fulcrum of history—the symbolic center where time and space pivot from one era to the next—shifts: Baird sometimes places emphasis on the cosmogony, sometimes on the early churches, sometimes on the American Apostles, and sometimes on the plain-style preaching of the present. Each of these marks on the timeline inflect the nature of American religion

differently, although all point to its coherence in certain idealized Protestant forms. What all of these chronological "Centers" share is a geographical reference point: the founding of the world, the establishing of the Christian church, the travels and preaching of the Apostles—each of these events unfolds upon the Valley of the Mississippi.

In this way, the Mississippi Valley not only visually centers Baird's account of American religion; it also provides the means—the space—for multiple, conflicting chronologies to intersect and cohere. This construction of time and nationalized space contrasts sharply with late nineteenth-century constructions of American religion. As I will argue in Chapters 2 and 3, Daniel Dorchester and Leonard Woolsey Bacon draw upon different models of the United States and "The West," and they craft their accounts of religion in plain view not only of the Mississippi River and its Valleys, but also with cities booming on the horizon of the Atlantic, the Midwest, and the Southwest.

Laying the Foundations for a Protestant America:

Daniel Dorchester's *Christianity in the United States* and Religious Competition in the Mississippi Valley

> There are certain great focal points of history toward which the lines of past progress have converged, and from which have radiated the molding influences of the future. Such was the Incarnation, such was the German Reformation of the sixteenth century, and such are the *closing years of the nineteenth century*.
>
> **Josiah Strong**
> *Our Country: Its Possible Futures and Its Present Crisis*

Introduction: "The Time Factor in the Problem"

Writing in the final decades of the nineteenth century, Dorchester constructs his account of religion in the Mississippi Valley in ways markedly different from Baird. To be sure, the United States had changed dramatically over the forty years that separate the publication of *Religion in the United States* and *Christianity in the United States*: debates over slavery had severed national denominations into northern and southern factions; slavery itself was abolished and then quickly replaced with the Redemption-era Jim Crow laws of southern, white Democrats; the United States annexed Texas (1848), Southwestern territory from Mexico (1848 and 1853), Oregon Territory from Great Britain (1846), and Alaska from Russia (1867). Meanwhile, mass migration grew cities and expanded farmland in the Great Plains and Midwest as waves of immigrants from Ireland, Central and Western Europe, Mexico, and China arrived on the shores of the United States. In describing this intervening period, R. Lawrence Moore emphasizes the rapid increase in religious diversity: "Orthodox European Jews were beginning to settle in America in significant numbers for the first time, and the Catholic mosaic grew more complex with the infusion of large populations of Italian, Polish, and Slavic people. Furthermore,

contrary to what Schaff and Baird had predicted, the domestically hatched religious groups they most feared, above all the Mormons, had not dropped into oblivion. Others in fact had appeared."[1]

In response to these vast demographic shifts, anti-immigrant and nativist sentiment rose and began to fuel movements like the Know-Nothing Party, policies like the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), and anti-Catholic rhetoric that permeated debates over public schools and the future of the West.[2] Prominent figures like Lyman Beecher and Josiah Strong propagated these fears of foreign influence; in particular, their speeches and publications drew explicit connections between the survival of the nation and the maintenance of Protestant spaces. Beecher, for instance, wrote that "the religious and political destiny of our nation is to be decided in the West" and that "the conflict which is to decide the destiny of the West, will be a conflict of institutions for the education of her sons, for the purposes of superstition, or evangelical light; of despotism, or liberty."[3] Linking "the destiny of the West" with "the political destiny of our nation," Beecher argued that public schools, through the support of local Protestant churches, would ultimately sustain and ensure the future of American destiny.

In addition to linking the future of the nation with the expansion of Sabbath schools in the West, Josiah Strong argued that the final decades of the nineteenth century would determine the future of the nation. Strong took up this issue in the first chapter of *Our Country*; he titles it "The

---

[1] R. Lawrence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of America*, 9.
[2] For more on the nativist movement, see: Katie Oxx, *The Nativist Movement in America: Religious Conflict in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2013); John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002); David Brion Davis, *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971); David Bennett, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American* History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Dale Knobel, *America for Americans: The Nativist Movement in the United States* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1996); Ray Billington *The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American* Nativism (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964).
[3] Lyman Beecher, *Plea for the West* (Cincinnati: Truman & Smith, 1835), 11-12.

Time Factor in the Problem." In 1885, he wrote: "There are certain great focal points of history toward which the lines of past progress have converged, and from which have radiated the molding influences of the future. Such was the Incarnation, such was the German Reformation of the sixteenth century, and such are the *closing years of the nineteenth century.*" Or again: "Many are not aware that we are living in extraordinary times. Few suppose that these years of peaceful prosperity, in which we are quietly developing a continent, are the pivot on which is turning the nation's future."[4] For Strong, the final decades of the century constitute a "great focal point of history," a "convergence" of past and future progress, and "the pivot" on which an unstable and uncertain future turns. This rhetoric is carried over into Austin Phelps's introduction to the 1891 edition of *Our Country*, where Phelps writes of history "piling up the proofs or our national peril," dangerously poised to fall "with the weight of an avalanche." Strong writes his little book "in the nick of time," Phelps argues.[5]

These metaphors of time—a focal point, a convergence of past and future, a pivot, an "avalanche" of history, and "in the nick of time"—gesture toward a fundamental sense of urgency as nativists move to claim the West for Protestantism. Significantly, these images of temporal nicks and points portray history not as a *longue duree* or as an arc—but rather as a single, fleeting moment. "Every minute, Phelps writes, "has been the nick of time."[6]

The collision of these rhetorics—the decisive role of the West, the convergence of time in the final decades of the century—not informed Daniel Dorchester's historical writing, his public service, and his popular writing. In February 1889, Dorchester published a scathing criticism of a

[4] Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and its Present Crisis* (New York: Baker & Taylor for The American Home Missionary Society, 1885), 1.
[5] Austin Phelps, "Introduction" to Josiah Strong's *Our Country: Its Possible Future and its Present Crisis,* 12.
[6] Phelps, "Introduction," Ibid.

recent *New York Sun* editorial.[7] The editorial in question, simply titled "The Roman Catholics of the United States," had calculated that, in 1888, the "total number of Catholics in the United States, active and nominal" was 12 million. This, the author suggested, demonstrated a growth of 2.5 million Catholics since 1884; if the Catholic population continued to grow at the same rate, the number would reach 20 million by 1900.[8] In his rebuttal, Dorchester lamented the column's particular exaggerations—and miscalculations—that enabled the author to concoct a story of the dramatic rise in the Catholic population. Further, the conclusion of the article reveals a deeper anxiety: "The points where Roman Catholic growth is most apparent are the larger cities, some factory communities, and localities in the West, where papal immigrants have settled together in comparative isolated communities. Protestants need to be wide-awake wherever the papists are showing their hand against our institutions." Here, Dorchester admits that there are places where Catholic growth is indisputable: large cities, factory communities, and the West. In light of this papal "showing of hand," he urges Protestants to be vigilant, ready to defend their institutions against the rising tide of Catholicism.

The first edition of *Christianity in the United States* was published a year prior to this dispute. Also in 1888, Dorchester published a voluminous book on the issue of *Romanism v. The Public School System.* In the period surrounding the release of *Christianity in the United States*,

---

[7] Dorchester, Daniel. "The 'New York Sun' Under a Papal Eclipse." *Christian Advocate (1866-1905)* 64, no. 6 (Feb 07, 1889): 83, https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/125869596?accountid=14657; "The Roman Catholics of the United States," *The Sun.* (Jan 21, 1889), 4, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Library of Congress.

[8] Dorchester's response was vicious: he claimed that the calculations had been constructed in a "desperate attempt to swell numbers." In particular, he argued that the distinction between "active" and "nominal" members had been invented in order bolster the total Catholic population. What is more, this practice of admitting "active" members enabled Catholic numbers to far exceed the standard and more conservative estimates of Protestant members, which were based upon a multiplication of "strictly enrolled communicants" who were "largely adults."[8] Dorchester explained: "The Rev. Dr. Robert Baird multiplied by four; I have always multiplied by three-and-a-half. Why Roman Catholics should add 50 per cent to their aggregate Roman Catholic *population*, comprising as it does whole families, every child being baptized at birth, I cannot imagine; and this is the first attempt to do so that I have known."

Dorchester's publication record reveals an anxiety about the rise of Catholicism in America. In fact, it was likely his vociferous engagement in these public debates that led to his nomination as the Superintendent of Native American Schools in 1889. From 1889-1892, Dorchester served Thomas Jefferson Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and joined with him in a battle to regain national control of Catholic Indian Mission schools.[9] As this chapter argues, Dorchester's projected anxiety was not merely about the rise in Catholic populations in the eastern cities of America: when read in the context of the author's governmental service and more public debates, *Christianity in the United States* dramatizes a deep anxiety about the status of place—particularly "unmarked" spaces and "papal" enclaves in the West—in the battle for Protestant dominance in the United States.

I argue here that Dorchester's history aims to assert—and visually illustrate—Protestant dominance in the West. In contrast to Baird's North American origin story, Dorchester makes a case for Protestant destiny in the repeated and ritualized acts of church founding on the frontiers. As we have seen, Baird defines a precise origin point for his history; *Religion in the United States* not only emphasizes the perfect design of created landscape—the narrative also elides whole centuries in order to link Christian history to the central space of the Mississippi Valley. In this way, Baird's narrative emphasizes the stability of certain categories and forces in American religious history: the original forms of the landscape are seemingly preserved and perpetually renewed throughout history; the Christian church retains a permanent pattern by

[9] For more on this connection, see for example: Sarah Dees, "An Equation of Language and Spirit: Comparative Philology and the Study of American Indian Religions," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion 27 (2015*): 195-219*;* Sean P. Harvey, "'Must Not Their Languages Be Savage and Barbarous Like Them?': Philology, Indian Removal, and Race Science." *Journal of the Early Republic, Vol. 30, No. 4* (Winter 2010): 505-532, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40926063. See also: Francis Paul Prucha, *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).; Thomas G. Andrews, "Turning the Tables on Assimilation: Oglala Lakotas and the Pine Ridge Day Schools, 1889-1920," *Western Historical Quarterly, Vol. 33, No. 4* (Winter 2002): 407-430, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4144766.

preserving the "simple truths" of the gospel and reiterating Apostolic types in North America; the progress of language and civilization moves naturally from complexity to simplicity.

Christianity in the United States takes a different approach to constructing chronologies and spatialities of Protestant dominance; most dramatically, the logic of Dorchester's narrative relies not upon the delineating of a common origin point—but rather the expression of a national, Christian heart that manifests itself the repeated acts of church founding. Indeed, Dorchester reserves the term "foundation" to *exclusively* characterize the activities of the Protestant church. His narrative repeatedly—on over 40 pages, to be exact—iterates the ways in which Americans have "laid the foundations" for states, churches, school systems, and even "private and public morality."[10] In the repetition of these many acts of church founding, Dorchester's narrative maintains a certain flexibility that Baird's does not: the plot emphasizes the romance, the adventure, the successes and failures of many individual events—and in doing so, preserves the unity of the Protestant "heart" by linking together each of these individual events in a shared, ritualized pattern. To invoke Eliade: each episode repeats the cosmogony as it "lays the foundations" for a Christian church and a Christian nation.

By reading Dorchester's text in this way, this chapter aims to analyze the ways in which the trope of church founding is enacted through certain temporalities, geographies, and metaphors of time and space. Specifically, I demonstrate the ways in which *Christianity in the United States* positions the Mississippi as the "focal point" of American religious history: the great river, its valleys, and the cities that rise up on its shores are contested sites of Catholic and Protestant missions. Dorchester argues that while French Jesuits are, in the words of Bancroft, "destined to leave no abiding monument," Protestant missions are better able to lay the

[10] Daniel Dorchester, *Christianity in the United States* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1895), 237.

foundations and convert the landscape into lasting religious and cultural institutions. The chapter proceeds in four phases: first, I argue that the maps and charts which intervene throughout the book support the volume's overarching effort to destabilize the coherence and longevity of Catholic history in the United States; I read a map depicting the European territories in North America in 1655 as both concordant with the larger aims of Dorchester's project and also unique in its ability to simultaneously portray and yet undermine Catholic dominance in early colonial American history. I continue this analysis in the second section, where I argue that the trope of impermanence infuses Dorchester's account of early Catholic history; through episodes of exploration, and speeches that dramatically underscore the instability of Catholic missions, the narrative attempts to undercut the coherence of Catholic history. In the third section, I point to the places where Dorchester offers a comparative analysis of Catholic and Protestant missions, arguing that the historian attempts to secure Protestant destiny through linking the conversion of territories, peoples, and chronologies with the lasting success of Protestant missions. Finally, I analyze Dorchester's portrayals of Protestant missions and argue that the narrative's veneration of Methodist Jesse Walker reveals a preoccupation with converting specifically Catholic spaces into the architectural forms of Protestantism.

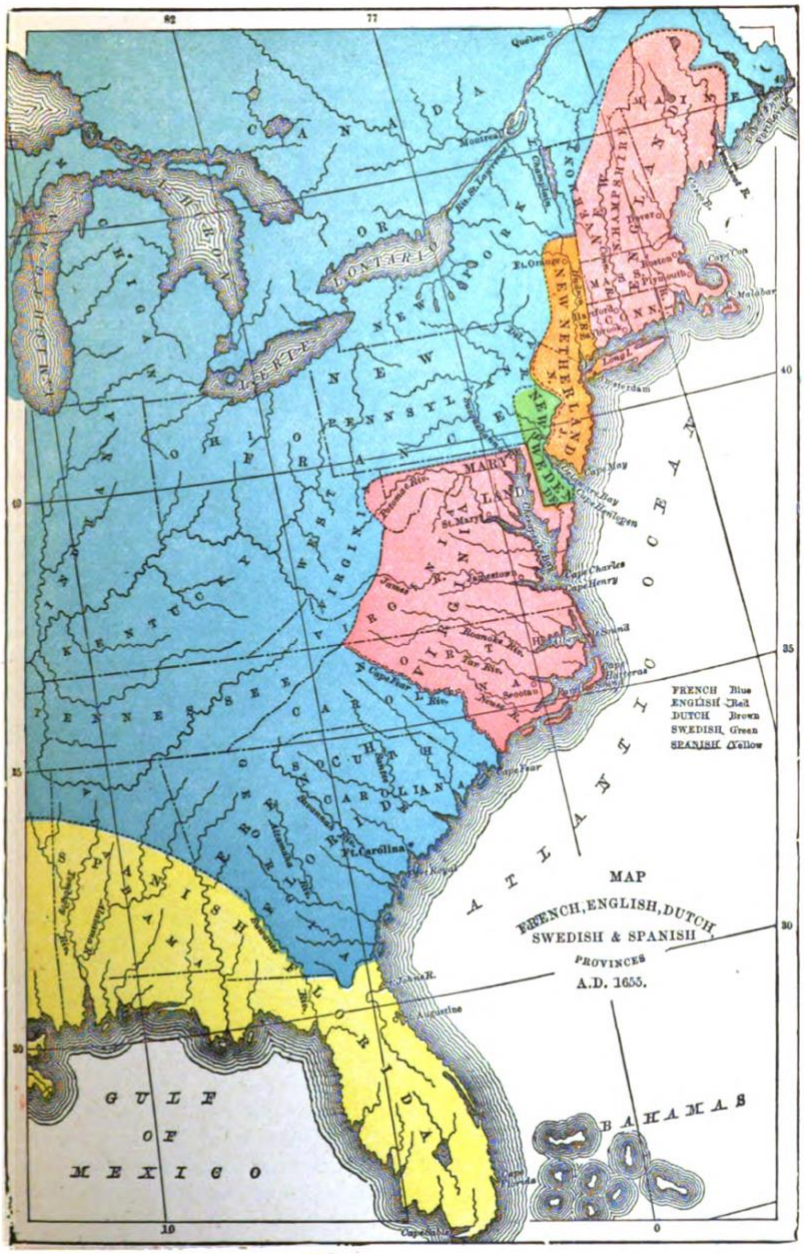


Figure 3. "Map of French, English, Dutch, Swedish, and Spanish Provinces." Daniel Dorchester, *Christianity in the United States* (1895 edition)

Mapping Protestant Dominance

Hinging between pages 22 and 23 of Daniel Dorchester's *Christianity in the United States,* a color-coded map marks a transition from the first chapter, "The First Discoveries and Settlements Under Roman Catholic Auspices," and the second, simply entitled "Protestant Beginnings." Dated 1655, the map depicts a sea of blue overwhelming the eastern part of North America: the blue, representing French territory, extends past the Mississippi River and rises from the top of the Florida peninsula, passing far north of the St. Lawrence River. The sea of blue exceeds the frame of the map. Amidst the blue, islands of red, green, and orange—English, Dutch, and Swedish territories—appear relatively minor. The vast territory of the French is challenged only by Spanish acquisitions, which are marked in yellow. Spanish territory covers the Florida peninsula and grows slightly northward as it extends west past the Alabama River.

Based upon the details of this map and its placement between "Roman Catholic Auspices" and "Protestant Beginnings," a reader might intuit that the first chapter explains the extensive territories claimed by French Catholics and Spanish Catholics. In fact, Dorchester's narrative intervenes to disrupt any sense of Catholic territorial predominance: despite the fact that both Spanish and French explorers arrived and established missions in North America well before 1655, the first chapter only follows "The Spaniards in the South." Strangely, "the French in the North" are classified as a second wave of "Later Roman Catholic Beginnings." Interrupting these "early" and "late" phases of Catholic exploration, a lengthy chapter on "Protestant Beginnings" hearkens back to the early history of Protestantism in Europe before tracing its subsequent transmission into North America via multiple imperial ventures. This reorganization of historical plot not only minimizes Catholic history but also disrupt its coherence: by dividing Spanish and French Catholic journeys into "early" and "late beginnings,"

Dorchester attempts to create a historical narrative that undercuts Catholic presence in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century North America.

If Dorchester's bifurcation of Catholic history is one tactic used to undermine early Catholic presence in North America, a second tactic concentrates on marking the temporal limits of French and Catholic colonization. To this point, the map and preceding narrative both feature the anachronistic markings of U.S. state lines: sketched beneath the French, Spanish, and British territories of 1655 are the faint outlines of the United States. Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Alabama, form the furthest edge of the map, and the older states continue eastward toward the Atlantic Ocean. What is more, these same anachronistic state markers are used to organize the narrative that precedes it: Dorchester divides the episodes of early Spanish missions within the discreet boundaries of eighteenth and nineteenth-century states. Notably, the chapter on "Protestant Beginnings" does not conform to this anachronistic pattern; instead, Dorchester divides early American Protestants by sect and country of origin.

Dorchester's account, unlike Baird's, begins *in media res*: the bisected narrative of Catholic history, and the intervening chapter on "Protestant beginnings, opens *Christianity in the United States*. This compositional choice has important consequences for the entire narrative. First, it effectively creates two beginnings: one Catholic, and one Protestant. As this chapter demonstrates, these two parallel beginnings are logically linked to two parallel story lines that only rarely intersect: through the repetition of verbs and modifiers that link Catholicism with "echoes of the Middle Ages" that are "passing away," the narrative creates the impression that the first beginning was something of a false start: as Dorchester at one point describes it, Catholicism was unable to "gain a permanent foothold" in the United States. In this narrative logic, Protestantism gains dominance not—as in Baird's rendering—by reproducing the

primitive Church, or by rooting itself into the enduring and original forms of the North American cosmogony, but rather by outlasting its competitors. Though rarely depicted in direct conflict, these two parallel trajectories of American religion compete with each other throughout history to convert lands and peoples into the idioms and symbols of Christianity.

A second important consequence of this double beginning is revealed in the map: even in its depiction of the 1655 provinces, the visual rendering of the nation recasts the anxieties of the present moment in terms of the past. To use Strong's metaphors, this introductory map depicts "the convergence" of the past and future; it focalizes the conflict into a single image and delineates the geographical "pivot on which turns the nation's future." Beneath the colored-coded territories lie the faint markers of American states; these U.S. designations not only undercut the stability of French Catholic dominance in 1655; they remind Dorchester's nineteenth-century readers of present conflicts and the ongoing battle to win the soul of the West to Protestantism. For Dorchester, this Mississippi Valley is the "great focal point" of American geography: then as now, the map argues, the character of the nation will be decided in the West.

Journeys Toward "The Mystic Center": Catholic Explorations of the Mississippi Valley

Dorchester's case for Protestant dominance thus relies upon simultaneously demonstrating the impermanence and decline of Catholic missions in the West—and the simultaneous endurance and growth of Protestantism. In his account of early Catholic missions, Dorchester argues that Catholicism was not destined to "gain a permanent foothold" and he defends this claim by emphasizing the futility of French attempts to name and proclaim ownership of the Mississippi Valley. Several episodes illustrate this point. The first begins in 1673, when Jesuit father James Marquette set out to discover the fabled Mississippi River. Long

fascinated by lore of the grand river, Marquette had studied the languages of the Illinois Indians and, before the start of his commissioned travels, he began to solicit assistance from Native American tribes in the Great Lakes region. Joined by Louis Joliet, a fur trader from Quebec, Marquette traced the western shores of Lake Michigan to Green Bay and then, finding access via a "celebrated portage," turned his canoe into the northernmost waters of the Mississippi River.[11]

Dorchester's depiction of this exploratory journey vibrates with mythic affect: the account is written as if to invite its readers directly into the unfolding adventure. To this end, the narrative avoids directly naming and describing the river itself. First spoken of only in local lore, the river becomes an object of supreme fascination—obsession, even—for French Canadian missionaries. The "wild chimera" of the so-called "great Messipi" is known only by native tribes. For French explorers and missionaries, "the grandest object was the Mississippi, indefinitely shadowed forth in the weird stories of the red men as a mysterious stream, rising far in the north, and flowing southward, they knew not wither."[12] For these European religious, the Mississippi thus becomes not only a powerful object of desire—but an elusive one, only named in the "vague descriptions" of foreign stories.

In 1671, after Louis XIV claimed possession of the Falls of St. Mary and all the "rivers, lakes, and streams contiguous and adjacent thereto," the Jesuits begin moving southward in exploration of the newly designated territory. As if dramatizing the tensions of the historical moment, Dorchester writes, "This great region was an unknown world. Roving tribes had vaguely described it; but who shall penetrate its wild solitudes?" The answer is immediate and direct: in the pages that follow, Dorchester describes the two humble Catholic heroes who

[11] See: Raphael N. Hamilton, *Marquette's Explorations: The Narratives Reexamined* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970).
[12] *Christianity in the United States*, 72.

answer the call of the French monarch: "the gentle, single-hearted, unpretending Marquette," and Joliet, son of a wagon-maker. The two explorers embark upon their journey with five companions and "a simple outfit of two birch canoes, smoked meat, and Indian corn."[13] Dorchester slows the pace of the narrative as Marquette and Joliet approach discovery of the fabled Mississippi:

> Here in this mystic center of the great continent, when flowing waters divide—to the St. Lawrence, on the one hand, and to the Gulf of Mexico, on the other—they carried their canoes on their shoulders for a mile and a half, and launched them upon the Wisconsin. Dismissing their guides, the adventurers were solely at the hands of Providence. Down the tranquil stream, by islands, bluffs, forests, marshes, and prairies—"the parks and pleasure-grounds of a prodigal nature"—they glided, bivouacking at night on the shores under their inverted canoes.
>
> The 17th of June was a memorable day in their career. Looking expectantly ahead, what is it that greets their gaze? At the foot of lofty heights thickly wrapped in forests, a wide and rapid current courses athwart their way.[14]

The landscape is emptied of human and animal life; Marquette and Joliet continue on in solitude, as if the drama of discovery depends upon an unaccompanied errand into the wilderness. Finally, the two explorers halt before a "wide and rapid current." Before them lies the body of the "mysterious river" that they had long been in search of. The rhetorical questions that follow emphasize the profound revelation: "What can be the name of this great stream? Is it indeed the Mississippi, the object of their search?" What was once only whispered in native idiom and local lore now flows swiftly before the eyes of the two explorers.

This passage bears remarkable similarities to Robert Baird's opening depiction of the North American continent, with its mountainous backbone and expertly placed rivers. The vast, god-like view of the American landscape—and the implicit logic of natural theology that undergirds the account—allows Baird to both distance himself from the violent consequences of

[13] Ibid., 73.
[14] Ibid., 73-74.

colonial history and, at the same time, build a foundation for the divine right of European occupation of the continent. Within this argument, the Mississippi and St. Lawrence Rivers occupied a crucial rhetorical space: by giving these forces of nature direct agency, they displaced divine control and intervention, thus naturalizing the unfolding of a particular Euro-American history upon the continent. In its attention to the "mystic center" of the North American continent, Daniel Dorchester's 1887 *Christianity in the United States* carries forward Baird's project of naturalizing the divine right of European exploration and occupation. Like Baird, Dorchester sacralizes the American landscape in order to illustrate the workings of Providence in the history of American religion. Also like Baird, Dorchester minimizes the presence of Native American peoples in the opening chapters of his account. Both historians attempt to locate the divine right of Protestantism within the natural forms of the North American landscape and, in doing so, their narratives attempt to subsume Native American civilizations beneath the grand progress of Nature. In the midst of an episode of Catholic history, the Mississippi River functions as a reminder of the Providence that "mysteriously guards and reserves" the continent for a "prepared people." Hidden in the mysterious, sacred center of the continent, the Mississippi River moves "in wide and rapid current" as a wholly natural and yet strangely mystical force.

However, even as Dorchester mirrors Baird's sacralizing of the continent and its powerful rivers, he approaches the subject using radically different narrative techniques: where Baird's account relies upon the narrator's god-like distance from the landscape, Dorchester places his characters and plot "on the ground," so to speak. He invites his readers to travel with his Jesuit heroes, and to discover the fabled Mississippi in lock step with the original explorers. In trading an omniscient view for a more limited, human perspective, Dorchester places the river as the central object of discovery: the unveiling of the Mississippi functions as the climactic

moment in a plot that emphasizes the limits of human knowledge, the immediacy of human experience, and the unwavering determination of human actors.[15]

These crucial differences inform the logic of Protestant destiny in *Christianity in the United States*. By locating the action of religious contestation in the lived episodes of early European colonization, Dorchester displaces Baird's American *Genesis* myth and instead lifts up the particularities of a landscape reshaped by the movements of modern religious forces. Religious contestation is dramatized in the discovery and naming of the Mississippi, and in the circuits of the South and Midwest; in this way, the "three great competing forces" of American religion—Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Divergent Elements—mark the landscape with pathways, footprints, and missions planted upon the frontiers. What is more, the forms and titles that this colonized landscape begins to take—whether Catholic or Protestant, impermanent or enduring—are integrally linked to the relative power or futility of religious speech. These speech acts mark and label the landscape, and in so doing produce the visible evidence of Protestant destiny. By contrast, Dorchester argues, Catholic religious idioms and namesakes are unable to endure upon the North American Landscape.

Perhaps no episode better illustrates this linguistic contestation than the episode above, where Marquette and Joliet discover the Mississippi River. As the two Jesuit explorers bask in the sight of the magnificent river, Dorchester repeatedly emphasizes the futility of Catholic designations. Marquette and Joliet, although credited with being the first European discoverers of the Mississippi River, are the subject of a cosmic joke:

[15] Dorchester's narrative was heavily influenced by Francis Parkman's multiple-volume work *France and England in North America*. In these volumes, Parkman intertwines his own personal travel narratives with historical episodes; in order to elaborate the drama of historical action, Parkman includes extensive detail about the landscape, wildlife, etc. See: Parkman, Francis. *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1867). For more on Parkman and his influence see David Levin, *History as Romantic Art*: *Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1963).

> We see them for a few moments, gazing at the mysterious river, their souls filling with delight, and then, under an impulse of inexpressible joy, urging their light barks into its calm, strong waters. In fulfillment of an oft-repeated vow to the Virgin Mary, Marquette gives to the stream the name of "Conception River." But no papal saint was destined to be the patroness of the Father of Waters; the Indian name has ever prevailed.[16]

Marquette, Dorchester explains, was devoted to "the dogma of the Immaculate Conception." This devotion drove his "ardent desire for discovery, that he might consecrate new domains to his celestial mistress."[17] Therefore, upon discovering the great river, Marquette inevitably "consecrates" this "mysterious river" to the Virgin Mary. Dorchester's nineteenth-century readers are certainly wise to the joke, and the narrative explains Marquette's failed attempt in no uncertain terms: "no papal saint was destined to be the patroness; the Indian name has ever prevailed." The Catholic name, bestowed upon the river in this rapturous moment, is unable to endure as a lasting sign of Catholic presence upon the North American map.

Marquette was not the only French Catholic to consecrate the Mississippi Valley to the Church. Six year prior, Claudius Allouez traveled south into the Great Lakes; his journey inspired him to recruit additional missionaries to join in pursuit of "the Great River."[18] In 1665, Claudius Allouez "embarked for the upper lakes, and spent twenty-five years among the Indians in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois." Dorchester continues: "Rowing along the southern shores of Lake Superior, with its alternating scenery of forests, fertile plains, reed-covered marshes, stupendous piles of drifting sands, towering cliffs of 'pictured sandstone'… [Allouez] celebrated the mass and consecrated those rugged wilds to Christ and his king."[19] Like Marquette, Allouez

[16] Ibid., 74.
[17] Ibid., 73.
[18] For a more recent study of the relationships built between Allouez and Native American villages in the Great Lakes region, see Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6ff.
[19] *Christianity in the United States*, 70.

found himself overwhelmed by the landscapes before him, sights which "excited in his mind the most romantic conceptions of the grand, the sublime, and the infinite." And like Marquette, he designated these natural formations as belonging "to Christ and his king."

The iteration of a local, private act of consecration and designation—a declaration made by a single religious man as he encounters sublime, natural beauty—also appears in another episode of Dorchester's history: In 1671, King Louis XIV claimed possession of the Falls of St. Mary and all the "rivers, lakes, and streams contiguous and adjacent thereto." The king enacts this claim by way of public declaration, sending Daumont de St. Lusson and fifteen men to announce France's intent to a congress of gathered Native nations:

> In the spring of 1671 representatives of fourteen tribes arrived [at the Falls of St. Mary], and on the morning of the 14th of June, on the top of a hill designated, a crowd of Indians stood or crouched or reclined at length, with eyes and ears intent, as a large cross was erected, the Frenchmen sang the *Vexilla Regis.* St. Lusson, with a loud voice, 'In the name of the most high, mighty, and redoubted [sic] monarch, Louis XIV., king of France and Navarre,' took possession of the place, and all the 'rivers, lakes, and streams contiguous and adjacent thereto, both those which have been discovered and those which may be discovered hereafter, in all their length and breadth, bounded on one side by the seas of the North and of the West, and on the other by the South Sea,' etc."

Although Dorchester later credits this Congress at the Falls St. Mary with "preparing the way for more extensive exploration, commerce, and civilization," in the narration above, St. Lusson's declaration is depicted as absurd.[20] "With a loud voice," St. Lusson claims possession not only of the falls at which they are gathered—but of all the "rivers, lakes, and streams contiguous and adjacent thereto." The decree purports to claim possession of all that is visible—and, even more strangely, of all the contiguous waterways that yet extend beyond European sight and knowledge. Dorchester pointedly plays on the ineffectual "loud voice" of St. Lusson's decree as he quotes Bancroft in the next paragraph: "Thus was the standard of France planted in the heart

[20] Ibid., 72. And here, Dorchester fails to remark upon the Marian designation of the falls.

of the American Continent, in the midst of its ancient races. Yet, says Bancroft "This daring ambition of the servants of a military monarch was destined to leave no abiding monument; this *echo of the Middle Ages*, to pass away."

In Dorchester's account, the Mississippi River Valley occupies the "mystic center of the continent." What is more, the land and the central waterway index, for Dorchester, the very place upon which the religious character of the nation is determined. As these three early episodes demonstrate, the Mississippi River and its valleys at first hold a kind of mythical power for European explorers: first-hand knowledge of the landscape is limited, and Jesuit missionaries must rely upon new, foreign stories and imprecise translations in order to access it. As Catholic and Protestant missionaries attempt to engage with these myths and translate between languages, the Mississippi River Valley increasingly becomes contested territory: in both implicit and direct conflict, Catholic and Protestant missionaries attempt to claim, name, and over-write the valley in religiously-inflected language and architecture. Ultimately, Dorchester argues, if Marquette, Allouez, and St. Lusson are "destined to leave no abiding monument," Protestant missionaries, by contrast, are able to convert the landscape to replicate forms of modern language and civilization.

Converting Native Landscapes and Temporalities

Dorchester's narrative of American Christian history pits three "competing forces" of religion against each other: Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and other "Divergent Elements." If, as I have argued in the sections above, the narrative strains to distinguish the impermanence of Catholic missions from the "lasting marks" of Protestantism, then these missionary landscapes—both in their past forms and present conditions—functions as the places in which

these competing forms manifest themselves and attempt to re-create European religious forms on the landscape. Indeed, just as Dorchester spent significant energies on extolling the virtues of Protestant Native American missions, and denigrating the work of Catholic missions, so too does *Christianity in the United States* argue for the demonstrated success of Protestant missionary tactics in New England and in the Mississippi Valley. This section studies Dorchester's comparison of Protestant and Catholic missions, arguing that his case for Protestant superiority pivots on the extent to which missionaries are able to disrupt and convert Native spaces and patterns of time. Crucial to Dorchester's account—and other nineteenth-century accounts of early Catholic missions in America—is the argument that Catholic missionaries were distracted, and their religious work diminished, by engaging in political negotiations. Protestant missionaries, according to this logic, operated outside of these political networks and in pursuit of the more "universal" achievements of civilization.

Indeed, Dorchester's account of Protestant dominance relies heavily upon Native American idioms and knowledge networks in order to establish a deeply religious and yet affirmatively "not Catholic" landscape. This native, religious landscape rejects and even mocks French and Spanish attempts to re-name and territorialize on behalf of the Catholic church. And yet, even as it does so, this mythic landscape—the "wild chimera" of the Mississippi, the "mystic center" of the continent—draws European explorers onward, propelling Protestant destiny forward even at the ineffectual hands of Catholic missionaries. In this way, Dorchester's narrative effectively dismisses Native American religion as a "great competing force" in his drama—even as it co-opts native idioms, names, and stories in order to legitimize Protestant inheritance of North America.

As the early episodes of Catholic missions demonstrate, accessing the language of the "ancient races" of North America enables missionaries like Allouez and Marquette to reach "the mystic center of the continent." After consecrating those "rugged wilds," Allouez established a church on the southern shores of Lake Superior. For twenty-five years, he lived and worked among the Chippewa, Ottawa, and the Sioux, teaching some to "chant the Pater and Ave." Dorchester writes, "He erected an Indian Church, amid many struggles with superstition and vice. The natives revered the lake, the rapids, the beetling cliffs, and even the metals, as gods, and talked indefinitely of 'the great Messipi,' as a wild chimera, but an object of adoration." And again: through conversations with the native tribes, Allouez "learned the story of the 'Messipi,' and longed to gaze upon the great father of waters and traverse its immense tributary valley."[21] Here, the river becomes the central subject of discourse; and yet, the thing itself remains untranslated into European language and unsubstantiated by European experience. Consequently, this lack of knowledge, coupled with a desire to replace lore with confirmation and a translated European name, drives the better part of Dorchester's Catholic exploration narrative.

Marquette also relies upon conversations with native tribes to orient his missions and propel his discovery of the river. Dorchester notes that Marquette "conduct[ed] valuable negotiations with the implacable Sioux" and "stud[ied] the mixed dialects of the Illinois more fully than any other Jesuit father." Through these endeavors, he "learned the story of the Mississippi, and prepared himself to communicate with the numerous tribes upon its banks."[22] Here again, the narration emphasizes the extreme temporal and spatial distance between the European explorer and the "story of the Mississippi." At least at first, Marquette does not have direct access to the great body of water: it exists only in myth and story. In this way, Native

[21] Ibid., 71.
[22] Ibid., 73.

American stories—and the knowledge they impart—allow Marquette to access the continental interior. What is more, the "story of the Mississippi" provides the missionary with a narrative foundation upon which Europeans might begin to construct their own dreams of and appeals for religious expansion.

Indeed, when combined with the explorers own first-hand experience of the sublime landscape, these native stories propel Marquette and Allouez on their southward missions. Dorchester writes that Allouez was "deeply impressed with his surroundings;" even more so did the stories of unknown landscapes excite his imagination:

> The well-authenticated narratives of the mammoth rivers, the broad alluvial prairies, the gigantic forests, the rich mineral deposits, the countless herds of wild animals, the innumerable bands of pagan Indians, the entrancing beauty of the scenery, and the magnificent vastness of the new mission region excited in his mind the most romantic conceptions of the grand, the sublime, and the infinite, arouse his deepest sympathies for humanity, and stimulated to the formation of political, social and religious schemes, commensurate with the vast possibilities of this great continental center, the key of the richest heritage of North America.[23]

The narrative itself becomes caught up in the "magnificent vastness" of the storied landscape: stacking noun upon noun, this single and effusive sentence strings together a series of rich, pastoral images. Each image is modified in the superlative: "mammoth" rivers, "broad" prairies, and "gigantic" forests. This chain of vibrant images is broken only by intervening verbs: these stories "excited in his mind" romantic ideas of the sublime and infinite; they "aroused his deepest sympathies," and "stimulated to the formation of political, social and religious schemes." In this scene, the "well-authenticated narratives" take on mythic proportions: not only do they cast nature in superlative forms, but they inspire foreign travelers such as Allouez to purse grand "political, social, and religious schemes"—schemes ambitious enough to extend upon this vast continental center.

[23] Ibid., 71.

Despite these grand schemes, Dorchester reminds his readers that these inspired Catholics would "leave no abiding monument" upon the sublime currents and landscape of North America. Marquette failed to produce a lasting Marian title for "the Father of Waters;" instead, the great "Messipi" lives on, despite Marquette's attempt to overwrite the myth in Catholic nomenclature. So too does St. Lusson's "echo of the middle ages" seem to fall silent under the grand force of the very river it proposes to claim. What is more, the failure of Catholic missions lies not only in the inability to translate and convert Native American spaces into Marian symbology; according to Dorchester, Catholics are also unable to convert native communities to the Church.

For Dorchester, French Catholic missionaries to Native North Americans compromised the purity of their religious missions by pandering to competing political interests. Father Jogues, for instance, met his downfall when he was recruited to negotiate peace with a Mohawk town in the upper northeast. A symbol of Catholic missionary failure, Father Jogues functions for Dorchester as a classic tragic hero. Jogues is first introduced in stunning portraiture: he is "dressed in a black gown and sitting in a canoe, [his] oval face and delicate mold of feature bespeak[ing] a modest, thoughtful, and refined nature." He was "physically slender, constitutionally timid, sensitively conscientious, and profoundly religious" and "in the fiery ordeal about to open before him, he is to be tested to the utmost, and gain a crown of martyrdom."[24] From the very first description of the Jesuit priest, the narrative not only foregrounds his downfall—but in doing so, it underscores the priest's suffering and martyrdom.

Ultimately, Dorchester directly links the suffering and death of Jogues with the total failure of Catholic missions in New York. Dorchester concludes his account of "The Iroquois Mission" with the death of Jogues, and the end of the mission:

[24] Dorchester, 55-56.

> Such were the New York Indians whom the Jesuits at Quebec sought to convert to the papacy and make subservient to the accomplishment of their schemes; but these powerful tribes proved to be the bulwarks raised up by Providence, and stationed all along that long line of the State of New York, for the protection of Protestant colonies against the machinations of the papacy. It would be interesting to sketch the attempts of the Jesuits in the seventeenth century to found missions among his people. It would furnish many thrilling pages, example of heroic adventure, sublime endurance, and lofty devotion, but all in vain. The failure frustrated a gigantic political scheme of territorial extension, and saved the continent to Protestantism.[25]

In a strange reversal, Dorchester argues that the Iroquois were in fact "bulwarks raised up by Providence," preventing French missionaries from moving south into protected Protestant colonies. The failure of Father Jogues signified the ultimate failure of a "gigantic political scheme of territorial extension" thus "saving the continent to Protestantism."

If Jogues represents the failure of French Catholic conversion efforts below the St. Lawrence, Dorchester at least in part attributes this to the compromises Jesuits made to their would-be converts. Dorchester writes of the difference between Jesuit and Protestant missionary approaches:

> From the first, Protestant missionaries to the Indians worked upon a plan very different from the Jesuits, involving more radical treatment and attended with greater difficulties. The Jesuits only slightly interfered with the native habits, wild ways and impulses of the savages. For the most part, the French, lay and clerical, compromised themselves and their own civilization by meeting the Indians more than half way… The French Jesuits did not seek to settle them in fixed residences, to make them cleanly, and improve their dress, but shared the native wigwam and loathsome cookery, regardless of filth, vermin, and immodesty. The religion they taught consisted of a few simple ritual ceremonies, the repetition of a prayer or chant, and the baptismal rite. Thus the doomed heathen was easily turned into a professed Christian and an enfranchised citizen of France… Such was their converting, Christianizing process.[26]

Dorchester here argues that the Jesuits "only slightly interfered with native habits," thus "compromising themselves and their own civilization" by making accommodations for native

[25] Dorchester, 65-66.
[26] Ibid., 190.

ways habits and social structures. Importantly, the Jesuits did not attempt to convert itinerant communities or wigwams into "fixed residences." These accommodations directly oppose Protestant strategies which aim to build more permanent settlements within missionary-supervised villages.[27]

As Dorchester suggests, these compromises served a specific political end: Jesuit missionaries were able to easily produce converts—not only converts to Catholicism, but converts to the French crown. Indeed, Catholicism is portrayed as a fusion of political and religious motives. To this end, Dorchester quotes Francis Parkman twice, who writes that toward the end of the seventeenth century, "the Canadian Jesuit was less and less an apostle, and more and more an explorer, a man of science, and a politician.[28]" Or of Father Jogues, Parkman notes that the Jesuit's errand to the Mohawks was ""half political and half religious"; "not only was he to be a bearer of gifts, wampum belts and messages from the governor, but he was also to found a new mission, christened in advance with a prophetic name *The Mission or the Martyrs."*[29] Dorchester explains that "political and religious considerations" inform Jogues' nomination as the leader of this mission; "for France looks to the conquest of territory of New York, and the Church must prepare the way."[30]

By contrast, the very mark of Protestant success is its power to convert the land, its symbols, and its people into the forms and language of Protestantism.[31] Dorchester bases his claims of Catholic failure and Protestant success upon at least two related issues: he argues that

---

[27] R.L. Moore also comments upon this distinction in his analysis of Dorchester; see *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, 10-11.
[28] Ibid., 72.
[29] Ibid., and here Dorchester cites Parkman's *History of the Jesuits in North America.*
[30] Ibid.
[31] For further studies of missionary engagement with national expansion see: Greenberg, *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion*. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012). And *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)., and John C. Pinheiro, *Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Catholic missions diluted their cause by engaging in political disputes and he depicts the speech acts of Catholic missionaries as unable to effect change in the hearts and habits of converts. By contrast, early Protestant missions in New England are portrayed as free from political ambition; their success is instead couched in terms of education and true religious conversion.[32] Like their Catholic counterparts, Protestants study and speak in Native American languages; but these Protestant missionaries study toward a different end: they aim to translate and publish religious texts into Native languages. As Christian texts are translated into Algonquin, for instance, Native communities—and the forms of space, time, and language that shape them—are converted and reorganized to reflect markers of civilized, Christian space and time.

Whereas Jesuit missions were compromised by local political, Protestant missionaries pursue a kind of universalized civilization. "Civilization," in other words, was not of necessity a British import, nor does Dorchester repeatedly invoke (as he does in the case of the French) the British monarch or parliamentary system as the originating cause of civilizing expansion. Instead, missionary endeavors in New England are characterized as promoting universal, rather than culturally specific, principles of progress and civilization. By this logic, Protestant missionaries in New England neither compromised their efforts by political ambitions—nor did they make accommodations for the particular habits or ideals of the culture they came in contact with. Civilization was the ultimate form toward which all of humankind might evolve.

Indeed, Dorchester's account of early English missionaries emphasizes the ways in which translation and education might work toward the united goals of religious and cultural conversion. Allouez and Marquette may have studied native languages in order to gain access to the fabled Mississippi, but John Eliot—their seventeenth-century Protestant counterpart—

[32] David Levin likewise argues that Bancroft and Parkman distinguished Catholic intentions as corrupted by political ambition in *History as Romantic Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959).

learned in order to preach at the Roxbury settlement. After two years of study, the historian writes, Eliot "ventured to preach in the Indian tongue." Dorchester notes the day and location of Eliot's discourse: on October 28th, 1646, "on a hill in Nonantum, about four or five miles from Roxbury, he discoursed for an hour and a quarter to the dusky natives, from Ezekiel 38:9" He continues:

> Eliot's 'prayer was in English, as he scrupled, lest he might use some unfit or unworthy terms in the solemn office.' This prompted an inquiry from his interested but bewildered listeners, whether God would understand prayers offered to Him in the Indian tongue. His method in subsequent visits, when he gained more confidence, was to offer a short prayer in Indian; to recite and explain the ten commandments; to describe the character, work, and offices of Christ as Savior and judge; to tell his hearers about the creation, fall, and redemption of man, and to persuade them to repentance.[33]

As Dorchester tells it, Eliot is at first careful to restrict his practice of the language to only the sermon: he offers prayer in English so as not to botch the sacred offering with a mangled translation. But after the bewildered response of his listeners, Eliot reform this practice, and begins to offer services that begin with "a short prayer in Indian," followed by—we may suppose—several lessons conveyed in the native language.

As the Dorchester notes, Eliot's work in translation extends beyond his preaching; he leads efforts to write and publish translations of the Bible and several religious tracts into local languages. In 1649, British Parliament passed the act establishing "A Corporation for the Promoting and Propagating of the Gospel in New England." Among the various provisions of this act, funding was set aside for the translation and printing of the Bible and religious tracts

[33] Dorchester, 175-176. The passage from Ezekiel reads: "Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee" (*KJV*). In this chapter, God foretells of apocalyptic destruction as he will bring "Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" against Israel in order that God may "be known in the eyes of many nations." This might be entering into a rabbit hole, but in preaching this text, is Eliot typing his Native American audience as Gog, in that they will "ascending like a storm" to rise up against the New Protestant Israel?

such as "Practice of Piety" and Baxter's "Call." "Between 1651 and 1660, six tracts in the Indian language, known as 'Eliot's Tracts,' were published in England."[34] Through these written translations, Eliot extends his linguistic prowess and solidifies his reputation as an expert in Native languages. Furthermore, Eliot's missionary efforts seek to simultaneously convert villages not only by teaching Native Americans the English language—but also by reorganizing communities under the laws and prescriptions of "civilized" society. Whereas Jesuit missionaries "did not seek to settle them in fixed residences," Eliot and others "aimed to establish communities of Indians in fixed settlements, exclusively their own, with changed habits of life, dependent no longer upon roaming and hunting, but pursuing industrious occupations, with lands cleared and fenced, modestly clothed, living in houses, regarding property and decency."[35]

For Dorchester, the Indian community at South Natick, established by John Eliot in 1651, epitomizes this kind of civilizing process, even in its very architecture and urban design:

> The Indian community at South Natick was divided by the Charles River, over which the natives built a strongly arched footbridge, eighty feet long. The streets ran parallel with the stream, two on one side and one on the other, with lots marked for houses, tillage, and pasturage. A palisaded fort enclosed a meeting-house fifty feet long and twenty-five wide, built of squared timber, in English fashion, by the natives, and used for worship and a school. The village soon began to wear an aspect of industry, thrift, and comfort. In deference to the Indians the wigwam was allowed, but cleanliness and decency were insisted upon.[36]

Stretching on either side of the Charles River, South Natick not only settles its Indian inhabitants into "fixed residences," but orders these residences with the utmost regularity. The streets parallel the natural course of the river, with regular plots marked for discreet domestic purposes: housing, tillage, pasturage. The meetinghouse is protected by a "palisaded fort," serving the joint roles of meeting and school house. The Indians themselves are employed in the work of

[34] Ibid., 177.
[35] Ibid., 190-191.
[36] Ibid., 178-179.

replicating the "English fashion" of architecture, such that "the village" began to appear industrious, thrifty, and comfortable.

Nearly a century later, Dorchester writes, this same model of religious and cultural conversion continued to dominate New England missions. In 1737, John Sargeant established a Protestant mission at Stockbridge: "Mr. Sargeant became convinced that the best results could not be accomplished until the Indians should be in some degree civilized, and exchanged their barbarous language for the English." Like Eliot's mission at Natick, Stockbridge links cultural change with domestic and linguistic conversion: "He therefore formed a plan for the education of Indian children which would more thoroughly affect their habits of thought and life. The plan included study, manual labor, and a knowledge of agriculture; for the girls, besides study, training in the duties of domestic life; and for all, knowledge of the principles of Christianity."[37] Domestic labors—constructing buildings in "English fashion," tilling land, pasturing cattle—assign new initiates to gendered tasks, thus organizing people into the roles and spaces of the newly-converted landscape. If young boys were employed in digging and dividing plots according to the British model, the girls were recruited to reorder the space and religious architecture of their newly-appointed homes.

Sargeant aimed to reorder the spatial, linguistic, and religious dimensions of the native community at Stockbridge. What is more, he also labored to reorganize the temporal boundaries of their culture. These temporal boundaries that govern daily and seasonal habits are disrupted by Sargeant's seemingly constant stream of religious instruction. Dorchester writes:

> When they went into the woods for some weeks at a time every year, to make maple sugar, Mr. Sargeant, unwilling that they should remain so long without instruction, accompanied them, in their own language prayed with them morning and evening, and preached on the Sabbath. In the day-time he taught their

[37] Ibid., 185.

> children to read, and in the evening the adults to sing, sleeping at night upon boughs and blankets. Several prayers and Dr. Watt's first catechism for the use of children were translated into their language.[38]

Though the spring thaw might have granted the residents of Stockbridge a short vacation from Sargeant's instruction, the missionary insists upon accompanying his pupils on their errand. Morning and evening, Sargeant inundated the community with catechism and hymn-singing, prayers and preaching. According to Dorchester, Sargeant's success is epitomized in his ceaseless efforts to disrupt and ultimately transform the community's organization of time, and the habits that mark it.

Given his explicit valorization of their conversion efforts, it is strange that Dorchester repeatedly admits the failures of these early civilizing efforts. Several wars, migration, and sickness contributed to the declining populations of many of these missions. For instance, Sargeant's mission at Stockbridge—later overseen by Jonathan Edwards and then Samuel West—eventually dispersed and traveled westward. Dorchester writes, "The Indians, however, under the westward migration, gradually disappeared from their old haunts. Some were absorbed in the war of the Revolution, some went to western New York, thence to White River, Indiana, thence to Green Bay, thence to Lake Winnebago, etc."[39] Natick apparently disassembled soon after the deaths of John Eliot and his successor, Tackawambit.[40] A native community under the paternal wing of Samuel Treat—once boasting just over five hundred church goers—was "swept off" by disease before Treat died.[41] Finally, Dorchester concludes that "a strange fatality has overhung the Indian races. They had been decimated by disease before the Pilgrims landed, and they have dwindled ever since, from natural causes inhering in the races, which unfriendly

[38] Ibid., 184.
[39] Ibid., 185.
[40] Ibid., 180.
[41] Ibid., 181.

influences from without have accelerated." Further, he writes, "The Pequot wars, King Philip's war, The French and Indian Wars, the war of strong liquors and debauchery, the wars of rapacious greed, and—may we not add?—civilization itself have terribly wasted them."[42]

Although these episodes emphasize the heroic attributes of Eliot and Sargeant, the conclusions to these stories ultimately depict the converted communities as dispersed or decimated. In Dorchester's account, Protestant efforts to convert Native spaces—and the lived rhythms of daily life—are able to produce substantial conversion: Sabbath days are inserted into the weekly routines; the days were punctuated by morning catechisms and evening song; the village began to "wear" English-style architectures and travel routes. And yet, these episodes are unable to offer a coherent narrative of lasting religious change: even the lofty mission of "civilization itself" erodes these Native villages, pushing them westward past the Mississippi.

How the "Wilderness Became a Fruit Field"[43]

For Dorchester and his Protestant missionaries, Native American conversion rates were perhaps difficult to measure—and even more difficult to gauge across space and time.[44] And yet, although measurable, lasting conversion was often difficult to illustrate, *Christianity in the United States* projects an image of the nation that underscores the impact of Protestant institutions, and the expansion of Christian missions in America. Just as the historical narrative dramatizes an inherent tension between early Catholic dominance and Protestant destiny, so too

[42] Ibid., 193.
[43] Ibid., 132. Here Dorchester cites *Christian History*, 63-64: 'The Spirit from on high was poured upon them, *and the wilderness became a fruit field*. In twenty-seven years from the first plantation there were forty-three churches in joint communion; and in twenty-seven years more, there appeared more than fourscore churches; twelve or thirteen in Plymouth Colony, forty-seven in Massachusetts Colony, and the Province of New Hampshire, nineteen in Connecticut, three on Long Island, and one at Martha's Vineyard.'
[44] For more on Euro-American attempts to measure conversion rates, see: Sarah Rivett, *Science of the Soul*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2011.

do images and maps of the nation highlight the dominance of Protestantism in American history. The discovery of the Mississippi, the attempts to inscribe the landscape with religious pronouncements and namesakes, the Protestant efforts to reconstruct the cultural landscape in the "English style"—all of these depictions reveal attempts to re-imagine the contours of North America through the particular language and lens of Protestant dominance.

These early episodes emphasize the futile attempts of Catholic missions and the unmarked landscape of North America. Significantly, because the narrative chronology is fragmented, it avoids placing "competing religious forces" in direct conflict. Marquette, Jogues, and Allouez may have been unable to permanently mark the landscape with Catholicism, but this was not due to hostile encounters with Protestant missions. Instead, Dorchester's narrative carefully draws territorial boundaries that segregate the competing European religious forces: in this way, Catholic and Protestant history parallel each other, and only rarely intersect. The clear segregation of Catholic and Protestant histories is illustrated not only in the organization of the narrative but also, and perhaps more dramatically, in the territorial map of 1655. French and Spanish Catholics, British and Dutch Protestants each have their own designated area in which they might play out the episodes of seventeenth-century religious history. If Catholicism's foothold was loosening, Dorchester implies, it was simply because Catholicism was destined to be eroded by the forces of time and the influences of Providence.

Protestant missions failed for different reasons. Stockbridge and Natick failed to endure as lasting Christian communities, but Dorchester interprets their impermanence not as a sign of missionary failure—but rather as evidence of a curse that "overhung the Indian races." This "strange fatality" decimated Indian populations through human and natural causes, and although Dorchester is willing to admit that "civilization itself" may have contributed to the cause, his

concluding remarks erase nearly all sense of human complicity in these episodes. Here again, the failure of Protestant missions is not due to direct Catholic interference; both Catholic and Protestant destinies were carried out separately, in parallel colonial timelines.[45]

These spatial images continue to unfold as Dorchester's history moves into the nineteenth century. However, whereas these earlier episodes strain to segregate Catholic and Protestant histories, the later episodes evoke hotly contested territories and direct religious competition. In this final section, I argue that as Dorchester's narrative moves into the early national and antebellum periods of American religious history, it becomes increasingly and explicitly hostile in its treatment of Catholicism. Abandoning the Providential logic that justifies the fitness of Protestantism and the passing away of "echoes of the [Catholic] Middle Ages," Dorchester now locates the conflict of Protestant and Catholic forces in "the Moral Condition of the West."

Thus, Dorchester's fascination with the Mississippi Valley comes full circle: beginning in the opening pages of his book, the battle for the religious soul of the nation is carried out in the West. Once an implicit competition, where Catholic forms were expected to fade away long before the arrival of the Protestants, the battle between religious forces becomes explicit in the national expansion of Jacksonian America. Earlier in the narrative, the valley held mythic power as "the mystic center of the continent"; by the nineteenth century, the mythical aura has vanished and the territory becomes the ground upon which Catholic and Protestant dominance is determined. This conflict in the West is foreshadowed in the introductory pages; Dorchester

[45] Although the episodes of Catholic and Protestant history are narrated in separate spaces, Dorchester doesn't refrain from blaming the Catholics for Protestant failures in their missions to the Native Americans. He opens the chapter on "Protestant Missions Among the Indians" with this: "The Spanish and French, in advance of all Protestant settlements, had occupied the northern and southern borders, and were intent upon the possession of the whole country. Studiously attaching the Indians to themselves and fostering jealousy and hatred toward the English, the Jesuits, working in the interests of Spain and France, *kept the Indian mind biased against* the English colonists *and strongly predisposed to hostility*. Even the natives living within or near the lines of the Protestant settlements were *tainted with the infection*, and with difficulty were held in affiliation. *Almost all the troubles of the English colonists may be traced to this source*" (172, emphasis added).

writes that "It is a striking but not unfamiliar fact that those portions of our national domain, the last to become integral parts of the United States, were the first upon which the efforts of the papacy were expended, and that in all of them, for many years, the Roman Catholic became the dominant and only faith."[46] Consequently, Dorchester states, the earliest chapters focus on those territories first dominated by Roman Catholicism.

In the nineteenth century, as these territories first populated by Spanish and French missions "become integrated" in to the United States, Catholicism comes into direct conflict with Protestant expansion. In a chapter entitled "The New Life Expanding—The Mississippi Valley," Dorchester writes:

> During the fifty years of this period a great change came over the western valley. Twelve vigorous States with rapidly-multiplying people were added to the Union, and still larger Territories, with the beginnings of civil order and numerous schemes and enterprises, were soon after received into the sisterhood of States. The population of this region increased from 500,000 in 1800 to 8,247,373 in 1850—a sixteen-fold advance. The material resources unfolded in a still larger ration, and the boundless capabilities, outreaching the largest expectations, call for the utmost activity and zeal of the churches. It soon became evident that there was to be a struggle for the possession of this inviting field. At the outset, the Roman Catholic Church was the only religious occupant. *Shall Protestantism enter*, and will Protestant enterprise keep pace with the growth of society and promptly bear her ministrations to the new communities?[47]

Dorchester traces U.S. expansion through territorialization and the adoption of new states into the union, thus creating an "inviting field" for missionary pursuits. His staged question at the end of this paragraph—"Shall Protestantism enter?"—is directly answered in the chapters that follow: not only does Protestantism enter into these formerly Catholic cities and communities, but, argues Dorchester, it has the moral and religious obligation to do so.

[46] *Christianity in the United States*, 13.
[47] Ibid., 380 (emphasis added).

As his account unfolds, Dorchester couches this conflict between religiously contested lands in terms of moral decline—specifically, in a community's failure to distinguish sacred time and space from the profane. For example, in his account of the "moral and religious condition" of the Mississippi Valley, Dorchester begins with a single descriptor: "deplorable." Dorchester elaborates: "Rev. Jacob Young, who went to Illinois in 1804, said: 'The bulk of the people are given up to wickedness of every kind. Of all places this is the worst for stealing, fighting and lying.'" Or Reverend Jesse Walker, "who went to St. Louis in 1820," and said, "the population was made up mostly of Catholics and infidels, very dissipated and wicked."[48] Rev. Elisha B. Bowman, who went to New Orleans in 1805, said:

> When I reached the city I was much disappointed in finding but few American people there, and a majority of that few may be truly called beasts of men… The Lord's day is the day of general rant in this city. Public balls are held, traffic of every kind is carried on, public sales, wagons running, and drums beating; and thus is the Sabbath spent… I reached Opelousas county, and the next day I reached the Catholic church. I was surprised to see race-paths at the church door. Here I found a few Americans, who were swearing with almost every breath; and when I reproved them they told me that the priest swore as hard as they did. They said he would play cards and dance with them every Sunday evening after mass; and, strange to tell, he keeps a race-horse and practices every abomination.[49]

Not unlike Dorchester's earlier criticism of eighteenth-century Jesuit explorers, this passage condemns the Catholic church for failing to separate sacred habits from the "general rant" of commercial pursuits. Race-paths mark church property; the priest himself indulges in secular pleasures after the mass. In each of these descriptions, the institution and its religious leaders fail to distinguish sacred from profane. Sacred space and time are marred—or worse, completely eroded—by the habits of marketplace gaming and colloquial speech.[50]

---

[48] Ibid., 381.
[49] Ibid.
[50] This is a repeated criticism in Dorchester's depiction of the moral degeneracy of the West. Another notable example comes from Rev. Alfred Brunson in Detroit, 1822: "When I first came to the place Sunday markets were as

Dorchester supports his claims of moral decay in the West with further evidence from mid-nineteenth century missionaries. Despite the best efforts of American missionary societies in the newly-acquired Louisiana Territory, the historian laments that "notwithstanding all that had been done, and the numerous religious bodies organized and established in the Mississippi valley, yet in many localities great immorality and religious destitution still prevailed." He includes testimonies, "dating about 1830," that claim "I have seen enough of the West to know that, in a spiritual sense, large portions of it are growing up with briers and thorns." Or another, who writes that "the progress of Romanism, together with open and disguised infidelity, in the great valley of the Mississippi, will require, according to present appearances, but a few years, to prepare from your presses a tract, which you may entitle, *The Last Hope of the World Fallen—America Ruined.*" The writer warns, "Be assured that in all the departments of benevolence unprecedented efforts must be made, and made soon, or our country is lost. Our civil and religious institutions, all the blessings of a free government, will be swallowed up as with a flood, and Woe! Woe! Will be written, in tears and blood, all over this once fair and happy land."[51]

If Romanism and "open and disguised infidelity" threaten to ruin America, then the future endurance of the nation lies in the hands of pioneer preachers, and the Protestant missionary and education societies that support them. Dorchester depicts these heroic preachers as "bold emissaries of the cross" who display both physical fitness and spiritual endurance:

> Their labors extended through sparse villages and open prairies, with individual settlers widely scattered. They traveled by Indian trails and marked trees. In the

common as week-day ones. The French brought in their meats, fowls, vegetables, etc., on Sunday as regularly as on any week-day. After selling out they would go to church, attend mass, and perhaps confess, and pay for absolution out of their market money, and then go home apparently in good spirits… On this practice I proclaimed a war of extermination… This raised a great fuss among the French, who from time immemorial had thus broken the Sabbath and after the market gone to mass, then to the horse-races in the afternoon, and fiddled and danced and played cards at night" (394).

[51] Ibid., 392-393.

> winter the roads were so bad and the bridges so few that they were sometimes obliged to desist from traveling. Often sleeping in the woods or on the open prairies on their saddle blankets; cooking their coarse meals by the way; fording streams on horseback with saddlebags and blankets lifted to their shoulder; exposed without shelter to storms, and drying their garments and blankets by camp-fires when no friendly cabin could be found, in a few years they became sallow, weather-beaten and toil-worn, and appeared among their brethren in the occasional ministerial gatherings without decent apparel and unused to the amenities of civilized society.[52]

These itinerant preachers traveled between "widely scattered" settlements. Seasonal shifts and winter storms often determined the extent of their travels, but Dorchester argues that these men were able to weather the changes well enough: they slept in the woods or on open prairies, forded streams, cooking and drying their clothes by campfire. They perhaps became "unused to the amenities of civilized society," but the primitive conditions did not deter them from their mission.

This "weather-beaten" heroism of the pioneer preacher diverges from Dorchester's earlier heroes of the Protestant missionary settlements in colonial New England. Whereas the efficacy of Stockbridge and Natick was in its ability to fix preacher and community into shared meetinghouses and well-ordered city streets—the successes of nineteenth-century missionaries depend upon their ability to forsake "English style" cabins and the conveniences of village life. In fact, these pioneer preachers take up *Indian trails* and follow the markings of trees as they scour the countryside for converts. In a strange reversal, Dorchester's account of the American West not only destabilizes his principled stand against the indignities of itinerant life, but it glorifies Protestants who co-opt Native American knowledge of land and travel for their own purposes. This co-opting of Native knowledge is the very thing for which Dorchester criticizes

[52] Ibid., 388.

Jesuit missionaries: they use Native American travel routes to access the Mississippi River and thus plant Catholicism "in the heart of the continent."

And yet, Dorchester's nineteenth-century heroes must contend with the vast expanse of a seemingly uncontrollable Western territory: as the heroism of Jesse Walker illustrates, these Protestant itinerants are not inscribing "lasting marks" of English Protestantism on a blank canvas; instead Walker must contend with a city already marked—in its language, habits, and architecture—by Catholicism. According to Dorchester, Walker's mettle is tested and ultimately proven in the challenge of planting a Methodist stronghold in the heart of St. Louis, a largely Catholic city:

> The struggle for [the establishment of a Methodist society] has had but few parallels in the modern history of Christianity. Any other man than Jesse Walker would have been appalled and left the city. He had resolved to plant a Methodist society in the Romish metropolis, where, up to that time, the Methodist itinerants had "never found rest for the soles of their feet." He laid his plans and selected two young ministerial brethren of undoubted courage to go and stand by him "to the bitter end."[53]

As a city that was "made up mostly of Catholics and infidels," St. Louis challenged Walker's every spiritual resource. At first unable to find lodging in the city, Walker and his two brethren decided to abandon their mission; only after riding eighteen miles away from the city did Walker turn around with renewed ambition. He met with members of the Territorial Legislature and declared that he had "come to take St. Louis."

Dorchester's hagiographic narrative emphasizes the ways in which Walker constructed a new dwelling place for the Methodists—even in a city that seemed closed to the possibility of a new religious sect. Indeed, the plot of Walker's story is punctuated by the hero's continually shifting location throughout space: his first "public experiment" was in a Baptist building, but

[53] Ibid., 391.

Dorchester writes that he was he was soon "excluded" from the place. Next, Walker "rented an unfinished dwelling-house" and "with his own hands" renovated the space into a "rude chapel" that was soon filled with congregants and school children. But this dwelling, too, proved only temporary: Walker and his growing Methodist community were eventually forced to vacate. Being invited by a "gentleman" to "cut timber for a chapel in his forest," the community crosses the Mississippi. There, by Walker's hands, a new meeting house is built. Thanks to the help of "new friends," by the end of the year the little Methodist community "reported seventy members and the chapel erected and paid for. He was reappointed to St. Louis the next year, and in 1822 the Missouri Conference held its first session in that city."[54] Dorchester's narrative emphasizes the heroic work of Walker's hands—which transformed a sparse cottage into a "rude" but vibrant church and constructed a timber chapel in the forests of the Mississippi Valley. By formulating a plot around Walker's movement—and temporary residences—throughout the city, Dorchester locates the missionary's legacy in the repeated, or ritualized, acts of marking space as Protestant.

When read in this way, Walker—and surely the pun at play in the Methodist itinerant's surname was not lost on Dorchester— becomes the example, par excellence, of the Euro-Christian missionary endeavor to mark the landscape with the shapes and patterns of Christianity. Walker resurrects the moral decay of New Orleans into a sturdy meeting place for Protestants. As in Dorchester's earlier portrayals of conversion efforts, the conversion of place and people is linked: in his firm resolve to "take St. Louis," Walker makes a place for a Protestant community in the West. The Mississippi and its valleys is now marked by the timbers of Walker's newly-raised chapel.

[54] Ibid.

The veneration of Jesse Walker also points to an inherent tension in the logic of *Christianity in the United States*: Walker's Methodist society may have indeed marked a small plot of Missouri forest with a Protestant chapel, but it did so in the midst of—or, perhaps more accurately, *on the periphery of*—a largely Catholic city. Even when Dorchester's Protestant heroes seem to able to produce evidence of visible, enduring change, the certainty of Protestant dominance is in America never entirely conclusive. If Dorchester's account repeatedly invokes the Mississippi Valley as the place in which religious change is contested and made visible—then his narrative is never able to fully reconcile the boundaries between Catholic and Protestant cultural influence: the two great "competing forces" are always enmeshed in a battle to outpace each other in population growth and territorial dominance.

This tension reverberates through Dorchester's portrayal of seventeenth and eighteenth-century missionaries along the Mississippi River and in New England. Although the narrative at first draws clear lines distinguishing the approaches of Catholic and Protestant missionaries—by emphasizing, for instance, Catholic weakness in yielding to "political" aims—the narrative is ultimately unable to sustain these distinctions as the chronology moves forward. Protestant missionaries prove to be no more effective in building lasting change upon the American landscape; what is more, Dorchester's portrayal of both Catholic and Protestant missions among Native Americans emphasizes the ways in which Europeans consistently relied upon Native stories, language, and knowledge to build networks of religious exchange across North America.

The map of 1655 illustrates this same conflict between a desire for Protestant dominance—and the representations of history that repeatedly frustrate this ideal. On the one hand, *Christianity in the United States* admits episodes of Catholic growth and territorial dominance. On the other, the narrative consistently seeks to subvert the presence and innovations

of Catholic missions by juxtaposing the growth of Catholicism against the anachronistic markers of the future United States, and by segmenting the timeline of Catholic history in order to disrupt any sense of Catholic unity. Dorchester's history is divided against itself. In reading the narrative for these fissures, Catholic and Protestant missionaries begin to bear striking similarity to one another: both, although perhaps in different ways, are repeatedly frustrated in their attempts to leave a defining and "lasting mark" upon the landscape of American religious history.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that *Christianity in the United States* aims to establish Protestant dominance in the West through three different narrative and rhetorical strategies: mapping Protestant destiny onto seventeenth-century designations of European empires; depicting Catholic missions succumbing to political interests and therefore as unable to "leave a lasting mark" on the landscape of the West; and glorifying Protestant missions—as early as John Eliot's mission at South Natick and as late as Jesse Walker's adventures in St. Louis—as heroic in their efforts to convert landscapes and peoples into the temporal and spatial patterns of civilization. Ultimately, this chapter argues, although Dorchester's history aims to narrate a coherent and conclusive story of Protestant dominance, the narrative itself is unable to support such claims: Protestants, it seems, are no more capable of leaving a lasting mark on the American landscape than their Catholic counterparts. This deep, intractable tension undercuts the entire narrative.

Perhaps this why Dorchester, realizing the deep fissures in his account, concludes the volume by conjuring a bold, militaristic battle cry. He reminds his readers of their common enemies, including Mormonism, which "lift[s] her beastly, defiant head" and "the specter of

Romanism" which "flits continually before the vision of others, causing grave fears."[55] And then, after rousing his readers' xenophobic fears and religious hatred, he writes:

> Let us not forget the God's kingdom is fostered by a beneficent Providence whose scope is too vast for finite thought; whose strategy is too profound for us to fathom... If there are any grounds for grave apprehensions, there certainly should be no trailing of banners nor folding of arms... To the front, then, Christian men and virtuous citizens, in every good work. March and toil in the fore-gleams of brighter days, shouting back to the advancing multitudes: 'THE MORNING COMETH!'[56]

These are the final words of *Christianity in the United States.* Dorchester's three great competing forces—Protestantism, Catholicism, and even some monstrous, divergent religious forms—are still enmeshed in battle at the conclusion of the volume. In response, Dorchester calls for his readers to take up arms against the "beastly head" of Mormonism, against the "specter of Romanism," and against the "corruption and lawlessness of the large cities." God's kingdom, in this final appeal, is a powerful, military empire, advancing into the American West with arms raised and banners held high. If Dorchester is unable to construct a narrative that solidifies Protestant dominance in the West, then his conclusion attempts to project this vision of Protestant strength into the future, calling his readers to join in the battle.

[55] Ibid., 787.
[56] Ibid.

Planting Christianity in "the American Soil":

Cities and Soils in Leonard Woolsey Bacon's *American Christianity*

> Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had not depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fall on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
>
> **Matthew 13:1-9 NRSV**

> Since those seventeen wonderful days of 1893, the idea that has so long prevailed with a multitude of minds, that the only Christian union to be hoped for in America must be a union to the exclusion of the Roman Catholic Church and in antagonism to it, ought to be reckoned an idea obsolete and antiquated.
>
> **Leonard Woolsey Bacon**
> *American Christianity* (1897)

In the final chapter of *American Christianity*, Leonard Woolsey Bacon presents his readers with a familiar portrait of American sectarianism that emphasizes both its sprawling diversity and its underlying coherence. Tracing the political and religious histories of the nation, Bacon marks their parallel development from scattered "seed-plots" to robust denominational ecologies. "As with civilization, so with Christianity," Bacon writes, "the germs of it, derived from different regions of Christendom, were planted without concert of purpose, and often with distinct cross-purposes, in different seed-plots along the Atlantic seaboard." He continues:

> Varying in polity, in forms of dogmatic statement, and even in language, the diverse growths were made, through wonders of spiritual influence and through external stress of trial, to feel their unity in one faith. The course of a common experience tended to establish a predominant type of religious life the influence of which has been everywhere felt. The vital strength of the American church, as of the American nation, has been subjected to the test of the importation of enormous masses of more

> or less uncongenial populations, and has shown an amazing power of digestion and assimilation.[1]

Here, churches vary in their forms of organization, church doctrine, and language; what is more, congregations are dispersed and extended across the map. As many of these varieties were native to Europe, denominational seeds were thus carried across the Atlantic—as if scattered by the wind—and were "planted without concert of purpose" in the costal soil.

In this portrait of American Christianity, diversity and coherence sit in direct tension with one another. The American church—that vague yet powerful national force—has "digest[ed] and assimilat[ed]" the transplants and adapted them to the American context. Though churches vary in structure, in theology, in language, and in regional location, Bacon argues that, through "external stress" and "spiritual influence," these transplanted species matured in the American soil and were "made to feel their unity in one faith." In each iteration of this tension, the unifying force itself is obscured behind grand ideals and generalities: the American church "assimilates" the various expressions of Christianity unto itself; "external stresses" and sweeping "spiritual influence" unify denominations—or, more precisely, allow these denominations to "feel" in unity with each other.

As this final accounting of American religion unfolds, Bacon exchanges the agricultural metaphor for language of religious competition and a voluntary system sustained by internal checks and balances. The logic, however, remains the same: the seed plots scattered across the Atlantic coast directly compete with each other as they struggle to plant and adapt themselves to a new cultural context. "External stresses" may help to strengthen some of these transplanted and

[1] Leonard Woolsey Bacon, *American Christianity*. (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1897), 399.

newly-forming sects, but they diminish others. As Bacon notes, the idea that "Competition is the life of business" is "applicable to spiritual as well as secular concerns."[2]

As if imagining an "absolutely free" religious ecosystem wherein the various competing sects exert control over the each other, Bacon paints a portrait of American religious voluntarism that is at once dynamic, self-regulatory, and—above all—independent of government intervention. Within the system of American voluntarism, Bacon argues, no one religion is able to maintain dominance over the others. "There is not so much a predominance of any one of the sects," he writes. "No one of them is so strong and numerous but that it is outnumbered and outweighed by the aggregate of the two next to it."[3] The magnitude of variation within American Christianity prevents any one sect from gaining an "expectation of supremacy or even a predominance."[4]

Even after this brief reading in the conclusion of *American Christianity*, it should already be clear that Bacon—unlike Baird or Dorchester—was invested in recasting American religion as a vast, dynamic ecosystem.[5] The living world of national religion that he constructed was comprised of European transplants that, through ongoing adaptation and reformation, construct the shape of American Christianity. Bacon's *American Christianity* explores is the possibility of a religious ecosystem that carries on without ongoing and direct interventions from God; what is more, his account argues that the primary cause of religious change is the living system itself:

[2] Leonard Woolsey Bacon, *American Christianity*, 403.
[3] Ibid., 401.
[4] Ibid., 404.
[5] Tweed notes this organic metaphor in Bacon's history and argues that this "germ theory" organizes many nineteenth-century narratives of American religion, including Baird's, Schaff's, and Dorchester's. However, as I argue here, Bacon's history relies upon this trope to a much greater extent than the American religious histories that precede; what is more, in adopting this trope, *American Christianity* is able to emphasize a natural, religious ecosystem that operates independent of divine control. See Tweed, *Retelling U.S. Religious History*, 14 and 233.

each sect is susceptible to the "corporate interests, sympathies, and antipathies" of the whole and therefore must continually adapt itself to its local and national contexts.[6]

This shift toward illuminating a natural and independent religious ecosystem implies a simultaneous shift away from divine intervention. Although Providence plays an important role in Bacon's history, in its construction of a national religious ecosystem, the narrative often obscures the precise nature of divine intervention. Baird, for instance, depicted the North American landscape as not only originally designed and constructed by God—but also continually marked by a Protestant God as evangelical Apostles perpetuated the forms and patterns of early Christianity in America. Bacon, meanwhile, invokes Providence only ten times over 400 pages, and in nearly all of these instances he emphasizes the "secrecy" or the "mystery" of the divine plan: for instance, there is "the *mystery* of Providence in the planting of the church in America," the "*painful mysteries* of divine providence" in the "annihilation of two magnificent schemes of Catholic domination on the North American continent" and in "permitting the curse of African slavery"; finally, in the concluding chapter, Bacon writes "We have marked the sudden divulging to the world of the *long-kept secret* of divine Providence; the *unveiling* of the *hidden* continent..."[7] Providence, for Bacon, does not represent a stable understanding of final or efficient causes; instead, in his narrative, Providence signals toward moments wherein historical agency is obscured, and the nature of a divine plan is unclear. Invoking the "painful mysteries of Providence" does not resolve these historical tensions; in many ways, it places further emphasis on (to invoke Ricoeur) the resonant aporia in the national historical timeline.

But further, as I will demonstrate in the following pages, Bacon—unlike Baird and Dorchester—does not ground his narrative in the original enduring forms of a North American

[6] Ibid., 401.
[7] Ibid., 36, 185, 257, 419.

Genesis; neither does he seek to enunciate the enduring natural forms of a landscape predestined for Protestant occupation. While both Baird and Dorchester—to different degrees and in different ways—rely upon permanent categories and forms to solidify a case for Protestant dominance, Bacon locates Protestantism's destiny in its ability to change and adapt to the conditions of a new world. Even certain species of Catholicism, Bacon argues, will be enfolded within the circle of American Christianity as it adapts itself into more Americanized forms. Thus, the endurance and persistence of certain forms of religion does not rely solely upon a denomination's ability to retain or retrieve certain formulations of an "original" Christianity—but rather upon a denomination's ability to extend beyond "insularity" and "adapt themselves to their new-world surroundings."[8] The sects that endure are those that display a certain "elasticity" and an ability to "self-adapt to whatever new environment" they might encounter.[9]

This chapter argues that when historical narrative is motivated by metaphors of adaptation and continual change—rather than retrieval of mythic forms, or the endurance of static categories—the construal of national space and historical time is significantly altered. What is more, while the visual fulcrum of Baird and Dorchester's history centers American religious history in the Mississippi Valley, the spatial touchstone of Bacon's history sits in the 1893 Chicago World's Fair: specifically, in the World's Parliament of Religions. Sydney E. Ahlstrom notes that Bacon concludes his volume with "that truly ecumenical gathering in mind."[10] However, as this chapter demonstrates, the World's Parliament of Religions is interwoven throughout the entire volume: not only do images from the Parliament meetings organize the concluding chapter of the book, but Bacon also cites speeches throughout and

[8] Ibid., 120.
[9] Ibid., 208-209.
[10] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*. (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1972), 9.

invokes the Parliament as a pivotal moment in ecumenical history. If the *axis mundi* for Baird lies in the primordial state of the Mississippi Valley, the center of the cosmos in Bacon's narrative lies at the turn of the twentieth century, in the idealized representation of the Parliament of Religions.

This construal of American religion also disrupts the chronologies of Bacon's narrative. In contrast to the two preceding histories, the *axis mundi* of Bacon's America is firmly planted in the present. Dorchester surely writes with a sense of urgency, but his narrative relies upon tracing the endurance and expansion of Protestant missions in the Mississippi Valley in the early nineteenth century. Bacon, meanwhile, constructs a narrative around the "pivot" of the present moment. To reiterate Josiah Strong's declaration: "There are certain great focal points of history toward which the lines of past progress have converged, and from which have radiated the molding influences of the future. Such was the Incarnation, such was the German Reformation of the sixteenth century, and such are the *closing years of the nineteenth century.*"[11] Bacon's *American Christianity* argues that 1893 is the "pivot" on which turns the history of Christianity; the Parliament in Chicago is a "convergence" of "past progress" and the event from which "radiate the molding influences of the future." As a consequence, Bacon's representation of the past—the founding of certain colonies, the interreligious conflicts and compromises of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—are inflected by the ways in which they anticipate the World's Parliament of Religion in 1893.

The challenge of analyzing Bacon's *American Christianity* is to hold in tension two seemingly disparate trajectories: on the one hand, the narrative is saturated with metaphors of

[11] Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and its Present Crisis.* (New York: Baker & Taylor for The American Home Missionary Society, 1885), 1.

growth and decay, survival and fitness; in this evolutionary logic, Bacon is able to trace the spread of European Christianities and native sects across the continent. In other places, however, the narrative uplifts a utopian vision of American religion that is firmly planted in the World's Parliament of Religion: here, American Christianity arrives in its perfect form as a unified yet diverse representation of religious life. There is a sense in which the entire narrative drives toward this teleological, "already but not yet" perfection—even as it traces the diverse and diffuse "germs of Christianity" seemingly planted "at cross purpose" from one another.

My analysis aims to preserve this tension in each of the four sections that follow: in the first section, I explore the formal constraints upon *American Christianity*, by arguing that, as the capstone volume of the American Society of Church History series, Bacon's history must preserve the narrative coherence and historical logic of each individual sect even as it attempts to unite the twelve preceding volumes of the series in a singular account of national Christianity. In this section I also examine the metaphor of the "American soil" and the "germs of Christianity" in its broad and varied appropriation throughout the text. In the second and third sections, I demonstrate the ways in which Bacon's depictions of Catholic and Protestant histories relies upon the evolutionary logic of adaptation, fitness, variation, and survival. In the fourth section, I turn to Bacon's representation of the World's Parliament of Religions, arguing that the historian's idealized portrait of the event positions the final decade of the nineteenth century as the moment wherein "past progress" and the future of Christianity converges in the American city.

The "Living Organism" of Church History

Bacon's *American Christianity* mimics many of the same patterns and narrative motifs

that his predecessors employ: Catholic and Protestant colonies are separated into distinct phases of American religious history; divergent elements are given slight treatment compared to the "mainline" denominations; Native American and African American religious histories are excluded from the volume. Further, Bacon—like his predecessors—positions the wilderness as a pivotal space that reifies the boundaries between civilization and primitive cultures, between religious fitness and "echoes of the Middle Ages." However, even as *American Christianity* closely follows the consensus tradition—it also calls in to question one significant tenet of nineteenth-century Protestant histories: Bacon argues that Catholicism ought to be included as a branch integral to the body of the American Church. While Baird dismisses Catholicism as "non-evangelical" and Dorchester ignores it as an outdated form of religion that is "passing away," Bacon argues vigorously for the inclusion of an Americanized version of the Roman Catholic Church into the *Unum* of American Christianity.

American Christianity culminates a thirteen-volume history published under the editorial advisement of Philip Schaff and The American Society of Church History (ASCH); as such, the logic of his narrative—and its emphatic inclusion of an Americanized Catholicism—reflects the ecumenical mission of the ASCH under the leadership of Philip Schaff, its founding president. The thirteen-volume series, which historian Henry Warner Bowden terms a "thoroughly Schaffian enterprise," was published between 1893 and 1897.[12] Albert Henry Newman, a professor of church history at McMaster University, Toronto and later Baylor University, proposed the project. Newman's proposal argued that the series might continue Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, which ended its study in the middle of the seventeenth century. Thus, in continuing Schaff's work, the series would consciously embody and promotes mutual

[12] Henry Warner Bowden, *Church History in the Age of Science: Historiographical patterns in the United States, 1876-1918.* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1971, 60-65.

understanding and cooperation among Christian sects; as Bowden states, the series was likely the organization's "most valuable literary achievement in an ecumenical vein."[13]

Although publication of the series began in 1893, the year Schaff died, the scholar's vision of church history, and his promotion of an ecumenical vision of "Evangelical Catholicism," left a clear mark on the ASCH series and on Bacon's contribution in particular.[14] Schaff viewed the church as an organic body—a living entity that grows and expands "from within" and that always retains its essence even as it changes from age to age. In *The Principle of Protestantism as Related to the Present State of the Church,* Schaff uses the term "organic" eight times to describe the church whole in relation to its dynamic parts; here, he argues that even as "the nature of Christianity" remains the same, Christianity itself undergoes a process of evolution over time:

> Christianity... is organic. This implies, in the nature of the case, development, evolution, progress. The law of its life moreover in this form, includes its whole life... The idea of such a development does not imply of course any change in the nature of Christianity itself. It implies just the contrary. It assumes that the system is complete in its own nature from the beginning, and that the whole of it too is comprehended in the life of the Church, at all points of its history. But the contents of this life need to be unfolded, theoretically and practically, in the consciousness of the Church.[15]

In this way, the Church "system" is complete even as the "contents of this life" need to expand and grow as the organism matures. Bowden, in fact, describes Schaff's idea of historical development as "analogous to the growth of a plant: all essential components present in the seed, and subsequent change was simply the natural extension of a single entity destined to flourish."[16]

---

[13] Ibid., 64.

[14] Surprisingly, none of the thirteen volumes dedicate or mention Schaff except within the context of the historical narrative. Although I take Bowden's point—and here likewise argue that Schaff's vision heavily influenced Bacon's narrative—the volumes themselves do not acknowledge their work as a "Schaffian enterprise."

[15] Schaff, Philip. *The Principle of Protestantism As Related to the Present State of the Church*. (Chambersburg, Pa.: "Publication Office" of the German Reformed Church, 1845), 19-20.

[16] Bowden, *Church History in the Age of Science*, 45. See also Klaus Penzel, "Church History and the Ecumenical Quest: A Study of the German Background and Thought of Philip Schaff." (Th.D. diss., Union Seminar, New York,

In this way, church history required theological grounding: in order to understand the changes taking place in each part, the historian must first appreciate the organic and complete whole—the essence of Christianity.

Schaff's vision of an "organic" church—and the language that shapes this vision—marks the pages of Bacon's history. As this chapter demonstrates, not only does Bacon extend the logic of the "living organism" through the metaphor of seed plots, soils, and the growth of an organic Christian Church in America; this trope also influences Bacon's portrayal of how Protestantism and Catholicism participate in a shared, "whole life" of the church. Schaff's ecumenical vision of church history argued that each branch of the Church—each sect, each faction that grew out of the schisms of the Reformation—was part of a whole, unbroken history: as Bowden writes, "Schaff thought of historical development *as an endless chain of events*, a single framework of human activity that could not be segmented without doing violence to the whole."[17] Strikingly, Schaff's system of historical development shares many features of the Aristotelian plot: ruled by "the law of progress," history unfolds in chained events according to a coherent and consistent pattern; the whole is made up of its constituent parts, or episodes, each of which are logically, internally, connected. The point here is not to prove Schaff's Aristotelian leanings, but rather to suggest that the historian's theology of history can be understood in narrative terms: in applying narrative analysis to his theory of history—and the texts informed by this theory—we can see the ways in which the representation of a whole, unbroken ecumenical history is patterned and thus enabled through metaphors such as the "organic growth" of a plant and seed plots being

1962), 222, 264.; and George H. Shriver, "Philip Schaff's Concept of Organic Historiography: Interpreted in Relation to the Realization of an 'Evangelical Catholicism' within the Christian Community," (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1960) and *Philip Schaff: Christian Scholar and Ecumenical Prophet: Centennial Biography for the American Society of Church History*. (Macon, Georgia: Mercer, 1987).

[17] Ibid., 45-46 (emphasis added).

cultivated in the American soil. In Bacon's volume in particular, these metaphors thematically interweave Protestant sects and Catholic histories into an "endless chain of events" that depict the whole life of the church expanding throughout history and across the North American continent.

Bacon's narrative organizes American religion as a constellation of related events and contested beliefs that are scattered across the national map. Each episode is linked not only to a specific period—but a specific place, and even a specific composition of soil. For instance, a quick scan of the table of contents reveals that every iteration of American Christianity is identified by its particular location on the map: "Puritan Beginnings" are denominated by their specific histories in Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas; a chapter on "The Church in New England" is organized by ports and colonial spaces along the "Atlantic seaboard"; the chapters on "The Great Awakening" unfold the acts of history across the continent. Even later chapters on "Controversies and Schisms" links issues with specific cities, states, and regions. Bacon's use of the term "soil" locates the outcome of specific sects within these local contexts; the conditions of the soil—whether rocky or fertile, contested or unoccupied—help to determine whether or not new church plants will adapt and survive in their new environment. The term "soil" itself appears on 25 pages; in these passages, the term is often modified by a regional or national descriptor, interweaving the text with references to "American soil," "the soil of Plymouth," or "the soil of the new nation" or world.[18] For instance, when writing about the rapid spread of Methodism, Bacon writes, "The work had spread to Philadelphia, and, *self-planted* in Maryland under the preaching of Robert Strawbridge, was propagating itself rapidly in that *peculiarly congenial soil.*"[19]

[18] Bacon, *A History of American Christianity*, 18, 88, 208, 5.
[19] Ibid., 200 (emphasis added).

Just as colonies and states grow out of the specific conditions of local soil, so too does soil composition explain regional variation and the outbreak of moral contests. The West, for instance, is characterized by its own kind of soil: although not uncongenial to church planting and growth, Western states are typically described as a rough and rocky soil; what is more, these territories and cities are continually populated by a variety of competing sects. Bacon writes that Native American missions were planted in "soil watered by the blood of [Catholic and Protestant] martyrs" as churches raced "to plant the soil of the West… with Christian institutions and influences."[20] The state of Kansas, too, was contested soil; as Bacon notes, Stephen Douglass's proposal of the Kansas-Nebraska Act was understood by both the opposition and supporting parties to effectively "turn over the soil of Kansas to slavery."[21]

In all these examples, the underlying metaphor depicts Christian religious culture as a seed being scattered and planted in the vast and varied compositions of "American soil." Each sect originates from a specific locale in Europe, offers its own unique variety of Christianity, and is transplanted into different growing environments. Central to this "organic" logic is the assumption that the "predominance" of one population over another is not a static and enduring state, but rather an unstable characteristic that is subject to change over time. The decay of one variant and the propagation of another unfolds unevenly and organically over time. As Bacon writes, the predominance of one religious species is not a matter of "reasonable probability"; instead, it is the consequence of a multitude of intermingling, unstable factors—the variety of seed, the composition of the soil, population density, the timing of planting—that together select some variants over others.[22] He continues: "The strongest in numbers, in influence, in prestige,

[20] Ibid., 23, 327.
[21] Ibid., 341.
[22] Ibid., 404.

however tempted to assert for itself exclusive or superior rights, is compelled to look about itself and find itself overwhelmingly outnumbered and outdone by a divided communion."[23] The self-regulating system is always shifting, and the sect that currently appears strongest might soon be outmatched by another. In this way, Bacon's narrative presents an image of national religion that is still in process. The varieties of American religion are planted everywhere, and yet the final accounting of its species—and the mapping of these species across national space and time—has yet to be written. Even the final chapter of the volume, "Tendencies toward a Manifestation of Unity," can offer only the possibility of Christian unity, rather than the assurance of its present state.

Through the metaphor of seedling churches growing and decaying in various American soils, Bacon's narrative interweaves a vast supply of historical episodes into one, coherent storyline: the history is both highly episodic—at times almost self-conscious in the ways it selects certain episodes and ignores others—even as it strings these episodes together and extends its account far back into "ecclesiastical antiquity." By comparing the depiction of Catholic and Protestant "plantings" in North America, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which different patterns of time—extensions, distilled episodes, plotted images—structure an "endless chain of events" that privileges the endurance and "deep planting" of certain "Americanized" forms of Catholicism and Protestantism. Because the narrative relies upon the repetition of a single, dominant metaphor, the volume often feels highly imagistic: Bacon distills an event into a series of images that inflect or support the dominant theme. Through the repetition of images, Spanish and French Catholicism are troped as withering plants, unable to

[23] Ibid., 405.

adapt to the new soil of the West. By contrast, New England Protestantisms—and the soil it inhabits—are troped as adaptive sects scattered in fertile, Atlantic soil.

Planting Catholicism in America

Bacon's adaptation of Schaff's "organic" logic allows him to cast the story of Spanish and French Catholic decline in terms of the natural processes of "decay" and "extinction." The difference from Baird and Dorchester might be slight; Catholicism is still fated to recede as Protestantism enters the continental stage according to the directions of Providence. And yet, by narrating the story in terms of a natural process—and even interweaving the familiar language of the Parable of the Sower—Bacon's narrative is able to remove God as the immediate cause and replace Providence with the reasonable and predictable acts of Nature. Further, when Bacon weighs the contentious debates of the nineteenth-century Catholicism—the internal debates of trusteeism, the public-school controversy—he concludes that ultimately the fittest, most adapted version of Roman Catholicism will continue in America. When depicting these debates, the metaphor of a religious ecology permits only the strongest and "most American" to survive; in this way, Bacon's narrative is able to preserve a progressive chronology, even as it obfuscates the direct cause of natural, religious selection.

As these natural metaphors saturate the narrative, they change the way that American time and space are organized. Significantly, even as Bacon's adoption of evolutionary logic preserves a progressive chronology, it also effectively extends the timeline of the narrative: Spanish and French Catholicism recede into "colonial and ecclesiastical antiquity"—and, on the opposite end of the timeline—Protestantism reaches forward to herald the dawn of a new and modern religious era. Just as the timeline of American religious history is distended to include "ecclesiastical antiquity," so also is national space transformed: colonial Catholicism, Bacon

writes, is displaced to the "far recesses of the continent." In this way, the narrative extends readers' perception of national time and space in order to demonstrate the ways in which certain forms of Catholicism might be construed as an earlier form of religion, less fitted to the specific demands of the American context.

Thus, the narrative of Spanish and even French missions highlights the ways in which Catholicism is less able to adapt to the North American context than their Protestant counterparts. Like Dorchester's history, *American Christianity* begins with Spanish Catholicism—an episode that Bacon several times refers to as "the story of planting Spanish Christianity."[24] A brief synopsis of the chapter is revealed in its title: "Spanish Conquest—The Propagation, Decay, and Downfall of Spanish Christianity."[25] The chapter on French Catholicism—which, unlike Dorchester's bisected narrative, directly follows the episode of Spanish Catholicism—is introduced by a similar headline: "The Project of French Empire and Evangelization, its wide and rapid success, and its sudden extinction.[26] Both titles cast a definitive arc of growth and decline: Catholicism, planted early in the American soil, grew rapidly and spread widely on the continent; however, even before the arrival of "Puritan beginnings," both Spanish and French Catholicism were susceptible to "sudden failure."

The opening paragraphs of the first chapter depict Spanish Catholicism as an ancient, long-extinct religious species. "The story of planting Spanish Catholicism" is characterized by the "prodigious impetuosity" of a church that recklessly extended itself over the continent; due to a combination of external conditions and the religion's characteristic weaknesses, the growth of

[24] Ibid., 11, 13.
[25] Ibid., 6.
[26] Ibid., 16.

Spanish Catholicism halted abruptly and the church decayed to "almost extinction." Bacon reflects upon the episode in this way:

> It is a striking fact that the earliest monuments of colonial and ecclesiastical antiquity within the present domain of the United States, after the early Spanish remains in Florida, are to be found in those remotely interior and inaccessible highlands of New Mexico, which have only now begun to be reached in the westward progress of migration. Before the beginnings of permanent English colonization at Plymouth and at Jamestown, before the French beginnings on the St. Lawrence, before the close of the sixteenth century, there had been laid by Spanish soldiers, adventurers, and missionaries, in those far recesses of the continent, the foundations of Christian towns and churches, the stately walls and towers of which still invite the admiration of the traveler.[27]

The rhythm of this passage—the repetition of "before"—emphasize the distance between Plymouth and Jamestown and the "early Spanish remains" in Florida and New Mexico. These early colonial ventures have marked the United States with the "earliest monuments of colonial and ecclesiastical antiquity": the foundations of town and churches, walls and towers. The narrator frames this depiction with a kind of self-referential gesture: "It is a striking fact," he remarks to himself and his readers; and, at the end of the paragraph, he notes that these ancient sights "still invite the admiration" of travelers today. In framing this depiction as a retrospective commentary, Bacon extends the distance between his readers and those "soldiers, adventurers, and missionaries" of antiquity, who have left only traces of themselves in "remains" and ruins.

In other places too, Bacon pauses to remark upon the chronological distance—and great religious difference—between these early transplants of Christianity and the forms of the present-day church. In this first chapter he writes, "the earlier pages of American church history will not be intelligently read unless it is well understood that the Christianity first to be

[27] Ibid., 7. Like Dorchester, Bacon goes on to suggest that the "attempted cooperation in the common device of God and mammon and Moloch" led to the eventual downfall of Spanish Catholicism.

transplanted to the soil of the New World was the Christianity of Spain."[28] And yet, for Bacon, understanding this first transplant helps readers to locate the great distance that extends between the ancient "remains" of Spain and the present. Indeed, Bacon argues, Spanish Christianity "has strangely little connection with the extant Christianity of our country":

> This condensed story of Spanish Christianity within the present boundaries of the United States is absurdly brief compared with the vast extent of space, the three centuries of time, and what seemed at one time the grandeur of results involved in it. But in truth it has strangely little connection with the extant Christianity of our country. It is almost as completely severed from historical relation with the church of the present day as the missions of Greenlanders in the centuries before Columbus.[29]

Reflecting on the limits and merits of his own composition, Bacon writes that his "story of Spanish Christianity" is "condensed" and "absurdly brief." After all, he concedes, Spanish colonialism in North America spans "three centuries of time" and a "vast extent of space." And yet, he concludes, this history, vast though it may be, "has strangely little connection with the extant Christianity of our country." This early species of Christianity is nearly "severed" from the forms we see in present day. Here, rather than extend the sense of temporal distance, Bacon suggests his readers might view the historical plot as ruptured in two.

If the narrative extends—or, to invoke Ricoeur's analysis, *distends*—the sense of temporal distance between the first transplants and the later iterations of immigrant Christianity, it also accentuates a spatial distance as well. The "monuments of colonial and ecclesiastical antiquity" are buried in the "far recesses of the continent." Spanish Catholicism is located in the what Bacon deems the far West of New Mexico; its remains are hidden in "those remotely interior and inaccessible highlands"—that is, beyond Salem and Plymouth, beyond the St. Lawrence and Mississippi. What is more, these "far recesses" conceal not thriving towns and

[28] Ibid., 5.
[29] Ibid., 15.

churches, but "the foundations" of a former species of Christianity. Only the admiring traveler, it seems, bothers to gaze upon the remains of this former civilization.

In his assessment of Spanish Christianity, Bacon argues that the lesson "legible on the surface of history" is that Catholicism crumbled under the weight of its own greed and in its violent pursuit of converts. What is more, he argues that Spain "seemed in its American conquests to have been converted to the worst tenets of Islam." He continues: "The propagation of the gospel in the western hemisphere, under the Spanish rule, illustrated in its public and official aspects far more the principles of Mohammed than those of Jesus. The triple alternative offered by the Saracen or the Turk—conversion or tribute or the sword—was renewed with aggravations by the Christian conquerors of America."[30] This "rule by the sword" ultimately led to Spain's downfall, Bacon argues; he cites the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 as the turning point Spanish-American colonial history and writes that "the measures of compulsion that had been used to stamp out every vestige of the old religion were put to use against the new." He concludes: "The cause of Catholic Christianity in New Mexico never recovered from this stunning blow."[31]

While Spanish Christianity withered "almost to extinction," other germs of Catholicism find greater success in North America. For instance, early French missionaries, who traveled widely along the St. Lawrence and Mississippi Rivers, are more receptive to the "native feelings" of the new world; citing Parkman, Bacon writes that grand "schemes" inspired by "the amazing possibilities of the continent" appeared to be "native to the American soil, springing up in the hearts of the French pioneer explorers themselves."[32] So too does the first American Bishop,

[30] Ibid., 7-8.
[31] Ibid., 12.
[32] Ibid., 18.

John Carroll, seem inspired by an American spirit: "he was a man not only versed in the theology and polity of his church, *but imbued with American principles and feelings*," writes Bacon.[33] He also cites the founding of a Sulpician seminary in Baltimore in 1791—an institution dedicated to "the training of native clergy"—as "the best security that had yet been given for the permanence of the Catholic revival" in America.[34]

In all these instances, the exact nature of these "American principles and feelings" is never precisely identified; nor does Bacon defend or explain his invocation of an "American soil." Perhaps because these terms are so ambiguous, Bacon takes recourse to them; in these instances where the narrative parses out the distinction between "foreign" and "native" religious forms, connection to the national soil often determines—or explains—why one sect thrives and another fails. Spanish Catholicism has "strangely little connection" with the present forms of modern American religion at least in part because it never, like the French, drank of the "schemes and possibilities" that sprung up from the American soil. So, too, is John Carroll "imbued with" a certain Americanness. According to this logic, a religion can only be properly called American after it has firmly planted itself in the native soil and been nourished by—and reconstituted in—the particular "principles," "feelings," and "possibilities" of the new world. Bacon states this most definitively in the final chapter of the volume; writing of internal debates within the present-day Catholic Church, he notes: "it is hardly to be doubted that with the growth and acclimatization of the Catholic Church in America that party will eventually predominate which is most in sympathy with the ruling ideas of the country and the age."[35] The Catholicism

[33] Ibid., 215 (emphasis added).
[34] Ibid., 217.
[35] Ibid., 397.

most likely to thrive in America will be, according the Bacon, that party most able to adapt or "acclimatize" itself to "the ruling ideas of the country."

Planting Protestant Christianity: Slow Growth in Congenial Soil

While for Bacon, Spanish Christianity illustrates the rapid sprouting and propagation of religious forms, New England Protestantism, by contrast, is defined by its meager beginnings and its slow growth in "congenial soil." Early Catholic history is portrayed as the seed being thinly planted or scattered upon rocky soil: it does not take root and is unable to propagate growing, thriving populations in the New World. By contrast, Protestantism is characterized by its diverse range of types—many of which are able to grow up alongside each other in chained "seed plots" along the Atlantic coast. Remarking on the first church plants in Massachusetts, Bacon emphasizes both the diversity of sects and the deepening roots of these early churches:

> By the end of one hundred years from the settlement of Massachusetts important changes had come upon the chain of colonies among the Atlantic seaboard in America. In the older colonies, the people had been born on the soil at two or three generations' remove from the original colonists… In different degrees and according to curiously diverse types, the institutions of a Christian civilization were becoming settled.[36]

Although divided, these transplants together endure the harsh conditions of their new environments, eventually growing robust, multi-generational roots into the American soil. While the "earliest monuments" of Spanish Catholicism endure only as reminders of a long-extinct civilization, a variety of Protestant sects are "becoming settled" upon the landscape.

[36] Ibid., 127.

For Bacon's narrative of the Protestant colonies, the "planting" metaphor illustrates both the variety of seedlings planted along the Atlantic seaboard—and the ways in which these early transplants begin to change and adapt to their new religious environment. For instance, despite its "decline to almost extinction," Bacon writes of the Virginia Colony: "there is sufficient evidence that the three little vessels which on the 13th of May, 1607, were moored to the trees on the bank of the James River brought to the soil of American the germ of a Christian church."[37] Bacon narrates the story of the Virginia Company's meager beginnings, its unstable management, and in 1624, the revocation of the charter—and yet, Bacon concludes, "the Puritan principles of duty and liberty already planted in Virginia were not destined to be eradicated."[38]

The differences between the early events of Catholic and Protestant "plantings" are slight, but significant: while the near-extinction of Spanish Catholicism in New Mexico leaves only "remains" in the "far recesses of the continent," the Virginia Company, though not exactly successful in maintaining and growing a population of religious dissenters, is still able to successfully plant "the Puritan principles of duty and liberty" into the costal soil. In his narration of French exploration, American "principles" and "feelings" were depicted as native to the soil; these virtues seemingly "sprung up" from the American soil "into the hearts of French pioneers and explorers." Here, however, these same virtues are transplanted from England; these "germs" of Christianity are scattered in the coastal soil through direct "plantings" at the hands of the Virginia Company.

In this way, the metaphor of churches being "planted" in North America is flexible enough to both obscure and highlight human agency; what is more, the metaphor discreetly sorts religions as "foreign" and "American." This section examines a series of early episodes in the

[37] Ibid., 38.
[38] Ibid., 48.

story of Protestant "planting": in particular, I highlight Bacon's narrative of the cooperation and "shared Christian love" between the Puritan colony at Salem and the Separatists at Plymouth. By comparing Bacon's representation of Salem-Plymouth unity to a second account of these events published in 1874 by Leonard Bacon (L.W.'s father), I argue that L.W. Bacon's construal aims to identify the precise moment in which "the foundations of a national church" were laid. What is more, in distilling this moment of Christian unity, the narrative gestures forward to conversations taking place at the end of the nineteenth century about the possibilities and limits of Christian unity in the United States: the "founding" concord shared between Salem and Plymouth prefigures the "religious harmony" of the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893.

The story of Salem—like Bacon's construal of so many other New England colonies—is a story of slow, often fitful growth within the costal soils of North America. In these narratives, early failures are typically depicted as productive: hardships like famine and lack of physical fitness drive colonies to adapt and change. Jamestown, Bacon reports, was first comprised by a proportion of four carpenters to forty-eight unskilled "'gentlemen'"; John Smith eventually "begs" his superiors "to send but thirty honest laborers and artisans, 'rather than a thousand such as we have.'"[39] The colony at Salem likewise begins slowly; it is first established as a "depot of supplies for the fishing fleets." Bacon pronounces the project "a costly failure" and yet, he writes, "it was like the corn of wheat falling to the ground to die, and bringing forth much fruit."[40] A similar metaphor appears a few pages later: he writes, "the solitude of the little starving hamlet by the sea was favorable to the springing and fructifying of this seed in the good and honest hearts into which it had been cast."[41]

[39] Ibid., 39-40.
[40] Ibid., 89.
[41] Ibid., 93.

Bacon argues that the success of Salem—a Puritan colony—was due largely thanks to the assistance of Plymouth, the nearby Separatist colony. Their story illustrates the possibility of diverse sects cooperating in "the spirit of Christian love." Bacon writes:

> We do not need to be told that to the little Separatist settlement at Plymouth, still in the first decade of its feeble existence, the founding, within a day's journey, of this powerful colony, on ecclesiastical principles distinctly antagonistic to their own, was a momentous, even a formidable fact. Critical, nay, vital questions emerged at once, which the subtlest churchcraft might have despaired of answering. They were answered, solved, harmonized, by the spirit of Christian love.[42]

Each shaped by their own radically different responses to the English Reformation, the Puritan and Separatist colonies stood divided in their "antagonistic" principles. Bacon prolongs this tension for another sentence: the founding of Plymouth was a "formidable act" that raised "vital questions" to church leaders. And then, in a swift turn of fate, Bacon concludes that these distressing questions were "answered, solved, harmonized, by the spirit of Christian love."

Although stated only in vague terms here, Bacon narrates this "harmonizing" episode with more specificity a few pages later: John Endicott's party arrived in "the uncultivated desert" of Salem, sick with scurvy "and other distempers." Receiving word of a doctor in Plymouth, Endicott summoned help and the doctor "hastened to their relief."[43] The governors of the two colonies—Endicott and Bradford—exchanged letters soon afterword; this correspondence, remarks Bacon, "marks an epoch in the history of American Christianity."[44] Bacon reprints Endicott's letter in full; the key passage appears in the first paragraph of the letter, where Endicott writes that "'God's people are marked with one and the same mark, and sealed with one and the same seal, and have, for the main, one and the same heart, guided by one and the same

[42] Ibid., 92.
[43] Ibid., 93-94.
[44] Ibid., 94.

Spirit of truth; and where this is there can be no discord—nay, here must needs be sweet harmony.'"[45]

For Bacon, Endicott's letter documents not only the possibility of Christian unity—but perhaps the very first instance of a new, American religious type: the material artifacts provide detailed evidence of two divided sects uniting in the soil of the New World. As Bacon writes:

> 'The positive part of church reformation,' which Higginson and his companions had come into the wilderness to practice, appeared in a new light when studied under the new conditions. The question of separation from the general fellowship of English Christians, which had lain heavily on their consciences, was no longer a question; instead of it arose the question of separation from their beloved and honored fellow-Christians at Plymouth.[46]

The "new conditions" of the American wilderness change the way in which English Protestants interpret the work of reforming the church—and interpret the call of charity toward their religious neighbors. In the "new light" of America, Bacon argues, Separatists and Puritans alike can begin again and write "sweet harmony" over former discord.

A third scene solidifies this union between Salem and Plymouth. By emphasizing single acts over a continuous and cohesive narrative, this episode distills the story of the two colonies into three important images: an entrance, a declaration of agreement, and a handshake. The basic storyline outlines the context of these three acts: on a particularly auspicious day—the day that a church body was formally established at Salem—a boat appears off the shores of Salem; after an invitation to come ashore, "messengers of the church at Plymouth" disembark. Led by Governor Bradford, the Separatists "came into the assembly" at Salem and "declared their 'approbation and concurrence,' and greeted the new church, the first-born in America, with the 'right hand of fellowship.'" Bacon here quotes his father, Leonard Bacon, who notes in his book, *The Genesis*

[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 95.

of the New England Churches, that this moment represented "the beginning of a distinctively American church history."[47]

For both L.W. and Leonard Bacon, the founding of the "first-born" church at Salem is meaningful only because it was recognized by fellow Christians at Plymouth. Governor Bradford and his fellow messengers arrived on shore and—to invoke the language of Genesis—beheld the newly-created church and declared that "it was good." Indeed, by entering the Salem congregation and offering greetings of "concurrence" and fellowship, the Separatists from Plymouth not only participate in the beginning of American church history—but they also mark the event, and ritualize it as a beginning. As L.W. Bacon writes, this shared fellowship lays "the foundations of a national church."[48]

Although both L.W. and Leonard Bacon place emphasis upon this as episode as foundational to a unified, American church, their representations of this event are markedly different. In L.W. Bacon's episode, for instance, time is condensed into single acts: an entrance into the assembly, a declaration of approval, a handshake. The narrative does not elaborate these acts, nor does it detail Salem's response to their guests from Salem; instead, it distills the story into images of unity. In word and in deed, the still-frame images epitomize the joining together of Separatists and Puritans under "the Spirit of Christian love." In turn, these images initiate a major theme in *American Christianity* that is replicated throughout the narrative*:* that is, the still-frame acts symbolize a peculiar kind of American ecumenism that can be traced from its origin on the shores of Salem to the convening of the World's Parliament of Religion in 1893.

[47] Ibid., 97 For the original passage, see: Leonard Bacon, *The Genesis of the New England Churches.* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1874), 475-478. For a biography of Leonard Bacon, see: Davis, Hugh. *Leonard Bacon: New England Reformer and Antislavery Moderate*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998).
[48] Ibid.

That L.W. Bacon repeatedly locates the action of these episodes on the shoreline further adds to the symbolic import of the Salem-Plymouth story as an "American beginning." Salem is seemingly constituted from the Atlantic waters: the sea brings forth clergymen to "plant the good seed," laborers to build the church, and friendly vessels to found and sustain Christian fellowship in the New World. Salem is first introduced as a "little starving hamlet by the sea," and the event which precipitates the first contact between the two colonies was the arrival of the first party of Puritans to the "port of Salem."[49] On the day that church at Salem was established, Bacon writes of the "belated vessel" from Plymouth that "landed on the beach at Salem."[50] In this way, just as the three still-frames are seemingly suspended or frozen in time as perpetual images of sectarian unity, so too is Salem itself portrayed as suspended in a liminal space: the beginning of American church history, as L.W. Bacon tells it, sits at "the port" or on "the beach of Salem."

If L.W. Bacon's rendering prioritizes select images against the cosmogonic backdrop of the Atlantic sea, Leonard Bacon's *The Genesis of the New England Churches* (1874), by contrast, offers expansive contextual detail and grounds the events in discreet, political spaces. Indeed, Leonard Bacon explains that leaders from Salem had in fact planned for the arrival and participation of a delegation from Plymouth: "it had been arranged that the transactions of that day should be consummated by a formal recognition of fraternity and mutual confidence between the church that was coming into form and organization in the Puritan colony and the Separatist church at Plymouth."[51] Significantly, L.W. Bacon's narration offers no explanation for the arrival of the "eagerly awaited" and "belated vessel" at the height of the day's ceremonies; indeed, because it lacks the detail of his father's narrative, L.W. Bacon's portrayal might imply

[49] Ibid., 93.
[50] Ibid., 97.
[51] Leonard Bacon, *The Genesis of the New England Churches*, 476.

that the vessel was invited by Providence—not by those involved in planning the ceremonies at Salem. In contrast, Leonard Bacon locates the actions of this episode almost entirely within the realm of human politics: his narrative employs language that positions these ritualized acts within the boundaries of church and colonies.

But perhaps most significantly, Leonard Bacon renders this scene of Puritan and Separatist fellowship not in the middle of the historical narrative—but at the conclusion of his book. Completing the story of *The Genesis of the New England Churches,* this episode marks a parallel between the beginning of the ancient church and the beginning of the American church. The book opens in "A.D. 1-100" with a chapter that follows the first Christian Apostles, and the founding of churches in Jerusalem and Antioch. Entitled "What was in the Beginning," the first lines invoke the Gospel of John, Chapter 1: "In the beginning, Christianity was simply Gospel. Ecclesiastical organization was not the cause, but the effect of life. Churches were constituted by the spontaneous association of believers."[52] At the end of the volume—in A.D. 1624-1629—Leonard Bacon argues that the beginning of American religious history essentially repeats this same act of "spontaneous association." Of the Salem and Plymouth episode, he writes: "Such was the beginning of a distinctively American church history. If we trace its progress, we shall find that it is essentially the history of voluntary churches—the history of tendencies and conflicts which have come to the result that now every American church forms by itself by elective affinity."[53] This "elective affinity" recalls the "spontaneous association" of early believers; in order to create symmetry in his timeline of Christian history, and in order to found this first act of churchcraft in an extended, historical pattern, Leonard Bacon positions Salem and

[52] Ibid., 17.
[53] Ibid., 477.

Plymouth *in illo tempore*: in this way, the founding of the first church at Salem invokes the founding of the Christian cosmos.

Pruning the narrative down to its most essential images, L.W. Bacon uses these episodes of Salem-Puritan fellowship to point forward—rather than backward—in time. Indeed, for L.W. Bacon, the greetings of approbation, the extended hand of fellowship establish a type—that is, a symbol of America Christianity unity—which is then enacted again and again throughout his narrative of American religious history. Indeed, these same gestures are on display at the World's Parliament of Religions, where Bacon argues that American ecumenism has reached new heights, its example displayed for the entire world. So too does the image of "slow growth" in "congenial soil" pattern the story of Protestant history, emphasizing a long and progressive view of history. By extending the timeline in this way, the narrative is able to resurrect even colonies such as Salem, which was at first a "costly failure," through a long and evolutionary narratives of religious history. So too do Bacon's organic metaphors emphasize a long view of history: Protestant churches, like the seed planted in fertile soil, grow slowly, adapt, and renew themselves over generations of religious life.

The World's Parliament of Religion

As R. Lawrence Moore argues in *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, Leonard Woolsey Bacon's *American Christianity* reiterates several themes common among nineteenth-century consensus narratives. Like Baird's and Dorchester's, Bacon's history is governed by providential design and driven by national and religious destiny; furthermore, he argues that religious unity appears not only possible but likely. To this end, the text's chronology separates rather than integrates Catholic and Protestant timelines, and many denominations that

Baird considers "un-evangelical" are predictably cast as minor characters whose stories diverge from the main plot. For instance, Bacon writes of Mormons: "It is only incidentally that the strange story of the Mormons, a story singularly dramatic and sometimes tragic, is connected with the history of American Christianity."[54] However, Bacon's history differs from previous consensus histories in at least one important way: the metaphor of "organic growth" patterns the adaptation of certain "Americanized" forms of Catholicism into the larger story of a national church. In this way, in sharp contrast to Baird and Dorchester, Bacon threads Philip Schaff's ecumenical vision of "Evangelical Catholicism" through his chronology of American religious history.

Moore largely glosses over this shift in the historiography. Instead of highlighting Bacon's significant divergence from previous constructions of Christian unity, he stresses instead the continuities in a historiography of desire. "Bacon was not tempted to do any more than repeat the theme that America's religious destiny was, despite appearances, to end schism, not to multiply it," writes Moore. *Christianity in America* "brought to a close nineteenth-century historical writing about American religion by demonstrating exactly the same thing that Baird and Schaff had tried to demonstrate."[55]

For Moore, H.K. Carroll's 1893 volume offers the most dramatic challenge to nineteenth-century consensus histories. Carroll's study, *The Religious Forces of the United States, Enumerated, Classified, and Described* was the first volume published in the American Society of Church History Series. According to Moore, Carroll reformulates Christian unity in terms of Catholic adaptation rather than (a la Baird and Dorchester) exclusion; Carroll's "useful statistics," writes Moore, "were intended to confirm what Dorchester had written. [His] figures

[54] Ibid., 335.
[55] R. Lawrence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, 12.

on church membership gave religious historians who were premising their narratives on the promise of eventual Protestant unity legitimate cause to take heart."[56] However, Moore emphasizes, Carroll ultimately lacked Dorchester's faith in the impermanence and ultimate decline of American Catholicism: "Carroll was not as confident as Dorchester had been that America would become the graveyard of Catholicism, but he was convinced that Catholicism would prosper only as it became more Protestant and emulated Protestantism's superior intellectual training."[57]

Moore underestimates the extent to which Bacon's book, which is edited according to the same "Schaffian vision" as H.K. Carroll's ACHS volume, also strains to reconcile growing religious diversity with a narrative of continuing Protestant dominance. What is more, Bacon's volume does not use census data or spatial metaphors to draw authoritative conclusions of Protestant dominance. To be sure, the organizing theme of "church plantings" imposes a unifying structure that advantages many Protestant sects and disadvantages all but the most "Americanized" religious outsiders. However, to say that Bacon's project merely replicates the same consensus formula of other nineteenth-century surveys understates Bacon's contribution to the genre. If, as Moore suggests, Bacon wrote his volume with "[Carroll's] statistics in hand," then Bacon's narrative marks a more considerable departure from his predecessors than has been previously acknowledged. In contrast to Baird and Dorchester, Bacon argues that religious unity depends upon a reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant forces in America—requiring an adoption of Catholicism into the fold of the American Church. Further, in evaluating the future of American sectarianism, Bacon rejects statistical evidence as ambiguous at best—and entirely misleading at worst. His book cites H.K. Carroll's study only four times, and *American*

[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.

Christianity lacks the substantive charts, graphs, and maps that punctuate Baird and Dorchester's account. Contrary to what Moore implies, Bacon does not rely upon statistics to bolster his account of religious unity. In fact, he does the opposite: he uses them to point to the tenuous notion of religious dominance or religious coherence.

But perhaps most significant to the present study, Bacon's spatialization of American religion diverges dramatically from the visual tropes of preceding accounts: he does not, as Baird, ground his account of Protestant destiny in a North American creation myth; nor does he mark the Mississippi Valley with evidence of Catholic missionary failures. Instead, *American Christianity* depicts the American Church in persistently agricultural terms: uncultivated, enduring soil becomes the place in which the European seedlings might root themselves in the New World. Adopting the language of the "Parable of the Sower" and the logic of Schaff's "organic history," Bacon weaves together an account of religious competition that emphasizes both the variety of American sectarianism and the instability of religious dominance. Only in the conclusion of the volume, where Bacon describes the events of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, does the narrative shift to highlight a more stable image of American ecumenism. In the final paragraphs of the volume, time slows—even freezes—to accommodate a detailed tableau of the Parliament that includes the sights, sounds, and textures of the event. While the historical narrative coheres through the trope of Christianity as "seedling churches," the conclusion abandons historical narrative and instead fixes its attention on the present—and possible future—of the church. In doing so, the narrative exchanges the metaphor of an "organic church" for one that emphasizes the ecumenical vision of "a city at unity with itself."

Stamped upon the final pages of Bacon's book, the image of the World's Parliament of Religions attempts to construct what historical narrative cannot: unity and harmony among

many, differing religious traditions. Written in the years following the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, *American Christianity* draws heavily upon the papers, reports, and proceedings of the World's Parliament of Religions. Throughout the volume, Bacon cites speeches and reports from the conference and, as Ahlstrom notes, Bacon offers a detailed rendering of the event in the concluding chapter, entitled "Tendencies toward and Manifestation of the Unity of the American Church."[58] Underscoring the importance of the image, Bacon's concluding depiction of the Parliament marks a sharp transition in the narrative. After stating his earnest hope for the realization of Christian unity, he writes:

> The record of important events in the annals of American Christianity may well end with that wholly unprecedented gathering at Chicago in connection with the magnificent celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus—I mean, of course, the Parliament of Religions.[59]

Although he writes that the record "may well end" with any number of events, Bacon's choice to conclude with the Parliament is not haphazard; in depicting religions as equals seated side by side, Bacon can—at least in the final pages of his book—represent American Religions in its ideal, and fully-grown, form.

Planned to commemorate the Columbian expedition, the World's Fair marks a pivotal moment in Bacon's history that simultaneously signals backward—to Columbus's North American landing—and forward to the next stage in the development of global Christianity. In fact, Bacon first references Columbus on the second page of the book, where he emphasizes, in three separate instances over two pages, the "timeliness of the discovery." For instance, he writes on page two: "With impressive coincidence, the latest vestige of this primeval American Christianity fades out in the very year of the discovery of America by Columbus."[60] At the time

[58] Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 9.
[59] Bacon, *American Christianity*, 418.
[60] Ibid., 2.

of Columbus's landing, he writes, both Catholicism and Protestantism were poised to plant a more "sobered" and "revived" church.[61] This same "timeliness" saturates the "wholly unprecedented gathering in Chicago": in marking the end of the Bacon's history, it also signals back to the mysterious "coincidence" that opened his account. This narrative symmetry suggests a new stage of development, wherein the American Church is now poised to plant a newly evolved church that harmonizes the highest forms of Catholicism and Protestantism—Schaff's "Evangelical Catholicism."

For Bacon, the World's Parliament illustrates the ecumenical capacities of American sectarianism: on the platform in Chicago, an otherwise "scattered" church gathers itself and engages in "harmonious" dialogue. Strains of American exceptionalism sound loudly here:

> In a land… in which the church, unsupported and barely recognized by the state, and unregulated by any secular authority, scatters itself into what seem to be hopelessly discordant fragments, a bold enterprise was undertaken in the name of American Christianity, such as the church in no other land of Christendom would have had the power or courage to venture on. With large hospitality, representatives of all the religions of the world were invited to visit Chicago, free of cost, as guests of the Parliament.[62]

In this passage, Bacon again recalls the pattern of American Christianity as "scattered seed plots": the church in America is "unregulated" and "scattered into what seem to be hopelessly discordant fragments." However, the tone here is different: this same church—now the *American Church*—steps out to "undertake a bold enterprise." United in the shared service of hospitality, this national church steps out onto the global stage, evoking Winthrop's model of charity in that beckoning "City Upon a Hill."[63]

Bacon's model of Christian charity is illustrated not only in the grand gestures of

---

[61] Ibid., 4.
[62] Ibid., 418.
[63] John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity" in Alexander Whitaker, et al. *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 37-41.

hospitality—inviting representatives from religions around the world to attend "as guests of the Parliament"—but also in the rhythms of the gathering itself. The Parliament displays both fundamental religious difference and, through the very act of assembly, a kind of momentary religious unity:

> For seventeen days the Christianity of America, and of Christendom, and of Christian missions in heathen lands, sat confronted—no, not confronted, but side by side on the same platform—with the non-Christian religions represented by their priests, their prelates, and teachers... There were those who stood aloof and prophesied that nothing could come of such an assemblage but a hopeless jangle of discordant opinions. The forebodings were disappointed. The diverse opinions were there, and were uttered with entire unreserve. But the jangle of discord was not there. It was seen and felt that the American church, in the presence of the unchristian and antichristian powers, and in presence of those solemn questions of the needs of humanity that overtask the ingenuity and the resources of us all combined, was 'builded as a city that is at unity with itself.'[64]

Bacon's rendering invites readers to not only picture religious unity, preserved on the platform in Chicago, but it also evokes for readers the vibrant and harmonious debate taking place: representatives of are seated "side by side on the same platform"; "diverse opinions were shared," and yet "the jangle of discord was not there."[65] Evoking unity in sight and sound, Bacon stages a conclusion that preserves both a variety of religious expression and the perception of religious harmony.[66]

If the World's Fair signals back to the auspicious "timeliness" of the Columbian Expedition, so too does it point to a new chapter in the "annals" of American Christianity. For Bacon, the Parliament precipitates an evolved formulation of Christian unity that not only draws upon Protestant ecumenism—but also Protestant and Catholic reconciliation. He writes, "Since those seventeen wonderful days of 1893, the idea that has so long prevailed with multitudes of

[64] Ibid., 418-419.
[65] Ibid., 418.
[66] For nineteenth-century critiques of the World's Parliament of Religions, see Curtis Evans, *The Burden of Black Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 109-115.

minds, that the only Christian union to be hoped for in America must be a union to the exclusion of the Roman Catholic Church and in antagonism to it, ought to be reckoned an idea obsolete and antiquated."[67] With faint echoes of the "impressive coincidence" wherein "primeval Christianity fades" at the time of Columbus's landing in the New World, Bacon here suggests that 1893 marks another pivotal moment in the history of Christianity: in this year, the Protestants turned from an "antiquated idea" and began to embrace the Roman Catholic Church—or at least, as he implies earlier, the more Americanized aspects of the Church—into the imagined union of American Christianity.

Bacon ends his account of American Christianity here, at this 1893 Columbian commemorative which pivots between an "antiquated" conception of religious unity and a more capacious one, and which brings Roman Catholicism and Protestantism into shared conversation. In fact, Bacon cites Bishop Thomas O'Gorman's *History of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States*—the ninth volume in the ASCH Series—a total of eleven times throughout his history, more than any other ASCH volume except for Henry E. Jacob's *History of the Lutherans.* In this way, Bacon's final volume embodies this same pivot toward the kind of ecumenical dialogue that the Parliament of Religions represents on the stage in Chicago—and that Schaff himself had envisioned in the notion of "Evangelical Catholicism."

Unlike the earlier episodes in Bacon's narrative, which depict Catholic and Protestant growth as organic processes which are not yet complete, this final episode crafts a more stable image of American religion. Further, the pivot from the old to the new is not a slow, organic change but rather a swift, in-the-moment shift wherein a range of conditions and plots converge to effect a surprising change. "Since those seventeen wonderful days," Bacon writes, the

[67] Ibid., 419.

prevailing assumption has been overturned, and replaced by a new vision of Christian unity. If, to invoke Ricoeur, Bacon's narrative primarily plots religious change as slow and "geological"—this final episode chooses a different approach: here, ideological change happens immediately, in the aftermath of the Parliamentary gathering.

This final scene diverges in another way as well: in recalling an image of the World's Fair in Chicago, Bacon draws attention away from the seed plots of the Atlantic, and the rural monuments of the Mississippi Valley—to the city, where representatives from the world over were gathered to "express their diverse opinions with entire unreserve." Here, in the conclusion, American Christianity is no longer construed as an organic plant—but instead as a "city builded at unity with itself." This final image—even if only for an instant—emphasizes the stability and teleological perfection of Christian ecumenism, realized and practiced in the American city.

Evolution and Teleology

At the beginning of this chapter, I proposed that when historical narrative is motivated by metaphors of adaptation and continual change—rather than retrieval of mythic forms, or the endurance of static categories—the construal of space and time is significantly altered. Bacon's American religious landscape is expansive and interconnected; the timeline that plots the course of history is equally so: it patterns and links episodes in a plotline that sprawls from ancient forms to the most evolved. Especially in its construal of early Catholic and Protestant plantings in the New World, *American Christianity* leaves open the possibility of continued change: history, in the Schaffian sense, is a "living organism," whose form is "constantly changing." But crucial to this evolutionary logic is a clear, teleological end: as Schaff writes, history "proceeds on an eternal, unchangeable plan of infinite wisdom, and tends, therefore, by an irresistible

necessity, to a definite end."[68] This tension pervades Bacon's entire project: as the capstone volume of the ASCH Series, it both animates the living organism—through all of its competing and cooperating parts—even as it makes clear that its history is driving toward a definite, if somewhat still mysterious, end.

Both Schaff's and Bacon's histories display this logic of directed evolution. Through the metaphor of the organic church, *American Christianity* emphasizes the sprawling, and sometimes unwieldy, growth of religion in America. Of New York in 1730, Bacon writes, "The general impression left on the mind by this survey… is a mass of almost *hopelessly incongruous materials*, out of which the brooding Spirit of God shall by and by bring forth the unity of a new creation."[69] Or later, he writes of the colonies in the South, "One impression made by this general survey of the colonies is that of the absence of any sign of unity among the various Christian bodies in occupation… In general, there were only scattered members of a Christian community, awaiting the inbreathing of some quickening spiritual influence that should bring bone to its bone and erect the whole into a living church."[70] And yet, as both of these passages illustrate, though religion in America often appears to be little more than a jumble of "hopelessly incongruous materials," the scattered churches wait expectantly for "the inbreathing" of "the brooding Spirit of God." Bacon likely drew this language directly from Schaff's *America,* where the same "brooding" Spirit looms over the concluding depiction of the nation. Schaff writes of "the heaping up of materials and plans, the chaotic fermentation that precedes the acts of creation." "The prolegomena are laid out" Schaff writes, and "the cosmos lies in the chaos, as man in embryo, and He who in the beginning said: 'Let there be light!' lives and rules with his

[68] Schaff, Philip, and Edward D. (Edward Dorr) Yeomans. *History of the Apostolic Church: With a General Introduction to Church History*. (New York: C. Scribner, 1854), 3.
[69] Bacon, *American Christianity,* 141 (emphasis added).
[70] Ibid., 150.

Divine Spirit, brooding over the ecclesiastical *Thohuvavohu* of the New World."[71] Schaff's final remarks, like Bacon's, emphasize the chaos of historical signs and the looming Spirit that mysteriously guides this "fermentation" toward a directed end.

Like Schaff's conclusion, final chapter of *American Christianity* illustrates the difficulty of ending an evolutionary story with divinely-inspired end. In the paragraph that immediately precedes the rendering of the World's Parliament of Religions, Bacon writes:

> It begins to look as if in this 'strange work' of God has been grinding up material for a nobler manifestation of the unity of his people. The sky of the declining century is red with promise... When next some divine breathing of spiritual influence shall be wafted over the land, can any man forbid the hope that from village to village the members of the disintegrated and enfeebled church of Christ may be gathered together 'with one accord in place' not for the transient fervors of the revival only, but for permanent fellowship in work and worship?[72]

Here again, Bacon invokes the "divine breath" as the only possible source of Christian unity—a supernatural force that transcends centuries of church history to collect the digressing elements of a "disintegrated and enfeebled church." And here again, conclusive unity is delayed—to the next century, to some future dispensation, to another revival. For Bacon and his contemporaries, this desire for religious unity is as much a theological problem as it is a formal problem.[73] Bacon insists that the "strange work" of God must move toward a "nobler manifestation of unity"; this is the teleological end to which history must progress. Although historical events may not provide immediate evidence of this grand design, Bacon reminds his readers that the unity is still possible—and always divinely-inspired. Christian unity cannot be predicated upon the logic "reasonable probability;" unity, Bacon argues, is a matter of "high faith."

---

[71] Philip Schaff, *America*, 213.
[72] Bacon, *American Christianity*, 417.
[73] R.L. Moore hints at this when he writes about these books as "histories of desire." See also: Moorhead, James H. *World Without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Brekus and Gilpin, *American Christianities: A History of Dominance and Diversity* and Henry Warner Bowden, *Church History in the Age of Science*.

Extending as far back as Aristotle's *Poetics* and even looking to more recent critical studies such as Caroline Levine's *Forms*, scholars have debated the ways in which chronological plot structures put pressure upon narratives to establish concordance between beginning, middle, and end.[74] Historical narrative, no less than fiction, is influenced by these formal pressures: in order to arrive at a conclusion that is logical and meaningful, historians must construct a plot line that is organized by causal connections and predictable effects; in order to satisfy, these narratives must produce a convincing and complete story. Bacon was subject to these formal pressures much more than Baird or Dorchester. Because *American Christianity* is situated as the capstone volume in a thirteen-volume series, Bacon's readers surely expected that the narrative would, in its total effect, offer a concordant conclusion that unifies the many detailed, sectarian studies that preceded it.

Bacon's answer to this formal problem is, like Schaff, to maintain the evolutionary logic of history in process—a fermentation bubbling up among the American churches—and delay the final, unified ending to some certain, but yet unrealized future. But Bacon also offers another, formal solution to this narrative problem: rather writing than a single, narrow conclusion, his final chapter offers three distinct endings. The first conclusion, the first part of the final chapter and by far the longest, offers readers evidence of sectarian cooperation, and small ecumenical movements. This first conclusion ends with the summary statement on the "strange work of God" that "grinds up material for a nobler manifestation of unity." As we have seen, in this first part Bacon directs attention toward the future: the satisfaction of Christian unity lies there, perhaps, after the next "breathing" of the divine Spirit. Here, the narrative heightens the view,

[74] See: Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy.*; Aristotle, *Poetics* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).; Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

collecting together the sectarian pieces that comprise his history—and the twelve volumes that precede it. As the view rises, the narrator projects the plot forward into the future.

The second conclusion features the World's Parliament of Religions. As we have already seen, this second part introduces the event by drawing attention to instability of the conclusion itself: Bacon writes that "the record of important events in the annals of American Christianity *may well end with*"[75] the Parliament. Any number of events might have been featured in the final position; the narrative might have ended, for instance, with the small, ecumenical gatherings that together pile up as evidence of a future unity. But of course, Bacon instead chose the Parliament as the final episode in his narrative—and with it, he emphasizes a certain kind of ecumenical harmony envisioned as a thriving city that stands at unity with itself.

The final ending—comprised of the last two paragraphs—is offered in a confessional mode, written as if in direct and personal dialogue with the reader. Here, Bacon emphasizes the limits of historical narrative and the difficulty of reconciling the many, diverse accounts of religion within a single, coherent ending:

> The theme prescribed for this volume gives no opportunity for such a conclusion as the literary artist delights in—a climax of achievement and consummation, or the catastrophe of a decline and fall. We have marked the sudden divulging to the world of the long-kept secret of divine Providence; the unveiling of the hidden continent; the progress of discovery, of conquest, of colonization; the planting of the church; the rush of immigration, the occupation of the continent with Christian institutions by a strange diversity of sects; the great providential preparations as for some "divine event" still hidden behind the curtain that is about to rise on the new century,--and here the story breaks off half told.[76]

The volume effectively ends with the final line of this paragraph. One might wonder what precisely Bacon means by "the theme prescribed for this volume." Is he referring, rather generally, to the subject of Christian history in America? Or is statement perhaps pointing to a

[75] *American Christianity*, 418 (emphasis added).
[76] Ibid., 419.

more idiosyncratic problem, that is, to the fraught task of composing the final volume in the American Church History series? In either case, the resulting narrative exceeds the limits of a tidy conclusion: the plot lines do not map neatly onto patterns of progress or decline, nor do they lend themselves to the satisfying ending of a romance novel or tragedy. Instead, the final event is "still hidden behind the curtain," and the story "breaks off half told."

Through each successive ending, the narrative reveals the difficulty of concluding an expansive collection of stories in a single chapter. It is not that Bacon offers the three conclusions so that the reader may choose one among the three—a collection of evidence, a finely-rendered image, or a soliloquy on narrative—but rather that the narrator seems to be easing the reader away from the notion of a conclusive ending, or a final pronouncement. This kind of story, Bacon tells his readers, cannot be ended. It must be constantly renewed and rewritten to reflect the always-shifting, ever-changing formations of American Christianity.

Conclusion:

Time and Space in Nineteenth-Century America

> Beyond all thoughts of epochs and endings and turning points, moreover, one may hope that such future interpreters, as well as later readers of these words, will see increasing evidence that the American people, in their moral and religious history, were drawing on the profounder elements their traditions, finding new sources of strength and confidence, and thus vindicating the idealism which has been so fundamental an element in the country's past.
>
> **Sidney Ahlstrom**
> ***A Religious History of the American People,* p. 1096**

This dissertation has argued that, in analyzing the spatio-temporal logics of nineteenth-century American religious histories, we might gain a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which Protestant dominance was figured in and beyond the nineteenth century. In particular, this study demonstrates how these texts visually pattern the nation and isolate particular national and global spaces—the Mississippi Valley, the World's Parliament of Religions—to underscore an image of Protestant power or religious unity. In order to emphasize the stability of Protestant presence in these frontier spaces, the plotline of these narratives often pause, and sometimes fragment, in order to preserve and uphold a certain concordant, visual pattern of Protestant destiny. In this way, representations of American national religion rely upon the coordination of both spatial and temporal logics in order to create a narrative of American religious history that both gestures to the extensive diversity of religions, cultures, and sectarian "seed plots" and, at the same time, orders its account into a complete and coherent story of Protestant exceptionalism.

In Baird's 1844 *Religion in the United States*, the primary geographical reference point is the Mississippi Valley: although each episode in the text's unfolding chronology lifts up a different portrait of the American religious landscape—the cosmogony, the founding of Protestant churches, the proliferation of American Apostles and plain-style preaching—all of these spatial focal points are grounded in what Baird refers to as "the Central Valley." Baird's repeated reference to the *Genesis* account of creation, to the New Testament Apostles and to the early churches plots a dramatic, circular narrative: Christian history repeats itself, the text argues. In this newly-founded world of North America, the simplified preaching of American apostles reiterates—and coheres to—an eternal, Christian story that renews itself from age to age. In this way, the Mississippi Valley represents the place—in Eliade's typology, the *axis mundi*—in which American religious history intersects with, and thus has access to, the eternal cycle of the Christian story.

Dorchester's 1890 *Christianity in the United States* invokes the Mississippi Valley to different effect: his text argues that the Valley is the pivotal place in which religious change is contested and made visible. Here, the two great "competing forces" of Catholicism and Protestantism are endlessly enmeshed in a battle to outpace each other in population growth and territorial dominance. If, as Strong writes, the end of the nineteenth century represented a focal point of history—a "convergence of past and future," a historical "pivot"—then the Mississippi Valley visually represents, for Dorchester, this same sense of apocalyptic change: in this central valley, European missionaries compete as they attempt to inscribe upon, erase, and revise the Native landscape in order to impose new religious orders on the American wilderness. This construction of Protestant destiny does not, as in Baird's narrative, rely upon repeatedly centering episodes at the *axis mundi* of the Mississippi Valley; instead, Dorchester tropes

Protestantism as the expression an essential, Christian "heart" that is figured—on over 40 pages of the narrative—in the ritualized act of church founding. From the sound and ordered construction of Stockbridge and Natick to the weather-beaten heroism of Jesse Walker, Dorchester argues that the strength of Protestantism lies in its ability to convert the wild landscape into the stable and enduring structures of Euro-Protestant civilization.

As the capstone piece to the 13-volume ASCH series, Bacon's 1897 *American Christianity* underscores the formal problem of creating a unified narrative from among many, diverging stories of American Christianity. His volume shifts attention away from the Mississippi Valley and toward a more comprehensive view of the continent as a whole. Taking up Schaff's metaphor of the "living organism" of church history, Bacon's volume constructs a visual pattern that construes American sectarianism in terms of "scattered seed plots" and regional soils; according to this logic, the Christian church evolves through organic growth and always toward some certain, if mysterious, end. However, the conclusion of *American Christianity* puts pressure upon this teleology of organic, evolutionary growth. In invoking an ecumenical image of the World's Parliament of Religions, Bacon attempts to—and I am here invoking Ricoeur—"mend the [ontological] discordance" of an inconclusive plot. Indeed, for Bacon, the united representatives of the Parliament not only embody the Schaffian vision of "Evangelical Catholicism," but they are also able to accomplish what his historical narrative cannot: unite the past progress, present conditions, and the future hope of American Christianity.

Each of these narratives, in its own way, strains to identify a stable notion of American religious identity and to locate that identity within the boundaries of national space and time. Although the United States was at that time undergoing dramatic change—its borders expanding; its populations growing, shifting, relocating; its political union ruptured and its cities

increasingly divided along racial and religious lines—these minister-historians wrote in order distinguish a visual and temporal pattern that might weave together the sectarian threads in American history. Baird pinpoints the Mississippi Valley as the symbolic center—and in accessing this center, his narrative suggests that American religion might tether itself to the simple and original forms that lie at the core of Christian history and identity. Dorchester's language of the center emphasizes the "Christian heart," an enduring and seemingly unchanging spirit which motivates the founding of stable, enduring Christian cities. Bacon locates the center of history—Strong's "pivot"—at the end of the nineteenth-century, in the World's Parliament of Religions: it is here that the scattered seed plots of Christianity come together, and participate in a shared moment of Schaffian "Evangelical Catholicism."

The language of center and pivot, the acts of scattering and founding, the characteristics of enduring, stable, original—all of these forms of speech locate historical meaning within the coordinates of space and time. These metaphors plot unity in specific places on the national map, and they render historical events—and historical change—through patterns of discreet, stable forms: the mountainous backbone of the continent, the founding or planting of churches, the Parliamentary subjects seated by side. In this way, narrative concordance and coherence is constructed through the replications of visual patterns across national space and national time: rivers and mountain ranges, the founding of churches, and scattered seed plots allow these writers to trope their texts with natural, enduring images of unity.

To be sure, this attempt to construct meaning in precise, spatial terms is not unique to historical narrative. In 1854, for instance, Henry David Thoreau published a collection of writing on his spiritual exercises at Walden Pond. In the second chapter of *Walden*, entitled "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," he writes:

> Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through Church and State, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call reality, and say, This is, and no mistake; and then begin, having a *point d'appui*, below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely.[1]

The similarity in language is striking: just as Dorchester's narrative repeats the language of church founding and a central Christian heart, and just as Bacon reiterates the theme of planting Christianity in the soils of the United States, so here does Thoreau take up metaphors that plant the wandering soul deep into the earth: "Let us settle ourselves," he writes, "and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush." Only after digging deep, through "that alluvion [sic] which covers the globe," can one reach "a hard bottom and rocks in place" where one can declare "this and no mistake." Thoreau calls this place a "point d'appui," which can be translated as "fulcrum" or "pivot"; in the more precise context of military operations, the term is used to designate a strategic base—a starting point for a campaign.

In the narrower sense of the term, *point d'appui* offers a new way to interpret the troping of Christian history in terms of center and pivot, scattering and founding; it suggests that these Protestant writers were attempting to strategically designate a starting point—a solid place from which they might build a case, or wage a campaign, for a coherent story of Christian history and Protestant destiny. If, these narratives argue, the timeline scales back far enough, the viewpoint rises high enough, or the roots of Christianity plant themselves deep enough, then religious history might be mapped in terms that are both intelligible to readers and also representative of a coherent, concordant whole. In this way, time and space together are patterned in ways that

[1] Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden* (London: W. Scott, 1886), 95-96.

attempt to "mend the [ontological] discordance" of American religious history, and the national "soul" these histories posit.

Structuring Time and Space in American Religious History

In his 1968 "The American Religious History Canon," Martin Marty noted his surprise that Catherine Albanese's *America: Religions and Religion* was not nominated as a contender for the disciplinary canon. Her book, he wrote, "transcended its genre by 'deconstructing' mainline, establishment, official, canonical history." He continued: "In half the book she used the conventional, Ahlstrom-like outline. In the other half she experimented, [working] through Native American to Jewish and Catholic and then quickly past the Protestant mainstream to black, nineteenth-century new religions, occult and metaphysical movements, Eastern religions, and Appalachia. It all looked different, and the book signaled promise in such approaches."[2] Albanese's *America* was subsequently revised and re-published in four more editions; the fifth edition was published in 2013. In each edition, however, the fundamental schematic remains the same: The first part—what Marty termed the "experimental half"—emphasizes the manyness of American religion, and each chapter in this part sustains a timeline that features a single religious tradition, from Native American religions to African American religions, to Metaphysical religions. The second part defines the "oneness" of American religion, a concept that is variously construed as "Public Protestantism," "Civil Religion," "Cultural Religion," and religious syncretism.

Albanese's experimental approach—one that combines strategies of comparative religious study and historical studies—produces a collection of narratives that are more

[2] Martin E. Marty, "The American Religious History Canon*," Social Research*, Volume 53, No. 3 (Autumn 1986), 513-528, Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40970429, *526.*

numerous, and more diverse, than any previous survey of American religion. In the first half of the book, religious histories are organized into three parts: "Original Cast," "Newmade in America," and "Patterns of Expansion and Contraction." Each of these parts, and the chapters that comprise them, paints a portrait of American religious life that that is distinct; the separate stories and episodes do not map easily on to a shared timeline. While Schaff, Baird, Dorchester and Bacon—and even historians as recently as Sidney Mead, William Warren Sweet, Winthrop Hudson, and Sydney Ahlstrom—prioritized the singular plot line, with its series of logically connected events, Albanese instead composes a seemingly uncountable number of chronologies, all of which are loosely connected by themes and illustrative episodes, rather than logically-linked plotlines.

In fact, some readers might argue that Albanese—like many other authors of recent American religion surveys—has in the strictest sense hardly written a historical narrative at all.[3] The book is organized thematically, rather than by a singular chronology; it offers a constellation of figures, episodes, and descriptions rather than a well-defined narrative with a clear and connected beginning, middle, and end. She writes that the book "[begins] at the beginning, with the religions of Native Americans," but does not mark middling periods, and signals the conclusion by shifting toward descriptions of present day religious formulations. In the final part, which depicts the "oneness" of American cultural religion and public religion, dates and figures recede into the background and change moves at a slow, sometimes imperceptible pace.[4]

However, a careful reading of Albanese's book reveals a complex negotiation of chronologies that feature discrete, historical episodes as well as sweeping portraits of a

[3] See, for example: Philip Goff and Paul Harvey, *Themes in Religion and American Culture.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2004); Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. (New York: Oxford, 2002).
[4] Albanese, 17.

developing inner consciousness. In the Preface to the First and Second Editions, Albanese argues that, in order to tell a story of "manyness and oneness," the text is organized by two kinds of events: the first are episodic events, which are "simple, clear-cut, and short-term." These are the discrete events that typically order historical narratives. In contrast, the second set portray the development of religious consciousness—a subject similar to Sidney Mead's "story of inner experience." Of this second set, Albanese writes:

> ... Just as important for the history of religions, are inner events of consciousness that find outer expression in religious settings. Unlike the names and dates of a more politically oriented history, these sets of events are not neat, tidy, and easily comprehended in conventional historical summaries. Most of the time, they unfold gradually, over centuries. To borrow—and modify—an idea from the French historian Fernand Braudel, they are events of "long duration."[5]

By invoking the *Annales* historians—and in particular, Braudel—Albanese also seems to invoke a schematic that, recalling Ricoeur's interpretation, effectively stratifies historical chronologies into distinct layers, comprised of temporal rhythms that are both long and short. In this interpretation of Albanese's method, the story of *America: Religions and Religion* is constructed by combining the surface chronology of episodic, event-driven history with the deeper, resonating rhythms of a lived and felt religious consciousness.

However, the temporal logic that Albanese enacts is in fact quite different: her method of chronology does not—as Ricoeur argues of Braudel—stratify time into distinct but interwoven layers. Ricoeur argues that, in order for the reader to make meaning of a history like Braudel's they must cycle through the three, layered chronologies: geological time must be interwoven into the *longue duree* of social history and share concordant patterns with episodic history; conversely, for episodic history to gain meaning, events must be integrated into the larger patterns of social history and glacial change. To "mend the discordance," Ricoeur argues, the

[5] Albanese, xvi.

three distinct levels must display resonant patterns that allow readers to make significant connections between them.

Although Albanese distinguishes between episodic chronologies and the temporal rhythms of the *longue duree,* she casts time and space in patterns that are quite different from what Ricoeur—or Mead or Ahlstrom—had in mind. On the most basic level, the "inner events of conscious" are in fact much more diffuse than what Braudel's history of Phillip II portrays; Albanese's diverse events of consciousness bubble within a multitude of individuals and rise slowly from among "the many" of American religious culture. Again, she writes:

> Such long-term events do not have sharp and precise edges, like a frame around a battle painting of the Civil War. Rather, these events are grasped as emerging out of the experience of people, vocalized and expressed through sacred story and ritual, everyday behavior, and sometimes institutions. Hence, this book tries to follow the pathways from outer expression to inner experience. It assumes the inner stories are immensely significant in American religious history.[6]

For Albanese, these events of consciousness—scattered, and subtle as they may be—are what allow the historian to tell the stories of the many: together, as in a stained-glass or patchwork pattern, these many events "emerge out of the experience of people" and produce the larger cultural narratives of "sacred story and ritual, everyday behavior, and sometimes institutions." As Albanese writes, these sets of events portray "the richness and texture of American pluralism."[7]

The more precise corollary to this pattern of "inner events" is not Braudel, but rather Mead, whose thesis in *The Lively Experiment* (1963) roots typologies of American religious consciousness with their formation in the "crucible" of the North American frontier. And yet, Albanese and Mead diverge dramatically in their approaches to telling this story of religious

[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

interiority: while Mead categorizes American religious consciousness into three figural types, who enact the episodes of "outward acts" upon the frontier—Albanese emphasizes instead the diffuse, inherently complex nature of American religious experience. In Albanese's book, the subject of inner consciousness is first introduced via Mead in an epigraph: "Americans," Mead writes, "have so presented to view and celebrate the external and material side of their pilgrims' progress that they have tended to conceal even from themselves the inner, spiritual pilgrimage, with its more subtle dimensions and profound depths."[8] In a metaphor that evokes the Ricoeurean image of stratified chronologies, Mead links the "inner pilgrimage" with "profound depths."

Indeed, these metaphors of internality and externality, surface and depth permeate the opening essay of *The Lively Experiment*. Mead argues that both the "outward acts" and inner experience are determined by the seemingly omnipotent force of American space. He writes: "He who would understand America must understand that through all the formative years, space has overshadowed time—and had taken precedence over time in the formation of all the ideals most cherished by the American mind and spirit."[9] Or again: "Americans during their formative years were a people in movement through space—a people exploring obvious highways and the many unexplored and devious byways of practically unlimited geographical and social space. The quality of their minds and hearts and spirits was formed in that great crucible."[10] In this way, Mead argues, the overwhelming space of North America—and the freedom it implies—shapes the "outward acts" and inward experience of American religious history. On the surface, the "mighty saga of outward acts" is embodied in what Mead terms "the mastery of a vast, stubborn,

[8] Ibid., xv.
[9] Mead, "The American People: Their Space, Time, and Religion," 12.
[10] Mead, 7-8.

and ofttimes brutal continent." But deeper still, in grappling with the ever-unfolding, unfamiliar space, pioneers found their minds and hearts changed, too: their ideals were shaped by what Mead calls "the subtle magic of space."[11] If American religious history is defined by the movement of pioneers through space, then Mead's three types of religiosity develop out of the pioneer response to the beckoning frontier: the "eager beavers" press ever Westward; the "reluctant pioneers" long to plant themselves at home; the "plodding settlers" dutifully perform the work of pilgrimage.[12] Albanese's account, of course, employs such typology; her text emphatically states that these "inner events of consciousness" are "not neat, tidy, and easily comprehended in conventional historical summaries."[13]

Mead's spatialization of the American frontier—and its influence upon the inward and outward shape of church history—is deeply influenced by Schaff's schematic of Christian history. In the preface to the volume, Mead echoes Schaff as he writes that "the history of the Christian Church is an unbroken continuum."[14] Indeed, Mead draws heavily upon Schaff's iteration of "organic" development: *The Lively Experiment* underscores the formative influence of the "frontier situation," and traces the development of "something wholly new" out of the chaos of American religious life.[15] Thus, Mead's orientation to church history not only underscores the *longue duree* of global, Christian progress; in the context of American church history, his book traces an even deeper, chronological pattern: the frontier—that vast, unfolding space—functions as the geographical constant in narratives of religious change. The omnipotent force of American space influences the development of the episodic, "mighty saga of outward

[11] Ibid. 14.
[12] Ibid., 11.
[13] Albanese, xvi.
[14] Mead, x.
[15] Mead, ix-x.

act"; it also produces a uniquely American religious consciousness—*the longue duree* patterns of American religious history. In this way, Mead's temporal and spatial logic maps squarely onto Ricoeur's schematic of historical narrative: the three, stratified patterns of short, long, and seemingly unbroken periods of historical development inflect each other.

As Mead's narrative highlights, Ricoeur's account of stratified time dissects historical chronologies into three rhythmic patterns; at bottom, the passage of time unfolds so slowly that historical change—geographical change—is barely perceptible at all. In this way, both the *longue duree* of social time and the episodic history of events are grounded as they inflect, or echo, the slow, steady waves of geographical time. In Mead's account, religious interiority and the grand saga of "outward acts" unfold upon and are centered within the American frontier. In fact, Mead explicitly invokes Schaff to make this point; Schaff writes, "They have all been uprooted from their several soils and ancestries and plunged together into one vortex, whirling irresistibly in a space otherwise quite empty." If, Mead and Schaff argue, the history of American pluralism must account for the various "soils and ancestries," then the common denominator of this religious multiplicity lies in the long, echoing waves of American space.

Though she invokes Mead's "inner pilgrimage" and Braudel's account of the *longue duree,* Albanese ultimately constructs the chronologies of *America: Religions and Religion* in a dramatically different fashion. Unlike Ricoeur's triad of chronologies—and Mead's construal of American time and space—Albanese spotlights only two kinds of events: the episodic and the "inner events of consciousness." The two types map onto Ricoeur's uppermost layers: the episodic events are "simple, clear-cut, and short-term" and the inner events "unfold gradually, over centuries." Missing from Albanese's account is the third, and base chronology: the extended eras of plodding geographical change are nowhere to be found in Albanese's book.

This, I would argue, represents the fundamental difference between Albanese's account of American religious history and many of the accounts that precede it: not only do Baird, Schaff, Dorchester, and Bacon construct histories that situate historical chronologies in reference to a fundamental, national geography—but so do William Warren Sweet, Winthrop Hudson, Mead, and even Sydney Ahlstrom invoke the frontier, spaces of settlement, and tropes of the wilderness to found episodic chronologies and social histories. While, for example, Ahlstrom applies the familiar spatial scaffolding to his account—the story begins in Europe, migrates to colonial settlements in North America, and situates religious movements in reference to their origin on the American map—Albanese's "Contents" signal to a more thematic method of organization. When she mentions specific places—Spanish and French missions for instance, or West African Religions—they are typically used to briefly mark religious migration. The only geographical-spatial pattern that subtly informs the structure and coherence of *America* is extra-textual: the book includes photographs of some of the nation's oldest and most significant religious houses, including the Touro Synagogue of Congregation Jeshuat Israel in Newport, St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, The Old Ship Meetinghouse outside of Boston, a Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Sitka, Alaska, and the Rama Temple in Lemont, Illinois.[16] These photographed landmarks provide the only significant geographical reference points for the reader.

However, although Albanese's book does not mark historical episodes and events of inner consciousness with the patterns of a corresponding national geography, the book does rely upon one significant visual trope: boundaries and contact. This trope of defining and crossing borders not only runs through the accounts of America's many religions and "one" religion; it

[16] Albanese, 44, 72, 93, 209, 227.

informs the very structure of manyness and oneness. Albanese explains, "*In the formulation of its basic theme* the book has profited from anthropological insights concerning the importance of boundaries. As social spaces where two peoples or realities meet, boundaries assume *monumental importance* in America."[17] As Albanese emphasizes, religion itself grew out of practices of border-making and border-crossing. Through rituals, sacraments, and daily practices, religion allows people to designate boundaries and facilitate crossings between territories, bodies, and periods of life and death:

> What we know about various religions suggest that they arose to deal with boundaries. For many peoples, physical boundaries that marked the limits of the territory of another group were frightening. They divided land that was safe, the source of nurture and sustenance, from land that was alien and unfriendly, the home of hostile spirits and strange or warring peoples.[18]
>
> But territorial boundaries were only one kind of border with which people dealt. There were also the limits of their own bodies, the boundaries of skin, muscle, and bone that separated each person in a group from every other person. Crossing the boundary of one's body could not be avoided: it happened every day in the simple acts of eating and drinking, of defecating, or of having sexual intercourse. It occurred even when words passed from one person to the next. Thus, rituals like prayer before a solemn speech or meeting grew up around these exchanges of language.[19]
>
> Finally, there were the temporal boundaries in the life cycle that any person passed through. In experiencing birth, puberty, marriage, and death, a person crossed the border between one form of life, which was known and secure, and a new kind of life, which was often somewhat fearful. So there were rites that would ease the passage across the boundaries...[20]

Using comparativist methods, Albanese argues that religion is best defined by these two, related acts of boundary-making and boundary-crossing. Rituals establish boundaries between bodies,

[17] Ibid., xvii (emphasis added).
[18] Ibid., 3.
[19] Ibid., 3-4.
[20] Ibid., 4.

even as they facilitate meetings between people; temporal boundaries mark stages in a life cycle, giving significance to the distinct stages and the crossing between them.

This visual schematic informs the entire account of *America: Religions and Religion*. While most chapters are not tied to geographical regions or national space, the historical episodes and events of "inner consciousness" squarely map onto this visual schematic of religious boundaries. The chapter on Native American religions, for instance, emphasizes themes of "tradition and change": the account highlights both the ways in which Native peoples have maintained traditions and distinct practices—even as they participate in cultural borrowing and religious exchange. She writes: "Native Americans, along with many other ethnic minorities in the United States, have been adept at *preserving their difference* and *borrowing from others* as needed or desired."[21] By troping the text with patterns of boundaries, expansion, contraction, and crossing, Albanese dislodges American religion from an inherently national space and instead locates it in a multicultural, multi-religious and global space.

The narrative logic, however, imitates a familiar pattern: although Albanese successfully extracts the stories of American religion from an essential, national soil, she must still take recourse to spatial logics in order to situate her account of American religions in time and space. The troping of spatial borders—boundaries between geographies, bodies, and temporal periods—allows Albanese to construct a concordant pattern of American religion that threads its way through the text: all religions, she claims, negotiate these boundaries. Albanese's *point d'appui* does not touch bottom in the Mississippi Valley, nor does it root a thematic narrative in the scattered seed plots of the American soil; instead, it tethers images of the many and the one to the shared axis-point of the boundary. The episodic events and the developments of inner

[21] Ibid., 21 (emphasis added).

consciousness are both shaped by their interactions with borders: they are rooted in religious acts of boundary-making and boundary-crossing.

Bibliography

Ahlstrom, Sydney E. *A Religious History of the American People*. Yale University Press, 2004.

Albanese, Catherine L. *America: Religions and Religion, 5th Edition*. 5th edition. Australia; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2012.

———. *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.

Andrews, Thomas G. "Turning the Tables on Assimilation: Oglala Lakotas and the Pine Ridge Day Schools, 1889-1920." *Western Historical Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 407–30.

Aristotle., Leonardo. Tarán, and Dimitri. Gutas. *Aristotle Poetics*. Vol. volume 338. Mnemosyne; Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Artigas, Mariano., Thomas F. Glick, and Rafael A. Martínez. *Negotiating Darwin: The Vatican Confronts Evolution, 1877-1902*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Bacon, Leonard. *The Genesis of the New England Churches.* London: S. Low, Marston, Low, and Searle, 1874.

Bacon, Leonard Woolsey. *A History of American Christianity*. The American Church History Series ;v. 13. New York: Christian Literature, 1897. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006760269.

———. *An Historical Discourse, on the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Founding of the Hopkins Grammar School, New Haven, Connecticut: Delivered before the "Hopkins Grammar School Association", July 24th, 1860 / by Leonard Woolsey Bacon; with Notes and an Appendix.* New Haven [Conn.]: Printed by T.J. Stafford, 1860.

———. *The Congregationalists*. The Story of the Churches. New York: Baker & Taylor, 1904. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008437816.

Baird, Henry Martyn. *The Life of the Rev. Robert Baird, D.D.* Life of Rev. Dr. Baird. New York: A.D.F. Randolph, 1866. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008304452.

Baird, Robert. *Sketches of Protestantism in Italy, Past and Present: Including a Notice of the Origin, History, and Present State of the Waldenses.* Boston: Benjamin Parkins & Co., 1847.

———. *View of the Valley of the Mississippi, Or, the Emigrant's and Traveller's Guide to the West: Containing a General Description of That Entire Country. and Also, Notices of the Soil, Productions, Rivers, and Other Channels of Intercourse and Trade, and Likewise of the Cities and Towns, Progress of Education, &c. of Each State and Territory.* Philadelphia: H.S. Tanner, 1832.

———. *Visit to Northern Europe: Or, Sketches Descriptive, Historical, Political and Moral, of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland, and the Free Cities of Hamburg and Lubeck, Containing Notices of the Manners and Customs, Commerce ... Arts and Sciences ... and Religion, of Those Countries and Cities.* New York: J.S. Taylor & co., 1841. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/3377101.

Bakhtin, M. M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. University of Texas Press, 2010.

Bassett, John Spencer. *The Middle Group of American Historians*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1917. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/1746857.

Beecher, Lyman. *A Plea for the West /*. Cincinnati [Ohio]:, 1835. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044009778481.

Bennett, David Harry. *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975.

Billington, Ray Allen. *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860; a Study of the Origins of American Nativism*. Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990.

Bouwsma, William J. *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Bowden, Henry Warner. *Church History in the Age of Science: Historiographical Patterns in the United States, 1876-1918*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972.

Bowden, Henry Warner. "Robert Baird: Historical Narrative and the Image of a Protestant America—1855." *Journal of Presbyterian History (1962-1985)*, no. (1969) (n.d.): 149–72.

Boylan, Anne M. *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Braudel, Fernand. *On History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Braudel, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II.* [1st U.S. ed.]. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

Braudel, Fernand., Roselyne de. Ayala, Paule. Braudel, and Sian. Reynolds. *The Mediterranean in the Ancient World*. London: Penguin, 2002.

Brekus, Catherine A. *The Religious History of American Women: Reimagining the Past*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Brekus, Catherine A., and W. Clark. Gilpin. *American Christianities: A History of Dominance and Diversity*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Butler, Jon. *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Butler, Jon, Grant Wacker, and Randall Herbert. Balmer. *Religion in American Life: A Short History*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Canary, Robert H., and Henry Kozicki. *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978.

Carlson, John D., and Jonathan H. Ebel. *From Jeremiad to Jihad Religion, Violence, and America.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/10018907.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Writing of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Cherry, Conrad. *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny*. Rev. and updated ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Clark, Peter. *The European City and Green Space: London, Stockholm, Helsinki, and St. Petersburg, 1850-2000*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2006.

Cmiel, Kenneth. *Democratic Eloquence: The Fight over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America*. 1st ed. New York: W. Morrow, 1990.

Davis, David Brion. *The Fear of Conspiracy; Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present.* Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 1971.

Davis, Hugh. *Leonard Bacon: New England Reformer and Antislavery Moderate*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998.

Dees, Sarah. "An Equation of Language and Spirit: Comparative Philology and the Study of American Indian Religions." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 27 (205AD): 195–219.

Doniger, Wendy. *The Implied Spider: Politics & Theology in Myth*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Dorchester, Daniel. *Christianity in the United States from the First Settlement down to the Present Time /*. New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1889. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044024311557.

———. *Romanism versus the Public School System.* New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1888. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006534408.

———. "The 'New York Sun' Under a Papal Eclipse." *Christian Advocate* 64, no. 6 (February 7, 1889). https://search-proquest-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/docview/125869596?accountid=14657.

———. *The Problem of Religious Progress /*. Rev. ed.; with new tables, colored diagrams, and supplementary chapter. New York: New York:, 1900. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nnc1.cr60145536.

Douglass, Frederick. *My Bondage and My Freedom.* Ebony Classics. Chicago: Johnson Pub. Co., 1970.

———. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*. A Signet Book. New York: New American Library, 1968.

Du Ponceau, Peter Stephen. *Mémoire sur le système grammatical des langues de quelques nations indiennes de l'Amerique du Nord*. Vol. LAC 13941. Library of American civilization; Paris: A. Pihan de La Forest [etc.], 1838.

Dupree, A. Hunter. *Asa Gray, 1810-1888.* Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959.

Eliade, Mircea. *Myth and Reality*. [1st American ed.]. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963.

———. *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. 9th paperback printing. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Evans, Curtis J. *The Burden of Black Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/6857925.

Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies. Albany: State University of New York, 1984.

Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.

Fessenden, Tracy. *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Finke, Roger, and Rodney. Stark. *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. 2nd ed. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

Fisher, Linford D. *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

———. *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Fowler, Alastair. *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

———. *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Franchot, Jenny. *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Cornell Paperbacks. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983.

———. *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Gjerde, Jon, and S. Deborah Kang. *Catholicism and the Shaping of Nineteenth-Century America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*. First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Goff, Philip, and Paul Harvey. *Themes in Religion and American Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Goings, Henry, Calvin Schermerhorn, Michael Plunkett, and Edward Gaynor. *Rambles of a Runaway from Southern Slavery*. Carter G. Woodson Institute Series. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012.

Graham, Stephen R. *Cosmos in the Chaos: Philip Schaff's Interpretation of Nineteenth-Century American Religion*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 1995.

Gray, Asa. *Natural Science and Religion;* New York, 1880. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015062241362.

Gray, Asa, and Jane Loring Gray. *Letters of Asa Gray*. London: Macmillan and co., 1893. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/002440127.

Greenberg, Amy S. *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion: A Brief History with Documents*. The Bedford Series in History and Culture. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012.

———. *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*. Cambridge, UK; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Gunn, Giles. "America's Gods." *American Literary History* 19, no. 1 (2007): 1–31.

Gunn, Giles B. *The Interpretation of Otherness: Literature, Religion, and the American Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Hall, David D. *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997.

———. *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1989.

Hamilton, Raphael N. *Marquette's Explorations: The Narratives Reexamined*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970.

Harvey, Bruce A. *American Geographics: U.S. National Narratives and the Representation of the Non-European World, 1830-1865*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001.

Harvey, Sean P. "Must Not Their Languages Be Savage and Barbarous Like Them?': Philology, Indian Removal, and Race Science." *Journal of the Early Republic* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 505–32.

Hatch, Nathan O. *The Democratization of American Christianity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

Heckewelder, John Gottlieb Ernestus. *An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations, Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States*. Vol. LAC 15143. Library of American Civilization; Philadelphia: A. Small, 1819.

———. *A Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Delaware and Mohegan Indians: From Its Commencement, in the Year 1740, to the Close of the Year 1808; Comprising All the Remarkable Incidents Which Took Place at Their Missionary Stations during That Period; Interspersed with Anecdotes, Historical Facts, Speeches of Indians, and Other Interesting Matter*. Philadelphia: McCarty & Davis, 1820. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/1731915.

Heckewelder, John Gottlieb Ernestus, and Peter Stephen Du Ponceau. *Names Which the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians, Who Once Inhabited This Country, Had given to Rivers, Streams, Places, &c. &c. within the Now States of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia: And Also Names of Chieftains and Distinguished Men of That Nation; with the Significations of Those*

Names, and Biographical Sketches of Some of Those Men. Vol. n.s., v. 4, art. 11. American Philosophical Society. Transactions, Philadelphia, 1834.

Herman, David. *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates*. Theory and Interpretation of Narrative. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012.

———. *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002.

Higham, John. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Hudson, Winthrop Still. *Nationalism and Religion in America: Concepts of American Identity and Mission*. [1st ed.]. Harper Forum Books, RD 10. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

———. *Nationalism and Religion in America: Concepts of American Identity and Mission*. Vol. RD 10. Harper Forum Books; Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1978.

———. *Religion in America*. New York: Scribner, 1965.

———. *The Great Tradition of the American Churches.* [1st ed.]. New York: Harper, 1953.

Humboldt, Alexander von. *The Travels and Researches of Alexander von Humboldt*. London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1855. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/inu.39000005616730.

Judson, Pieter M. *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction: With a New Epilogue*. [New ed.]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Knobel, Dale T. *America for the Americans: The Nativist Movement in the United States*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996.

Lane, Belden C. *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*. Expanded ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Lepore, Jill. *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1998.

———. *The Story of America: Essays on Origins*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Levin, David. *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman.* A Harbinger Book. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1963. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/1815944.

Levine, Caroline. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Lincoln, Bruce. *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual, and Classification*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

———. *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Marsden, George M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

———. *Religion and American Culture*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990.

Martin, Joel W., and Mark A. Nicholas. *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Marty, Martin E. *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of American Religion*. 1st ed. Boston: Little, Brown, 1984.

———. "The American Religious History Canon." *Social Research* 53, no. 3 (1986): 513–28.

———. *The Writing of American Religious History*. Munich: K.G. Saur, 1992.

Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden; Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Mead, Sidney Earl. *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America*. New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

———. *The Nation with the Soul of a Church*. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

———. *The Old Religion in the Brave New World: Reflections on the Relation between Christendom and the Republic*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Miller, Perry. *Errand into the Wilderness.* Harper Torchbooks. The Academy Library. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.

Miller, Susan A., and James. Riding In. *Native Historians Write Back: Decolonizing American Indian History*. Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2011.

Mitchell, W. J. T. *Landscape and Power*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Moore, R. Laurence. *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Moorhead, James H. *World without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880-1925*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Munro, Martin. *Different Drummers: Rhythm and Race in the Americas*. Vol. 14. Music of the African Diaspora; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

Noll, Mark A. *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/4756761.

Orsi, Robert A. *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Oxx, Katie. *The Nativist Movement in America: Religious Conflict in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Paley, William. *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity: collected from the Appearances of Nature.* New ed. London: 1830. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951001996372t.

Parkman, Francis. *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*. France and England in North America / by Francis Parkman; pt. 2nd. Boston: Little, Brown, 1867. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011556067.

Pasquier, Michael. *Gods of the Mississippi*. Religion in North America. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Paul Ricoeur. *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.

Penzel, Klaus. "Church History and the Ecumenical Quest: A Study of the German Background and Thought of Philip Schaff." Union Seminary, 1962.

Pinheiro, John C. *Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War*. Religion in America. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2008.

Prucha, Francis Paul. *The Churches and the Indian Schools, 1888-1912*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979.

Raboteau, Albert J. *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. Updated ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Ricœur, Paul. *Time and Narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Ricœur, Paul., Kathleen. Blamey, and David. Pellauer. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Pbk. ed. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Ricœur, Paul, and John B. Thompson. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action, and Interpretation*. Cambridge [Eng.]: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Rivett, Sarah. *The Science of the Soul in Colonial New England*. Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Robert Baird. *Holdings: Religion in the United States of America, Or, An Account of the Origin, Progress, Relations to the State, and Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States :* Glasgow and Edinburgh: Blackie and Son, 1844.

———. *The Christian Retrospect and Register: A Summary of the Scientific, Moral and Religious Progress of the First Half of the XIXth Century.* New York: M.W. Dodd, 1851.

"roflv02i02_Chartier_060111_0.pdf." Accessed November 30, 2017. http://arcade.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/article_pdfs/roflv02i02_Chartier_060111_0.pdf.

Rosengarten, Richard A. *Henry Fielding and the Narration of Providence: Divine Design and the Incursions of Evil*. New York: Palgrave, 2000.

———. "The Recalcitrant Distentio of Ricoeur's Time and Narrative." *Literature & Theology* 27, no. 2 (June 2013): 170–82.

Sacks, Sheldon. *Fiction and the Shape of Belief: A Study of Henry Fielding, with Glances at Swift, Johnson, and Richardson*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964.

Sarna, Jonathan D. *American Judaism: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

Schaff, Philip. *America: A Sketch of the Political, Social, and Religious Character of the United States of North America, in Two Lectures, Delivered at Berlin, with a Report Read Before the German Church Diet at Frankfort-on-the-Maine, Sept., 1854.* Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1855.

———. *History of the Apostolic Church with a General Introduction to Church History /*. New York, 1854. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.ah3lpk.

———. *History of the Reformation*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892.

———. *The Principle of Protestantism as Related to the Present State of the Church /*. Chambersburg, Pa. :, 1845. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433081979431.

———. *Through Bible Lands: Notes of Travel in Egypt, the Desert, and Palestine.* New York: American Tract Society, 1878.

Schaff, Philip, and Henry Warner Bowden. *A Century of Church History: The Legacy of Philip Schaff*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.

Shriver, George H. *Philip Schaff: Christian Scholar and Ecumenical Prophet: Centennial Biography for the American Society of Church History*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer, 1987.

———. "Philip Schaff's Concept of Organic Historiography: Interpreted in Relation to the Realization of an 'Evangelical Catholicism' within the Christian Community." Duke University, n.d.

Smith, Henry Nash. *Virgin Land; the American West as Symbol and Myth.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950.

Smith, Jonathan Z. *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*. University of Chicago Press ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Strong, Josiah, Austin Phelps, and American Home Missionary Society. *Our Country Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis*. New York: The American Home Missionary Society, 1885. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008586948.

Swanson, Michael R. "Robert Baird and the Evangelical Crusade in America, 1820-1860." Case Western Reserve University, 1971.

Taves, Ann. *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999.

"The Roman Catholics of the United States." *The Sun*, January 21, 1889. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Library of Congress.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden.* London: Walter Scott, 1886. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x006113684.

Tocqueville, Alexis de, and Henry Reeve. *Democracy in America*. De La Démocratie En Amérique.English. Cambridge: Sever and Francis, 1863. https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011538586.

Tompkins, Jane P. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Tweed, Thomas A. *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.

———. *Retelling U.S. Religious History*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997.

Vizenor, Gerald Robert. *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994.

Ward, Samuel Ringgold. *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro.* New York: Arno Press, 1968.

White, Hayden V. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.

———. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. 20th anniversary ed. Studies in North American Indian History. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Williams, George Washington. *History of the Negro Race in America from 1619 to 1880: Negroes as Slaves, as Soldiers, and as Citizens; Together with a Preliminary Consideration of the Unity of the Human Family, an Historical Sketch of Africa, and an Account of the Negro Governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia /*. Popular ed. New York, 1885. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hn321m.

Wosh, Peter J. *Spreading the Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

Zerubavel, Eviatar. *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Zoran, Gabriel. "Towards a Theory of Space in Narrative." *Poetics Today* 5 (1984) (n.d.): 309–35.