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Religion at Time Inc.: From the Beginning of Time to the End of Life

Consenstein, Eden

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RELIGION AT TIME INC.: FROM THE BEGINNING OF *TIME* TO THE END OF *LIFE*

Eden Consenstein

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

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Adviser: Judith Weisenfeld

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Abstract

In 1954, when an interviewer accused the media mogul Henry R. Luce of printing openly partisan journalism in his *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines, Luce simply agreed. "I am a Protestant, a Republican and a free enterpriser," he retorted. "I am biased in favor of God, Eisenhower and the stockholders of Time Inc."[1] Beyond his work as a media mogul, Luce was an active Presbyterian layman and a self-styled amateur theologian. I bring Luce's two vocations into conversation, asking what it looked like to edit a series of newsmagazines and run a massive media corporation with a "bias in favor of God."

This study examines Time Inc.'s corporate archives alongside *Time* and *Life* magazines to determine how Luce's entwined religious and political priorities found expression as news. I begin with Time Inc.'s debut in 1923 and conclude shortly after Luce's retirement in 1964, tracing a narrative wherein Luce's religious ambitions expanded concurrently with Time Inc.'s reach. Throughout this work, I demonstrate that Time Inc.'s news media was organized around Luce's belief in the United States' special role in divine providence and his confidence in the Christian value of capitalism. This history complicates two salient historiographic assumptions. First, Time Inc.'s Christian content was necessarily calibrated to appeal to many denominational communities. The corporation's history thus invites us to blur the bright lines that often demarcate "liberal" and "conservative" Protestant cultural production. Second, my research shows that Jews and Catholics were not easily included in Time Inc.'s journalistic products and processes. In emphasizing enduring interfaith tensions at Time Inc., I unsettle narratives of increasing "tri-faith" inclusion in the twentieth-century United States.

[1] John Hersey, "Henry Luce's China Dream: A Portrait of the Editor as Evangel," *The New Republic,* May 1983, 27-32.

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Introduction

In 1954, when an interviewer accused the media mogul Henry R. Luce of printing openly partisan journalism in his *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines, Luce simply agreed. "I am a Protestant, a Republican and a free enterpriser," he retorted. "I am biased in favor of God, Eisenhower and the stockholders of Time Inc.—and if anybody who objects doesn't know this by now, why the hell are they still spending 35 cents for the magazine?"[1] This suggestion, that anyone harboring antipathy toward Luce or his media might simply abstain from purchasing it, underestimated his power and prominence. At the time of this exchange, Luce was at the peak of his career. Just over three decades earlier, he had launched a fledgling media corporation, Time Incorporated, with a college classmate. By the mid-1950s, Time Inc.'s three major magazines were ubiquitous, reaching approximately one in every four adults in the United States every week.[2] Including all assets and liabilities, Time Inc. was worth nearly seventy million dollars.[3] As his missive suggests, Luce's influence appeared in the realms of news media, politics, corporate finance, and religion. Beyond his massive success as a media mogul, Luce was an active Presbyterian layman and a self-styled amateur theologian. These concurrent circumstances evoke a pressing question. What did it look like to edit a series of newsmagazines, and run a massive media corporation, with a "bias in favor of God?"

This study examines Time Inc.'s corporate archives alongside the content of *Time* and *Life* magazines to determine how Luce's religious, political, and economic principles found

[1] John Hersey, "Henry Luce's China Dream: A Portrait of the Editor as Evangel," *The New Republic,* May 1983, 27-32.
[2] Memoranda from Ed Miller to Mr. Roy Larsen Re: Alfred Politz Research, March 14, 1951, Folder 27, Box 434, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY. See also, James L. Baughman, "Who Read *Life?* The Circulation of America's Favorite Magazine," in *Looking at Life: Rethinking America's Favorite Magazine, 1936-1972* ed. Erika Doss, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001).
[3] ANNUAL REPORT TO STOCKHOLDERS: TIME INCORPORATED, 1954. ProQuest Historical Annual Reports.

expression as news. I begin with Time Inc.'s debut in 1923 and conclude shortly after Luce's retirement in 1964, tracing a narrative wherein Luce's religious ambitions expanded simultaneously with Time Inc.'s reach. Along the way, I examine how the mogul's increasing efforts to wield religious and moral authority stoked audiences' anxieties.

Throughout this work, I demonstrate that during Luce's tenure, Christian narratives and Protestant presumptions pervaded the content of *Time* and *Life* magazines. I use the production of religious discourses at Time Inc. to complicate two historiographic assumptions. First, I conceptualize Time Inc. as a space of social contact, wherein Luce's religious and political priorities were brought into conversation with those of multiple religiously diverse readers, writers, and advertisers. Examining the religious exchanges that took place in and around Time Inc. shows that actors like Luce, who historians have typically associated with the Protestant "mainline," shared spaces and sensibilities with conservative actors and institutions, who typically populate separate studies. "Religion at Time Inc." thereby blurs the bright lines that often demarcate "liberal" and "conservative" Protestant cultural production. Second, my research has shown that inclusion of Jews and Catholics in Time Inc.'s journalistic products and processes remained contentious into the postwar period. In emphasizing enduring interfaith tensions at Time Inc., I unsettle narratives of increasing "tri-faith" inclusion throughout the twentieth-century. This introduction sets the scene by introducing Luce and his corporation, and elaborating my scholarly contributions.

Henry R. Luce: Background and Biography

Luce was born in Tengchow, China in 1889, where his parents helped run a small Presbyterian missionary college. Luce's father, Henry Winters Luce, was an esteemed

missionary in the liberal tradition. His career took shape within the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, a Progressive-era, Protestant movement that trained college students to undertake missionary work. In the words of his biographer B.A. Garside, "he had drunk deep from the currents of exhilarating optimism" that fueled nineteenth century missions. Luce Sr. was motivated by the promise that bringing Christianity to China, the world's most populous nation, could help bring about the millennium. Upon completing a Master of Divinity at Princeton Theological Seminary, Luce Sr. and his wife, Elisabeth Root Luce, moved to a missionary compound organized around a recently established Presbyterian college. Luce Sr.'s mentors advocated a Progressive missionary theology that prioritized meeting potential converts' social and material needs as a means of sharing the Christian gospel. This required connecting with locals in their own languages, and ultimately training them to lead their own Chinese Christian congregations. Luce Sr. learned Mandarin with relative ease and quickly assumed a leadership role within the college. His family lived in the college's surrounding compound, which attempted to attract converts with the promise of resources, education, and community, while allowing the missionaries themselves to live comfortably among other displaced U.S. Protestants.[4]

Henry Robinson Luce took easily to the religious tradition he was raised in. In a speech about his father's religious thought and legacy, Henry Luce III imparted an old family anecdote wherein his father, the future chairman of Time Inc., delivered his first "sermon to the heathen people" at age 6 or 7.[5] As this racializing language suggests, the young Luce's religious outlook

[4] B.A. Garside, *One Increasing Purpose: The Life of Henry Winters Luce* (New York, NY: F.H. Revell Co., 1948), 7-9, 113-125.
[5] Henry Luce III, "The Faith of Henry Luce," Delivered at the dedication of Luce Hall, Center for Theological Inquiry, Princeton, NJ, October 9, 1984, Folder 3, Box 10, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

was shaped by the particulars of the missionary compound. Luce came of age surrounded by "stern, bearded Calvinists" who constantly reinforced the differences between the U.S. Protestant culture recreated in their missionary compound and the "corrupt" society beyond.[6] Luce was only rarely allowed to leave the compound (on his own prized pet donkey) and his excursions did not afford him substantive contact with local communities.[7] The contrast between the neatly organized, well-resourced compound and the sprawling, agricultural landscape he saw beyond seemed to confirm the pretense of his parents' missionary endeavor, that the Chinese could only find salvation if they adopted the principles and practices of the morally superior West. Luce's earliest religious formation was thus profoundly bound-up with an abstract concept of what "America" was and what it could do in the world.

Just as Luce's Christianity was shaped by his experience in a missionary family, his earliest journalistic endeavors were informed by his religiosity. Luce left China to attend Hotchkiss, an elite all-male boarding school in Connecticut, and then went on to Yale. At Yale, he rose through the ranks of campus journalism alongside the fervor of World War I. He briefly entertained the idea of following his father into missionary work but was ultimately swept up by the exciting debates and engaged audiences he found through the campus newspaper.[8] He wrote to his parents that, "I believe that I can be of greatest service in journalistic work… and can by that way come nearest to the heart of the world."[9] At this precise moment, he was penning

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[6] Henry Luce III, "The Faith of Henry Luce," Delivered at the dedication of Luce Hall, Center for Theological Inquiry, Princeton, NJ, October 9, 1984, Folder 3, Box 10, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

[7] "MR. LUCE INTERVIEW WITH R.T. ELSON, Phoenix" January 12, 1965, Folder 4, Box 11, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

[8] For discussions of Luce's campus journalism career at Yale, see Allen Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry R. Luce and his American Century* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 43-57, W.A. Swanberg, *Luce and his Empire* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1972), 35-43. or Noel Busch, *Briton Hadden: A biography of the co-founder of TIME,* (New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss & Company, 1949), 26-33.

[9] Quoted in Brinkley, *The Publisher,* 54.

analyses that implored his classmates to see the United States' participation in the war as a mission to bring about "the City of God" on earth.[10] Reflecting on the experience of growing up far afield from the nation he nonetheless considered home, Luce later mused, "I probably gained a too romantic, too idealistic view of America." His missionary upbringing, he suggested, endowed him a uniquely intense, theologically infused patriotism. "I was, from my earliest manhood, dissatisfied with America. America was not being as great and as good as I knew she could be, as I believed with every nerve and fiber God Himself had intended her to be."[11] It was this nationalistic, Christian fervor that motivated his career for nearly five decades.

The intense patriotism that suffused Luce's Christianity did not constrain his deep theological inquisitiveness. With the exception of his conviction about the United States' role in divine providence, his theological presumptions were always undergoing interrogation and revision. On the topic of Christianity, he was impatient with niceties and relished intense, meaningful conversation. In the midst of an exchange with Paul Hutchins, then the editor of *The Christian Century*, Luce demanded, "Paul—isn't there one thing which as editor of the Christian Century you have really got to make up your mind about—and that is quite simply whether or not the Catholic Church is, on balance and in its main intention, Christian? … you have to come out with a Yes or a No on this."[12] For his own part, Luce took a great interest in assessing the insights and blind spots of Catholic theology. It was one of two topics where he disagreed intensely with his father. According to his recollections, Luce Sr. "was characteristic of a deep and long American sentiment that there was something very wrong about the Catholic Church,"

[10] Swanberg, *Luce and his Empire,* 43.
[11] Quoted in Robert E. Elson, *The World of Time Inc.: The Intimate History of a Publishing Enterprise Vol. I* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1968), 27.
[12] "Dear Paul:…" January 15, 1948, Folder 2, Box 90, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

a position which Luce thought was bigoted.[13] He maintained lifelong friendships with Cardinal Francis Spellman and the Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray, who he enjoyed engaging in theological conversation and debate. The first time he considered using Time Inc.'s profits to give himself a raise, he sought out Cardinal Spellman to discuss the moral ramifications.[14] The other topic where he and his father disagreed fervently was Prohibition, which the younger Luce pragmatically believed was bad government policy.[15] Ecumenism and the relationship between Protestant morals and state policy were among the many religious topics Luce remained committed to researching, debating and expounding on throughout his career. The searching quality he applied to his Christianity did not find expression in the exploration of non-Christian religious traditions. Although a voracious intellectual, no evidence suggests that he dedicated any energy to gaining fluency in non-Christian religious thought.

Luce's contemporaries unanimously described him as an enthusiastic, curious consumer of art, history, philosophy, and his own surroundings. Recalling their editorial deliberations in the early 1940s, former Time Inc. journalist Theodore White wrote that, "conversation with Luce, someone remarked, was like conversation with a vacuum cleaner: he could strip almost everyone clean of all they knew in the first conversation… and the next morning he would have more questions; and more questions at the end of the day."[16] Luce avidly consumed others' expertise and reflexively accumulated his own. In 1959 Luce moved from New York City to Phoenix, Arizona, on the advice of doctors who recommended more sun. When one Time Inc. executive visited him there, he was treated to an hours-long driving tour wherein Luce offered

[13] "MR. LUCE INTERVIEW WITH R.T. ELSON, Phoenix" January 12, 1965, Folder 4, Box 11, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[14] "Re: Working with Luce, Source: Sidney Olson," Undated, Folder 1, Box 11, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[15] "MR. LUCE INTERVIEW WITH R.T. ELSON, Phoenix" January 12, 1965, Folder 4, Box 11, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[16] Theodore White, *In Search of History: A Personal Adventure* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1978), 133.

detailed insights into all the local history, geography, and architecture.[17] A Time Inc. journalist who visited him in Rome, where he lived briefly while his second wife, Clare Boothe Luce, served as U.S. ambassador to Italy, reported that, "He took most of us to see a tiny statue of Pan he'd discovered deep in the recesses of the Borghese Gardens. He thought it was a perfect example of the paganism which survived Christianity in Italy."[18] As this anecdote suggests, expressions of Christianity consistently captured his attention throughout his life.

Despite Luce's well-documented Christianity, none of his multiple biographers have attended to his religiosity with generosity, specificity, or detail. The first biography of Luce, W.A. Swanberg's Pulitzer Prize winning *Luce and His Empire,* published in 1972, portrays Luce as an immensely powerful force in twentieth-century culture, who's "frightfully irresponsible journalism" shrewdly misled millions of everyday people, particularly with regards to the urgency of the Cold War. In Swanberg's account, Luce's Protestantism emerges as a predictable adjunct to his conservativism. Swanberg writes, "The gentleness and warmth with which religion invests some communicants were absent in the dour, intense Luce."[19] And speculates, "Had he lived in the time of the Crusades, Luce would surely have elbowed aside Count Raymond of Toulouse as leader of the first one."[20] Passages like these treat Luce's Presbyterianism as a personality trait that motivated and accentuated his firm, conservative politics. While Swanberg correctly identifies Luce's Protestantism as galvanizing, he does not locate Luce theologically vis-à-vis his contemporaries, or examine how the publisher's piety was received and understood by his multiple publics. The present study will fill these two lacunae.

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[17] Marshall Berges, Memories of Henry R. Luce, April 24, 1967, Folder 6, Box 10, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[18] Jim Bell, "HRL as a Reporter," February 28, 1967, Folder 6, Box 10, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[19] Swanberg, *Luce and his Empire,* 79.
[20] Swanberg, *Luce and his Empire,* 316.

More recently, Allan Brinkley's *The Publisher: Henry Luce and his American Century,* takes issue with Swanberg's high-pitched criticism of Luce and his high estimation of his political influence. Brinkley writes that although Luce's strongly held positions on topics including "communism, capitalism and the Republican party…sometimes blinded him to the realities around him," he was nonetheless "eager for new information and new ideas, even receptive to challenges and contradictions." In Brinkley's telling, both tendencies emerged throughout his magazines, which were "great in their flaws, but also great in their breadth, originality and creativity."[21] Brinkley is particularly moderate in his estimation of Luce's influence. Throughout the biography, he dwells on instances when the political agendas Luce advanced through Time Inc. did not succeed, including the publications' endorsement of various unsuccessful Republican political candidates. Luce's Protestantism makes only fleeting appearances in Brinkley's account. The publisher's religious world is only mentioned in discussions of his missionary upbringing and at the end of his life. As this study will show, this omission leaves a major element of Luce's influence unexamined.

Two other biographical studies focus on particular aspects and episodes of Luce's career. Robert Herzstein's 1994 *Henry R. Luce: A Political Portrait of the Man who Created the American Century,* is a highly detailed appraisal of Luce's political disputes and alliances throughout the tumultuous 1930s. Herzstein's account, which concludes in 1941, focuses primarily on Luce's open dislike of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and activism around U.S. intervention in the Second World War. Like Luce biographers before and after him, Herzstein also fails to seriously address Luce's religious expressions. James L. Baughman's 1987 *Henry R. Luce and the Rise of the American News Media* is a biographically focused history of Luce's

[21] Brinkley, *The Publisher,* xii.

contributions to the conventions of U.S. journalism. Like Herzstein and Brinkley, Baughman does not attend to Luce's Protestantism. Baughman does, however, provide considerable insight into how Luce conceived of each of Time Inc.'s publications in relation to contemporaneous newspapers and magazines. Baughman also scoured numerous advertising trade journals, market research reports, and contemporary opinion polling to yield the most detailed existing portrait of who read Time Inc.'s magazines during Luce's career.[22]

Luce's power, all these biographers agree, stem from the reality that he ran a media corporation, an entity uniquely capable of shaping how individuals and communities come to understand their surroundings. My research in Time Inc.'s magazines and corporate archives demonstrates decisively that Luce's Protestantism was integral to his work as a media maker. The omission of his religiosity from these existing assessments of his career thus leaves a major dimension of his power and influence unexamined.

"My Ultimate Accountability Had to be to My Creator:" Christianity and Journalism at Henry Luce's Time Inc.

Luce's Christianity was the matrix through which he understood his role as a journalist and media mogul. He once imparted to his son that as a media maker, his only responsibility was to God. He told Henry Luce III that he gave little thought to stockholders, "who cared only for profit rather than journalistic quality and purpose." Readers, Luce concluded, "could not know what they wanted or needed or read until they read it." Weighing these and other stakeholders, Luce claimed to make his choices about what Time Inc. should say or do with the confident

[22] Baughman, *Henry R. Luce,* Robert E. Herzstein, *Henry R. Luce: A Political Portrait of the Man who Created the American Century* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1994).

belief that "my ultimate accountability had to be to my Creator."[23] In practice, this meant that Time Inc.'s journalism, when Luce was involved, had to conform to his conception of what his Creator would sanction. This played out in a variety of ways.

Luce's Christianity led directly to its frequent discussion in his magazines. After Luce's death, a former *Time* writer recalled, "Luce's unflagging interest in religion caused Time to cover it most extensively." He then went on to list a range of Christian theologians who had graced the magazine's cover.[24] In a more detailed anecdote, former *Life* editor William J. Miller recalls that, "His religious certitude sometimes led to unexcepted Life editorials. On one occasion, when Luce was going over our weekly list of possible subjects, he brought forth a fact that we all had overlooked. 'This is National Prayer Week,' he said. 'As Christians, we are presumably in favor of prayer. Why not do an editorial on that?'" This conversation resulted in a 1954 *Life* article, titled "A Path to Peace Through Prayer," that implored readers to pray for the fall of the Soviet Union.[25]

Luce's assumption that his colleagues shared his religious commitments is worth noting. Miller's anecdote resonates with an aside from one *Life* editor's oral history reminiscences. Reflecting on Luce's role in producing *Life'*s content, Daniel Longwell recalled, "… he was very surprised with the fact that we ran so much religion. … Billings and myself looked at him and said, 'Do you think you've got a monopoly on this situation? We happen to be religious men ourselves.' We may not go to church, but, as I said, we surprised him in nice ways."[26]

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[23] Henry Luce III, "The Faith of Henry Luce," Delivered at the dedication of Luce Hall, Center for Theological Inquiry, Princeton, NJ, October 9, 1984, Folder 3, Box 10, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[24] Jim Bell, "HRL as a Reporter," February 28, 1967, Folder 6, Box 10, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[25] William J. Miller, "HRL Warts and All," November 15, 1971, Folder 1, Box 11, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[26] Daniel Longwell Oral History Interviews, March 5, 1956, Folder 2, Box 226, Daniel Longwell Papers, Columbia University Rare Books and Special Collections, New York, NY.

Longwell's reflection conjures the image of two editors ardently assuring an incredulous Luce of their religiosity. These recollections all suggest that Luce's Protestantism directly influenced the content of Time Inc.'s journalism. More surreptitiously, his well-known piety informed how Time Inc.'s journalists and editors worked to meet the expectations of their enormously powerful employer.

Luce's investment in covering religion in *Time* and *Life* sometimes played out in unexpected ways. In an article for *The Atlantic,* Michel J. Arlen recounts a remarkable experience he had as a very junior employee in *Life'*s Religion department. In the early 1950s, Arlen had awkward encounter with Luce when he accidently rode in the corporate chairman's private elevator. In a moment of nervousness, Arlen recalled that Luce was friendly with a well-known Jesuit theologian and "wildly" claimed he was working on a "big story" about Jesuits. This was not true. Arlen had no ability to work on stories of his own. Luce, however, was thrilled to hear that a story about Jesuits was underway. He made sure that *Life'*s premier photographer, Margaret Bourke-White, was available to provide photography. This chance encounter resulted in an expansive *Life* photo essay on Jesuits in the Americas.[27] Taken together, these recollections of media production at Time Inc. suggest that Luce's leadership created, or perhaps imposed, an environment wherein journalistic discussion of Christianity was prioritized and rewarded.

Beyond featuring Christianity prominently in the magazines, observers have suggested that Luce's missionary formation shaped his understanding of what journalism should do.[28] It was his strong conviction that journalism should not "give people what they want," but guide

[27] Michael J. Arlen, "Green Days and Photojournalism, and the Old Man in the Room," *The Atlantic,* August 1972, 58-66. Margaret Bourke-White's photographs of Jesuit communities in the Americas can be found in *Life,* October 11, 1954, 134-148.
[28] Swanberg, *Luce and His Empire,* 1-3, David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be,* (University of Illinois Press, 1979), 46, David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017) 19-26.

them towards what they need. He concluded an article for *Public Opinion Quarterly* by imploring journalists, "to tell, to teach, to create order and protest against order when it denies conscience and liberty."[29] In a similar vein, he was fond of telling colleagues that the journalist's job was to gather facts, while the editor's job, his job, was to determine and amplify the (capital T) "Truth" of those facts.[30] These related principles routinely sanctioned political partisanship. In one anecdote, an associate complained that *Time'*s ruthless treatment of Adlai Stevenson, the 1952 Democratic presidential candidate, was not a matter of ultimate truths. Luce disagreed. Ensuring moral leadership of the United States (by compelling readers to vote for the Protestant Dwight D. Eisenhower, in this case) was certainly a matter of ultimate truth.[31] Appreciating how Time Inc.'s media operations were structured and who populated the corporation will help us to see how the corporation became, in large part, a vehicle for advancing Luce's Truths.

Time Inc.: Corporate Organization and Religious Culture

The basic details of the corporation's size, organization and output shifted almost constantly throughout Luce's career. Time Inc. was launched as a vehicle for financing *Time,* which Luce created in collaboration with his Yale classmate, Briton Hadden. The corporation's debut in March of 1923 was simultaneous with *Time*'s first issue. As I will explore in detail in Chapter 1, *Time* represented a bold experiment in how news could be produced and organized. With Luce at the helm, Time Inc. continued to push the parameters of how news was styled and narrated. Time Inc.'s second offering, *Fortune* magazine, was singular in its material richness. Directed at corporate elites, *Fortune* reflected its intended audiences' luxurious lifestyles with

[29] Henry R. Luce, "Giving the People What They Want," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 2.1 (January 1938), 62-66.
[30] John Hersey, "Henry Luce's China Dream," 30, David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be,* (University of Illinois Press, 1979) 59.
[31] Halberstam, *The Powers That Be,* 59.

thick paper stock and rich visuals. With each new product, Time Inc.'s staff, audience, and facilities grew. *The March of Time* radio and cinema news reels, which came next, applied the strategies and idioms of the entertainment industry to the presentation of news. *The March of Time* hired actors to narrate, and in the case of the newsreels, reenact, current events.[32] This move anticipated Time Inc.'s signature blending of information, entertainment, and instruction which found its most decisive expression in *Life* magazine, the biggest success of Luce's career.

The premier of *Life,* as I explore in Chapter 2, marked Time Inc.'s transition from a small firm into a large, complicated business. With its premier in 1936, *Life* became the first U.S.-based, mass market periodical comprised primarily of photography. It has since been described as the most popular magazine in U.S. history.[33] Thanks to *Life'*s huge success, Time Inc. outgrew its original offices in Manhattan's glamorous Chrysler building by the beginning of 1938. Luce relocated his flourishing company to the newly named Time & Life building in Rockefeller Center. Time Inc. occupied this skyscraper, which overlooked the famous ice-skating rink, for decades to come.[34]

Both magazines' popularity sky-rocketed during the Second World War, and the corporation's properties, investments, and products proliferated in turn. Wartime saw the corporation invest in then-scarce resources like paper, and open offices across the country and around the globe. Foreign offices in Europe, Asia, and South America hosted remote staffs who collected local information to send back to Time Inc.'s New York headquarters for inclusion in the magazine.[35] In 1956, exploiting Time Inc.'s moment of peak profits, Luce introduced *Sports*

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[32] Elson, *The World of Time Inc. Vol. I,* 177-185.
[33] Erika Doss, "Introduction," in *Looking at* Life, ed. Erika Doss (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001), 2.
[34] Elson, *The World of Time Inc. Vol. I,* 334.
[35] Time Inc.'s establishment of remote bureaus was deeply entwined with the politics of World War II. The corporation's first overseas circulation efforts were established to deliver magazines to deployed combatants. The first international news gathering bureau was established in Bueno Aires, Argentina, because of the common belief

Illustrated, which presciently predicted and guided U.S. Americans' increasing interest in athletics and outdoor recreation. Beyond these Luce creations, Time Inc. released a constantly rotating array of coffee table books (sometime adopted from magazine issues), practical books on topics like gardening and stargazing, and beginning in the late 1950s, records. Time Inc.'s everchanging stable of products was intended to keep pace with contemporary culture and maximize the corporation's opportunities for profit.[36]

Luce's active involvement in Time Inc.'s media output was a constant throughout his career. Until his retirement, he maintained the titles of editor-in-chief of *Time, Life* and *Fortune* and chairman of Time Inc. The proliferation of media products which he could not easily oversee made him uncomfortable. In the late 1950s, Luce almost stopped a very lucrative deal to acquire a textbook company, stating, "I can barely read all the words we print now, and I know I can't read all these textbooks. I don't want them going out with my name on them if I haven't read them."[37] While the acquisition went through, Luce's reluctance evidences the intense degree to which he identified with Time Inc., and required that Time Inc.'s products bear his imprimatur. For purposes of focus and brevity, this study looks exclusively at *Time* and *Life,* the periodicals that most reliably consumed Luce's efforts. As I will demonstrate in detail, the content of both *Time* and *Life* reflected his entwined commitments to Protest Christianity and U.S. influence in the world.

Luce was the final authority on both matters of editorial output and corporate finances, and these roles frequently overlapped. In 1938, he wrote to a colleague that "The business of

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that Nazis might try to infiltrate the U.S. through South America. See files related to Time Life International, Folder 17, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

[36] Curtis Pendergast, *The World of Time Inc. Vol. III: The Intimate History of a Changing Enterprise 1960-80* (New York, NY: Athenum, 1986), 208-234.

[37] Halberstam, *The Powers That Be,* 724.

Time Inc. is not easy business. It involves everything from the hard business of making a nickel to the equally hard business of interpreting the world."[38] At Time Inc., the simultaneous work of "making a nickel" and "interpreting the world" were completely entangled. Time Inc.'s primary source of revenue was advertising, and the rates the corporation could charge advertisers were attached to how many readers a magazine would reach. Thus, creating popular content was crucial to the corporate bottom line. There was no disentangling what Time Inc. could say from what it could sell.

Religious ideas and idioms were often used to describe and justify the relationship between Time Inc.'s profit motive and Time Inc.'s journalism. Despite the imperative to attract and retain advertisers, it was generally assumed that the editors should be at liberty to publish whatever they liked without attention to profits. At some point in the 1950s, Time Inc. employees adopted the language of "church" and "state" to describe the desired relationship between editors and "publishers," the corporate employees responsible for each magazines' profitability. The formulation suggested that journalists and editors, the proverbial "church," should not be influenced by the avaricious affairs of the "state."[39] The religious metaphor used here is suggestive, as Luce reflexively used Christian arguments and idioms to ennoble the corporation's definitive imperative to profit. Bringing his church (in the literal sense) to bear on the "state" operations of Time Inc. was not a reach for Luce. His son recalls that Luce embraced the Calvinist principle, made famous by Max Weber, that success in the earthly world anticipated election beyond.[40]

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[38] Elson, *The World of Time Inc., Vol. I,* 332.
[39] Daniel Longwell Oral History Interviews, March 5, 1956, Folder 2, Box 226, Daniel Longwell Papers, Columbia University Rare Books and Special Collections, New York, NY.
[40] Henry Luce III, "The Faith of Henry Luce," Delivered at the dedication of Luce Hall, Center for Theological Inquiry, Princeton, NJ, October 9, 1984, Folder 3, Box 10, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Luce ensured that his publications advanced his desired Truths, including the Christian value of capitalism, through a variety of means. One was constant contact with each magazine's panel of "managing editors." Managing Editors, who Luce appointed at his discretion, oversaw each magazines' large staff of journalists, review writers, subject based editors, fact-checkers, and secretaries. Luce worked closely with the Managing Editors to articulate the editorial perspectives that would determine which content finally made it into the magazines and how it was presented. Their conversations, which provide the basis for much of my research, often read like high-stakes political summits, wherein policies and politicians might rise or fall thanks to *Time* or *Life'*s sanction. On a semi-regular basis, Luce would descend from his top floor offices to edit the magazines himself. Former Time Inc. journalist Jim Bell recalls that, "when we knew he was going to edit we'd take elaborate care to make sure he understood how to run the managing editor's signal equipment. … It was generally assumed that he was hopelessly incompetent on anything mechanical."[41] Others recall that Luce's guest editing appearances brought renewed intensity and excitement to weekly tasks.[42]

Luce also ensured that his perspectives were persevered through the corporation's hiring and firing. Luce was eager to hire the most talented writers and photographers, but often became frustrated when their views diverged from his own.[43] Chapter 4, which focuses on Time Inc.'s coverage of World War II, will provide insight into one such case. Beyond this one case study, Time Inc.'s creative talent do not receive concentrated attention throughout this study. The remarkable writers and photographers, including John Hersey, William H. Whyte, Gordon Parks,

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[41] Jim Bell, "HRL as a Reporter," February 28, 1967, Folder 6, Box 10, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[42] Dora Jane Hamblin, *That was the LIFE: The Upstairs Downstairs Behind-the-Doors Story of America's Favorite Magazine* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 67.
[43] Halberstam, *Powers That Be,* 61. For an account of Luce's prolonged disagreements with a cohort of progressive *Fortune* writers in the 1930s, see Robert Vanderlan, *Intellectuals Incorporated: Politics, Art and Ideas Inside Henry Luce's Media Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012).

and Margaret Bourke-White, who passed through the halls of Time Inc. were often exceptions to the general rules of corporate hiring. What's more, their output was always subject to the needs and ambitions of Luce and the Managing Editors.

The corporation's upper echelons were shaped by the elite, white, Protestant social networks Luce entered upon enrolling in the Hotchkiss School as a teenager. Willian R. Hutchinson looks to informal social networks to explain how white Protestants exerted political and cultural influence in the first half of the twentieth century. In his essay "Protestantism as Establishment," Hutchinson uses the example of exclusive "summer colonies" to illustrate how mainline laymen and theologians mingled with members of elite milieus like business, diplomacy, and higher education. Looking at such elite social spaces, Hutchinson suggests, is instructive for seeing how mainline Protestant actors maintained a tight proximity to political and cultural power.[44] The corporation was similar kind of space. The men wo populated Time Inc.'s leadership benefitted from and reproduced the dynamic Hutchinson describes.

Like Luce, much of Time Inc.'s leadership were the sons of mainline clergy. Pierpont "Perry" Isham Prentice, who joined Time Inc. in 1929 and maintained leadership roles on the publishing side until the early 1950s, was the son of a Congregational minister who boasted lineage going back to the Mayflower.[45] T.S. Matthews, who joined *Time* in 1929 and was chief Managing Editor from 1941 to 1953, was the son of an Episcopal priest and remained active in the Episcopal church throughout his adulthood.[46] Samuel Gardner Welles, who joined Time Inc. in the late 1930s and was a Managing Editor at *Life* throughout the late 1950s, was also the son

[44] William R. Hutchinson, "Protestantism as Establishment," in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960* ed. William R. Hutchinson, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 3-19.
[45] "P.I. Prentice, 82, Former Publisher of *Time,*" *New York Times,* February 4, 1989, 32.
[46] T.S. Matthews, *Name and Address: An Autobiography* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1960).

of an Episcopal priest and an active layman.[47] Otto Fuerbringer, who joined Time Inc. in 1942 and was a Managing Editor at *Time* until 1960, was the son of a Lutheran theologian and attended Lutheran parochial schools.[48] Jim Linen, who ran *Time'*s publishing operations from 1945 to 1960 and became president of the corporation in 1960, was initially hired because he came from a family of philanthropists who funded the Luces' missions.[49]

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 1: A group portrait of Time Inc.'s writers and editors, circa 1948. Excerpted from a souvenir booklet celebrating Time Inc.'s 25th Anniversary. Folder 25, Box 449, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

This preponderance of mainline affiliation was not a coincidence, but a product of affinities and relationships that stretched over generations. Time Inc. was thus a space where men of similar backgrounds collaborated around the production of products that reflexively advanced their own point of view. Those most capable of constraining Luce's editorial perspectives were the least likely to. The Managing Editors' conversations indicate that Luce's colleagues might encourage him to edit or complicate a strongly held religious or political opinion, but they rarely offered strong counterpoints.

[47] Elson, *The World of Time Inc. Vol II,* 420.
[48] Elson, *The World of Time Inc. Vol II,* 314-315.
[49] Glen Fowler, "Jim Linen 3d, 75, Ex-Publisher And President at Time Inc., Dies," *New York Times,* February 4, 1988, A22.

Time Inc.'s corporate archives, which became public starting in 2015, primarily preserves the voices of Time Inc.'s leadership. Files pertaining to the production of the magazines include many rich exchanges between Luce and his editors about what various magazine articles should say and what the consequences might be. These voluminous files also include unedited cables from remote journalists, reports from the "letters department" about how various articles were received, updates on business matters from the publishers, and correspondences from important readers voicing objections to various features. These files vividly capture the conversations that occupied Time Inc's leadership. They do not, however, reflect corporate operations from the bottom up. The daily work of writing, copy editing, re-writing, assembling layouts, fact-checking, numbers crunching, and coordinating with printers is not well preserved in the archives.

Practically, this means that the hundreds of women who worked at Time Inc. are not visible in the corporate archives. In addition to employing women as secretaries, Time Inc. employed women as "researchers." Researchers fact-checked articles by making phone calls and consulting public records, and conducted background research in libraries and encyclopedias where necessary. Time Inc.'s three volume, self-published internal history, *The World of Time Inc.: An Intimate History of a Publishing Enterprise*, lauds the corporation's leadership for giving women these research positions, which were considered more prestigious than secretarial work [50] Their efforts, however, were never credited in the published magazines and are not visible in the archives. To get a better sense of Time Inc.'s operations beyond the executive's offices, I've turned to former Time Inc. employee's published memoirs.[51]

[50] Elson, *The World of Time Inc. Vol. I,* 72.
[51] Published memoirs by former Time Inc. writers include, David Cort, *The Sin of Henry Luce: An Anatomy of Journalism* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle and Stuart, Inc. 1974), Loudon Wainwright, *The Great American Magazine: An Inside History of Life* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1986) and Hamblin, *That was the LIFE!* and White, *In Search of History.*

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 2: A group portrait of Time Inc.'s researchers, circa 1948. Folder 25, Box 449, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

Similar to Luce's biographers, existing scholarship on Time Inc.'s media gives little attention to the corporation's religious output and milieu. Existing scholarship germane to Time Inc. tends to address the representational worlds each magazine conjured through close readings and discourse analysis.[52] These works typically address each publication in isolation, and necessarily do so without attention to the discourses that pervaded the production processes. One notable exception is Robert Vanderlan's *Intellectuals Incorporated: Politics, Art and Ideas Inside Henry Luce's Media Empire,* which describes how a cohort of politically progressive writers, including Dwight MacDonald, Archibald MacLeish and James Agee, struggled against

[52] For example, Michael Augspuger's *An Economy of Abundant Beauty:* Fortune *Magazine and Depression America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004) provides detailed readings of *Fortune'*s longform business journalism. Wendy Kozol's Life's *America: Family and Nation in Postwar Journalism* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994) examines how *Life'*s photographs depicted U.S. families at a moment when traditional gender roles were undergoing rapid change. *Life* has also been the subject of two edited volumes. *Looking at* Life ed. Erika Doss, (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001), is the only one that addresses religion, in an essay by David Morgan analyzing *Life'*s photographs of Christian clerics and other religious leaders in the fifteen years after the Second World War. A more recent volume on *Life,* Life *Magazine and the Power of Photography* eds. Katherine Bussard and Kristen Gersh, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020) is the first published study to benefit from unsupervised access to Time Inc.'s records. The only academic monograph on *Time* is Luce biographer Robert E. Herzstein's *Henry R. Luce* Time, *and the American Crusade in Asia* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), which summarizes *Time* magazine's hawkish coverage of Japan during World War II and the U.S. wars in Korea and Vietnam.

the grain to assert their political perspectives in Time Inc.'s magazines. All had more or less abandoned the task by the end of World War II.[53] With the expectation of the most recent work, Katherine Bussard and Kristen Gresh's 2020 edited volume, Life *Magazine and the Power of Photography,* all these existing studies analyze Time Inc.'s publications without the benefit of the corporation's archives.

Time Inc.'s internal records were not readily available to scholars until after 2015.[54] As one of the first scholars to gain unsupervised access to Time Inc.'s archives, I am able to illustrate how *Time* and *Life* were both products of the same institutional logics and imperatives. This study expands on existing analyses of Time Inc.'s journalism by bringing *Time* and *Life* magazines into conversation against the backdrop of Luce's editorial leadership. My work thus shows how both magazines were shaped, in different but often complimentary ways, by the Protestant aspirations and assumptions that animated media production at Time Inc.

Contributions to U.S. Religious History

The history of white U.S. Protestantism has often been told as a history of print. The current study looks to Time Inc.'s media to expand the archive of what has counted as Protestant printing in the twentieth-century United States. In *Religion in Vogue: Christianity and Fashion in America,* Lynn Neal argues that fashion magazines "established a sense of distance and detachment," wherein readers could admire the craftsmanship of Christian artifacts without the demands of theological claims.[55] I argue throughout this work that *Time* and *Life* magazines did

[53] Vanderlan, *Intellectuals Incorporated.*
[54] David W. Dunlap, "Time Inc.'s Record of the 20th Century, in Thousands of Boxes, is Moving Uptown," *The New York Times,* November 5, 2015.
[55] Lynn Neal, *Religion in Vogue: Christianity and Fashion in America* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2019), 22. I am grateful to Jenny Wiley-Legath for drawing my attention to this work.

not encourage the reader to take a distanced stance from Christianity. To the contrary, I demonstrate that Christian arguments and assumptions shaped the news. To provide just two examples (many more are coming) a 1940 *Time* Religion column titled "German Martyrs," on the state of churches in Nazi Germany, proclaimed sternly that, "Here men bear mute witness that the Christ—whose birth the outside world celebrates unthinkingly at Christmas—can still inspire a living faith for which men and women even now endure imprisonment."[56] In its discussion of martyrdom and discussion of "the Christ" *Time* encouraged readers to understand the news in Christian terms. Twenty years later, on Easter of 1960, *Life* printed a Presbyterian minister's close reading of the Lord's Prayer on the magazine's usual editorial page.[57] By investigating the Christian content that appeared in *Time* and *Life,* and the religious discourses that shaped production behind the scenes, this study demonstrates that twentieth century Protestant publishing also took the form of mass market news.

Bringing Time Inc.'s news media into the history of Protestant printing brings new actors and dynamics into view. While Time Inc.'s Christianity was overt, it was not overtly targeted. Existing research on twentieth century Protestant print has demonstrated that the production and circulation of devotional books and theological magazines allowed twentieth-century Protestants to locate and distinguish themselves within a complex and fractious religious scene. Time Inc. had different objectives. The corporation labored, sometimes unsuccessfully, to produce a Christianity that would hail the United States' Christian majority in terms general enough to avoid losing customers. Because Time Inc.'s media was produced through massive collaborations and captivated massive audiences, the corporation became a space where varied theological perspectives met and were mediated. At Time Inc., mainline affiliated editors and

[56] "German Martyrs," *Time,* December 23, 1940, 38.
[57] "The Lord's Prayer," *Life,* April 6, 1960, 37.

executives, religiously diverse readers, and Luce's varied theological interlocutors all came into often unsteady contact. I argue here that viewing Time Inc. as a space of religious contact complicates two dynamics that scholars of U.S. religions have often taken for granted.

First, by describing when and how Time Inc. brought different and competing religious actors into conversation, this study attempts to blur the bright lines that often demarcate scholarly appraisals of "mainline" and "conservative," or "evangelical," cultural production. Second, this study emphasizes that the corporation was a space where varied religious actors were on profoundly uneven footing. The desires of Time Inc.'s Protestant editors and executives, and the success of the firm, were always tantamount. By emphasizing Protestant hegemony at Time Inc., this work unsettles narratives that describe increasing "tri-faith" inclusion throughout the twentieth century.

The religious ideas, debates and encounters that shaped Time Inc.'s Christian content complicate the political categories scholars have used to describe twentieth-century Protestant cultural production. In "Protestantism as Establishment," Hutchinson questions the historiography's frequent elision of "liberal" and "mainline," suggesting that many of the actors who ensured that mainline Protestantism could exert political and cultural leadership were far from liberal in their political leanings. Hutchins writes that during the twentieth century, the organizations categorized as "mainline" were led by liberal theological thinkers, and also, "included all too many others who merely tolerated their thinking and connived in their machinations."[58] Luce, who once told *Time'*s Managing Editors that, "I consider myself a liberal. Perhaps my kind of liberalism is considered far on the right,"[59] was certainly among the cohort

[58] Hutchinson, "Protestantism as Establishment," 15.
[59] Memo To: Mr. Ingersoll, Mr. Gottfried, Mr. Norris, Mr. Matthews, Mr. Paine, From: Mr. Luce. March 25 1938, Box 446, Folder 32, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY. See also, Luce's

Hutchinson describes. He circulated in mainline social networks, and simultaneously threw immense energy and capital into promoting conservative points of view. This study thus seeks to show how Protestant sensibilities typically treated in entirely distinct literatures came together around Time Inc.

Studies of liberal and conservative Protestant publishing engage distinct lines of inquiry and are rarely brought into conversation. Works on liberal Protestant publishing grapple with the nature and scope of religious liberals' cultural influence. For example, Elesha Coffman's *The Christian Century and Rise of the Protestant Mainline* analyzes how Charles Clayton Morrison, the creator of *The Christianity Century* magazine, strived to establish his magazine as the United States' religious mainstream and liberal intellectual vanguard. In Coffman's estimation, *The Christian Century'*s actual influence "could never quite match the movement's confident rhetoric."[60] The act of asserting *The Christian Century'*s readers and contributors as the cultural center always belied the fact that the publication served an elite minority. Matthew Hedstrom's *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* uses the commercial book trade to present a different narrative of liberal Protestantism in the twentieth century. *The Rise of Liberal Religion* argues that the "values and sensibilities" of a religious liberalism typically assumed to be in decline in fact became "more and more culturally normative" throughout the first half of the twentieth century.[61] These studies look specifically at

addresses, "Liberals, Conservatives and Liberty," and "The Great Liberal Tradition," both included in *The Ideas of Henry Luce,* ed. John K. Jessup (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1969), 23-31, 219-224.

[60] Elesha Coffman, *The Christian Century and Rise of the Protestant Mainline* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.

[61] Matthew, Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5. Other studies that grapple with the question of liberal religion's cultural influence include, Mark Huslether, *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity and Crisis Magazine, 1941-1993* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), *Between the Times,* ed. Hutchinson, and *American Religious Liberalism* eds. Leigh Schmidt and Sally Promey (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012).

reading materials with overtly marked religious affiliations. Looking to the religious content of *Time* and *Life,* two ostensibly secular news magazines, provides a more complex view of the various religious ideas and sensibilities in circulation at the same time and within the same demographics.

The texts and readers described in Hedstrom and Coffman's studies shared overlapping spaces with Time Inc.'s magazines and employees. Luce contributed writing to *The Christian Century,* corresponded extensively with *The Christian Century'*s writers and editors, and occasionally hosted the same voices in his own publications. Beyond the executive suite, the publications in Coffman's and Hedstrom's studies likely sat on many of the same coffee tables and nightstands as *Time* and *Life.* Time Inc. actively courted clergy with the offer of clerical subscription rates, and their clerical mailing lists included many of the same figures whose names appeared in the pages of *The Christian Century* and Religious Book-of-the-Month Club selections.[62] Even more broadly, both the authors discussed above identify the audiences they analyze as predominantly white, college educated, middle class, and urban or suburban.[63] Time Inc.'s media circulated most extensively within that same demographic. In *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline,* Coffman uses Luce's famous 1941 "American Century" editorial to provide an "external gauge" of the political arguments circulating beyond *The Century's* pages.[64] With these circumstances in mind, I figure Time Inc.'s publications as contiguous with, rather than "external" to, the world of twentieth-century liberal and mainline Protestant publishing.

[62] "Details: re: Clerical Subscription Offer," Undated 1946, Folder 8, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[63] Coffman, *The Christian Century,* 10, Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion,* 7.
[64] Coffman, *The Christian Century,* 139.

At the same time, *Time* and *Life* promoted ideas and sensibilities historians have aligned with conservative and evangelical Protestant media production, and Time Inc.'s mail reports show that both magazines reached many readers who implored the editors to take more conservative stances. While accounts of liberal Protestant print have wrestled with liberalism's ambiguous cultural influence, studies of twentieth-century evangelical publishing have emphasized the effective consolidation of constituencies through business connections and up-to-the-minute media savvy.[65] Timothy Gloege's *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* climaxes with the productions of *The Fundamentals,* a volume that drew on emergent strategies of branding and marketing to unite a burgeoning public of conservative evangelicals. Gloege writes that sensibilities born of the business sector produced a publication that succeeded thanks to a "patina of tradition, and the appearance that it could coexist the distinctive denominational beliefs and practices."[66] Time Inc.'s religious content also claimed a U.S. American traditionalism and sought to co-exist with varied denominational discourses. In a similar vein, Darren Grem locates Billy Graham's *Christianity Today* magazine within a larger culture of conservative evangelicalism formed through alliances between corporations and conservative clergy. In Grem's account, evangelical print media including *Christianity Today,* and later a range Christian self-help books and business guides, benefitted from corporate capital and in turn promoted theologies that sanctioned corporate political agendas.[67] Those agendas included anti-statism, anticommunism,

[65] Other works that advance this narrative include, Darren Dochuck, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) and Heather Hendershot, *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelicalism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
[66] Timothy Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 192.
[67] Darren Grem, *Blessings of Business: Corporate America and the Rise of Conservative Evangelicalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016).

and an investment in dominating global marketplaces with U.S. products. Time Inc. provides an example of an organization that bore mainline affiliations, but nonetheless promoted pro-business political agendas and employed cutting-edge media strategies. "Religion at Time Inc." thus argues that Luce and his media transgressed and transcended the worlds of "mainline" and "evangelical" publishing that have organized existing histories.

Most recently, Daniel Vaca's *Evangelicals Incorporated: Books and the Business of Religion in America* focuses on the Zondervan publishing company, showing how U.S. evangelical culture took shape through the book business's deft adoption of contemporary business and media practices. Vaca observes that Zondervan "treated a subcultural understanding of evangelicalism as a commercial strategy," producing products intended to shore-up consumers' existing evangelical identities, and simultaneously expand that identity's commercial appeal.[68] Time Inc. also marketed Christian sensibilities as consumer products. However, rather than producing a Christianity tailored to a conservative "subculture," Time Inc. worked to produce a religious outlook aligned with the United States' religious and racial majority. The Christian priorities that organized the narration of Time Inc.'s news were the belief that the United States' had a special role in divine providence, which typically sanctioned various interventions abroad, and a confidence in the moral value of capitalism. These principles, at different moments and in different ways, both attracted and repelled Protestants across the political spectrum.

Time Inc. thus existed between and among the varied Protestant publishing projects that historians have so far described. Rather than advancing a neatly denominationally affiliated Christian perspective, the corporation promoted a religious outlook imagined for the masses. I

[68] Daniel Vaca, *Evangelicals Incorporated: Books and the Business of Religion in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) 231.

show how this unfolded through four chronological sections, each comprising two short chapters. The first section, "Building an Interwar Empire: 1923-1939," focuses on the years before Luce began using his position at Time Inc. to advance his own religious and political perspectives. Here, I emphasize how the early corporation's elite, exclusionary culture shaped Time Inc.'s earliest representations of religion. The second section, "Time Inc. and the Second World War, 1940-1945," describes how Luce honed Time Inc.'s Christian outlook against the backdrop of World War II. In these chapters, I demonstrate that Time Inc.'s bellicose American exceptionalism alienated Luce's mainline colleagues but appealed to an audience of readers Luce and his colleagues derisively called "fundamentalists." The third section, "The Postwar Peak, 1946-1955," on Time Inc.'s moment of peak prosperity in the postwar years, complicates existing appraisals of religion in the midcentury United States by examining the enduring effects of popular anti-Catholicism and demonstrating that Christianity and commercialism did not co-exist as easily as many studies assume. A through-line uniting these first three sections is Time Inc.'s enduring exclusions of Jews and Catholics. A series of recent studies have argued that religious differences among white Protestants, Jews and Catholics became less consequential throughout the twentieth century, as Jews and Catholics were steadily welcomed into the Protestant mainstream.[69] Time Inc. provides a salient counterexample. Finally, this study's concluding section, on Time Inc. in the early 1960s, analyzes how *Time* and *Life* mediated the decades' changing religious scene. Here, I show that *Life'*s substantial base of conservative readers grew increasingly critical of the magazine, to an extent that ultimately impacted the Time

[69] Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion,* Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), Wendy Wall, *Inventing the 'American Way:' The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement Promise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Inc.'s bottom line. *Time,* on the other hand, figured religious change as intrigue, which continued to win readers. Together, these chapters explore the consequences of Luce and his firm's effort to produce a religious outlook aimed at a mass audience.

In 1963, *The Christian Century* wrote, with palpable lament, that "In more ways than many realize, or others care to, Mr. Luce has helped shape the religious and theological thought of our day. He has brought the Barths and Niebuhrs, the Blakes and Pope Johns, the Murrys and Tillichs, to the attention of otherwise oblivious millions."[70] Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Time Inc.'s religious outlook had the unique ability to reach the "otherwise oblivious millions." When *The Christian Century,* or *Christianity Today,* or a Religious Book Week selection sought to assert a particular vision of U.S. Christianity, they all necessarily did so against the backdrop of, and in reference to, the ubiquitously circulating vision of "American Christianity" advanced in *Time* and *Life.*

Reader Demographics

To conclude, it's crucial to summarize who Time Inc. most effectively reached. As I will show in detail in my first chapter, *Time* magazine was initially imagined for and marketed to Luce and his co-founders' elite, white, Protestant peers. As Time Inc. grew, its media offerings remained predominantly within the world of the United States' white middle and upper-middle class. In his exhaustive account of all existing data pertaining to *Life'*s midcentury readership, Baughman concluded that "The *Life* readership that emerged was anything but representative of the national population. It was middle class and, very often comfortably so, and much less likely

[70] "The Time of Henry Luce's Life," *The Christian Century,* May 22, 1963, 695.

to live in a farm or small town."[71] While no similarly thorough academic study of *Time's* readership has been published, internal market research suggests that the class status and geographic location of *Time's* readership was similar.[72]

Directing the magazines at the nations' religious and racial majority had substantial financial benefits. Corporate affiliates enjoyed claiming that *Time* and *Life* were the nation's "most important" magazines because they circulated among the most important people.[73] As this missive suggests, Time Inc. intentionally and successfully courted readers who could buy the products it advertised and enact the policies it proscribed. Internal research indicates that both magazines' readers were predominately college educated, middle or upper-middle class, and located in relatively affluent cities or suburbs. In the 1940s, when Black Americans, Latinos, and immigrants were largely excluded from middle and upper-middle class neighborhoods and professions, this data suggests that Time Inc.'s paying readership was predominantly white.

In this study, I follow the approach of media historian Lynn Spiegel. She writes, "I look at mass media as evidence not for what people think or feel, but for evidence of what they read, watch and say." Time Inc.'s particular imaginings of Christianity, the United States, and the United States' role in the world circulated most densely among relatively well-off, white U.S. Americans. The archives of Time Inc. provide substantial insight into what this group read and said about religion throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

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[71] "Who Read *Life*? The Circulation of America's Favorite Magazine," in *Looking at Life Magazine* ed. Erika Doss (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001), 41-55..

[72] See reader data collected by Elmo Roper for Time Inc. from 1942 to 1946, Folder 7, Box 417, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY. Time Inc. did not collect reader data based on race, a choice that could easily be read as an expression of the corporation's myopic focus on white culture and white readers.

[73] This language appears in H.R. Hodgins to C.B Yorke, "Time Inc.—Influence and Responsibility," March 31, 1944, Folder 7, Box 417, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

PART I: BUIDLING AN INTERWAR EMPIRE, 1923-1939

In February of 1936, three editors at *Time* magazine penned a long, cautious note to their editor-in-chief, Henry R. Luce. They wanted to address the magazine's troubling reputation. Gossip columnist Walter "the Winch" Winchel had accused *Time* of holding fascist sympathies on his popular national radio show. "I don't think anyone up here has ever thought *Time* was fascist in intention," the editors wrote, "It is however true," they continued, "that quite a lot of us think *Time* has a strong unconscious bias."[74] Only weeks later, *The American Spectator,* a monthly literary magazine, opened its March issue with a story chronicling the rapid expansion of *Time's* parent company, Time Inc. The more media Time Inc. produced, *The Spectator* warned, the more audiences could see "the Fascist viewpoint emerging unmistakably." The article pointed to several recent Time Inc. products that glorified fascist parties in France, Germany and Italy, and trivialized their opponents. "There is no question but that *Time* is marching on," *The Spectator* concluded, "We have tried to indicate in what direction it is marching."[75]

These statements represent a high point in public anxiety about the politics and purposes of Time Inc. When these editors wrote to Luce*,* Time Inc., its flagship *Time* magazine, and its chairman Henry R. Luce were all on the brink of becoming prominent national institutions. *Time* magazine's circulation had grown well beyond the country club set it was originally intended to serve, Luce had increased Time Inc.'s media offerings to include *Fortune* magazine, "The March of Time" radio and cinema newsreels, and *Life*, which was in production, would become one of

[74] "Harry: Walter Winchel's crack…" February 24, 1936, Box 446, Folder 26, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[75] Hy Karvif, "Behind the Scenes of 'March of Time,'" *The American Spectator,* March 1936, 1-2.

the most popular magazines in U.S. history. Time Inc. honed its journalism against the backdrop of an escalating global war and a world historic economic Depression. In 1929, a year of catastrophic economic collapse, *Time* earned enough money to print its first color portraits within the cover's famous red borders.[76] At the end of the 1930s, *Life,* the nation's only mass circulation "picture magazine" had a near monopoly on images of combat in Europe and Asia.

The two chapters in this opening section describe Time Inc.'s formative period, from the corporation's debut in 1923 to the years immediately preceding the Second World War. Each chapter provides a religious history of one major magazine's establishment. Chapter 1, "'*Time'*s Impartial Eye:' Facts and Prejudices at the First Newsmagazine," addresses *Time* magazine, paying special attention to how the publication provoked accusations of fascism. Chapter 2, "'To See*,* and to Be Instructed:' Public Relations at the Dawn of Photojournalism," looks at the premier of *Life,* considering how the corporation's representatives worked to diffuse and deflect such concerns as their public profile expanded.

Across these two opening chapters, I argue that Time Inc.'s fundamental outlook transitioned from an expression of the founders' elitist parochialism, addressed in detail in Chapter 1, to a tacit Christian universalism, described at the close of Chapter 2. In the early 1920s and '30s, when Time Inc. was still a fledgling organization, magazine editors glibly expressed their elitist sensibilities through openly offensive copy and accompanying assertions that their reporting was objective. As the corporation attracted a more varied reader base and experimented with new styles of mediation, this attitude was replaced with an emphasis on service and purpose. Time Inc.'s shift from parochialism to universalism thus tracked with a movement away from claiming to state "the facts" toward an overt interest in using journalism to

[76] TIME INCORPORATED, NEW YORK, Annual Report to Stockholders, 1929. ProQuest Historic Annual Reports.

instill “values.” It was this transition that laid the groundwork for Luce’s assertive statements of religious purpose during the wartime and postwar years.

Chapter 1: "*Time*'s Impartial Eye:" Facts and Prejudices at the First Newsmagazine

When it premiered in 1923, *Time* magazine claimed to resolve a crisis in contemporary news. An advertisement consuming the back cover of the magazine's third issue used a stark metaphor. "Did you—at first base—ever try to catch 100 balls, all thrown at the same time? ... It is no less difficult to handle acceptably the hundred or more news stories that the daily papers are serving at you day after day." The advertisement went on to describe *Time*'s unique editorial process as the solution to this untenable onslaught of news. "TIME is the crab net that lets you catch the news—and hold it. TIME's staff of specialists read collectively 300 newspapers and magazines of importance, select the significant (and interesting) facts, and present them clearly—where the busy man can see them."[77] As this advertisement suggests, *Time* was not comprised of original journalism. Rather, it was produced through a practice of collecting and summarizing published news from other sources. By extracting and re-writing a curated array of content, *Time*'s creators claimed to offer a periodical ideally suited to the particular needs of the busy, modern, 1920s gentleman.

This chapter describes the religious stakes of *Time*'s editorial approach. The practice of aggregating, sifting, and re-writing existing journalism produced a singular written idiom, which was eventually called "Timestyle." One contemporary critic described "Timestyle" as "always tinged with a peculiar kind of jeering rancor."[78] Here, I demonstrate—contra prevailing accounts—that *Time*'s rancor was not randomly directed.[79] Resonating with the widespread

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[77] "TIME—*the crab net,*" *Time,* March 24, 1923.
[78] Literary critic Edmund Wilson, quoted in W.A Swandberg, *Luce and His Empire,* (New York, NY: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1972), 123.
[79] Histories of *Time* unanimously state that the magazine of the 1920s and early 1930s was an "equal opportunity offender," describing the magazine's bigoted reporting as a cultivated stance wherein all newsmakers were equally subject to ridicule, regardless of their identities. See, Allan Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 128-130, James Baughman, *Henry R. Luce and the Rise of the American News Media* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1987) 50, W.A. Swandberg, *Luce and His Empire* (New

religious bigotry of the 1920s and early 1930s, *Time* consistently traded in anti-Catholic and antisemitic discourses. This chapter begins with a discussion of the social conditions that shaped *Time'*s editorial approach, then looks closely at two instances when prominent Jewish and Catholic readers protested their representation in the magazine. By focusing on *Time'*s offensive representations of religious minorities, and the disputes that ensued, I show how *Time* magazine's unique editorial process resulted in journalism that assumed and asserted the cultural dominance of white, Protestant elites.

My attention to *Time'*s editorial process is inspired by a recent turn in Media Studies. A series of influential works encourage scholars to analyze the media that do the crucial work of shifting, categorizing, and filtering, including often overlooked objects like filing systems, media infrastructures, and algorithms.[80] These works shows that attention to representation is woefully incomplete without attention to the devices that determine what is represented and what is submerged. In the words of media theorist Bernhard Siegert, "The basic operation of those cultural techniques responsible processing the distinction between nature and culture, or barbarism and civilization, is a filtering operation."[81] *Time'*s 1920s newsroom was a space where precisely this kind of filtering took place. Every week, the relevant was distinguished from the mundane, and the "interesting" was extracted from the ordinary. This work was freighted with racial and religious bias. At *Time,* amplifying the relevant often meant asserting the social

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York, NY: Scribner & Sons) 73, Robert Vanderlan, *Intellectuals Incorporated: Politics, Art and Ideas Inside Henry Luce's Media Empire* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 79. This chapter presents my research in Time Inc.'s archives and in the magazine itself, which clearly demonstrate that *Time* was overwhelmingly likely to print copy that offended Catholics, Jews and other racialized minorities.

[80] For several important examples, see Lisa Gitleman, *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2018), Bernhard Siegert *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors and Other Articulations of the Real* trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2015), Jonathan Stern, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format,* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

[81] Siegert, *Cultural Techniques,* 32.

importance of elites, and pointing-out the "interesting" frequently meant exoticizing and racializing the minoritized. To continue with Siegert's religiously resonant phrasing, *Time's* editorial formula naturalized long-standing distinctions between the "barbaric" and the "civilized."

In drawing out how *Time*'s editorial formula reproduced an exclusionary religious imaginary, I provide insight into the kinds of prejudices that shaped Time Inc.'s first newsrooms. Time Inc. was a predominantly white, male and Protestant space, shaped by the presumption of white, male Protestant superiority. The news organization, however, was not explicitly aligned with any of the right-wing organizations or conservative theologies where Religious Studies scholars have tended to locate affinities between white Protestantism and white supremacy.[82] As I'll show here, *Time's* particular assertions of white Protestant superiority cannot be extracted from the geopolitical context of the interwar period, when Nazism was emerging as global threat and Benito Mussolini reigned in Italy. In this chapter, I examine the editorial practices and impulses that resulted in Time Inc.'s offensive characterizations of U.S. religious minorities, emphasizing how this content coalesced with the magazine's simultaneous glorification of ascendent dictators aboard. By extrapolating this outlook, I demonstrate the social and intellectual proximity between the cultural attitudes of white elites and the politics of interwar authoritarianism. In making these affinities clear, I emphasize that dangerous religious politics have never been the sole province of explicitly right-wing actors and self-described white supremacists.

[82] See for example, Anthea Butler, *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2021) and Kelly J. Baker, *The Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK's Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2017).

When it came to *Time*'s antisemitism and anti-Catholicism, the magazine's editorial formula served a dual purpose. Timestlye, *Time*'s singular written idiom, allowed the editors to weave antagonism toward religious minorities seamlessly into narrations of the news, and simultaneously provided recourse to claim that they were simply printing "the facts." In the examples that consume the body of this chapter, I argue that *Time* writers used the language of "facts" to relegate Jewish and Catholic readers' concerns to the realm of subjectivity, compounding the offense by asserting a superior grip on reality. The claim to objectivity thus coalesced with the work of asserting white Protestant supremacy.

This chapter concludes in the second half of the 1930s, when rapidly accumulating criticisms of *Time* and the intensification of World War II motivated executives at Time Inc. to revise the magazine's public image. In Chapter Two, we'll see how efforts to improve *Time*'s reputation resulted in materials proudly declaring that *Time* was not at all based on facts, and instead shaped by "American values." For example, a 1939 pamphlet soliciting subscriptions baldly rejected older claims to objectivity, instead stating that *Time* was "prejudiced" in favor of "American values," including, "Tolerance—for all races, and all religions," and "Democracy—The finest and noblest form of Government ever created by Man."[83] By beginning this study with a close examination of *Time*'s early, exclusionary reporting, I intend to emphasize the religious and racial grids through which these "values" were forged. This history also works to show that Time Inc.'s later turn to "principled" reporting replaced a style of "objectivity" shaped by religious and racial bias.

[83] "TIME: The Weekly News-magazine," October 1939, Box 447, Folder 11, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

The "Dominant Group" and the Beginning of *Time*

Time Inc.'s self-pubished corporate history, *The World of Time Inc.: An Intimate History of a Publishing Enterprise,* betrays the patrician sensibility that motivated *Time* magazine's founding. According to this corporate mythology, *Time'*s co-founders, Henry R. Luce and Briton Hadden, were inspired to start a magazine while training to become officers during the First World War. Luce and Hadden, who were then sophomores on-leave from Yale, found that their fellow trainees were grievously underinformed about the events of the war. Already enthusiastic campus journalists, *The World of Time Inc.* claims that the two men spent many late nights imagining what kind of publication might produce a more-informed populace. In its exposition of this origin story Time Inc.'s corporate history notes that Luce and Hadden "enjoyed a sense of security and assurance which came not from wealth but from place and position, from being part of the dominant group."[84] As this chapter will show, Luce and Hadden's belonging to the "dominant group," or being white, male, Protestant and connected to upper-class institutions like Yale, made the founding of Time Inc. materially possible, shaped its idiosyncratic journalistic technique, and ultimately pervaded *Time'*s reporting.

Luce and Hadden were each connected to different varieties of elite institutions. Hadden belonged to a wealthy New York banking family, and like many other Yale students of his generation, grew-up sequestered in the all white, all male and exclusively Protestant schools and clubs that served early twentieth-century urban elites.[85] Hadden displayed an early interest in producing media wherein racism was cloaked as edginess. He started his first newspaper, *The Daily Glonk*, as a student at Brooklyn's exclusive Polytechnic Preparatory Academy. Hadden's

[84] Robert Elson, *Time Inc.: The Intimate History of a Publishing Enterprise: Vol. I, 1923-1941,* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 16.
[85] For insight into these spaces in New York City particularly, see Clifton Hood, *In Pursuit of Privilege: A History of New York's Upper Class & The Making of a Metropolis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019).

biographers have since hailed *The Glonk*, which was comprised almost entirely of racist and antisemitic cartoons, as *Time's* earliest forerunner.[86]

Luce, on the other hand, was born in Tengchow, China, where his parents served as Presbyterian missionaries. Luce's foreign upbringing set him apart from his classmates at Yale. His clothes weren't tailored in the Western style and, as he once complained in a letter to his to his mother, he did not know the rules of "American football." His missionary connections, however, made him eligible for scholarships, endeared him to wealthy philanthropists, and imbued him with a worldliness and cosmopolitanism that would ultimately benefit his journalistic endeavors.[87]

Time magazine was founded simultaneously with its parent company, Time Incorporated. This was thanks to Luce and Hadden's connections to corporate finance, philanthropy, and private clubs. Rather than taking the conventional route of funding a new publication by selling advertising space to local businesses, the two recent graduates gathered investments to start a media corporation that would then produce their imagined magazine and future publications to come. Hadden toured the nation's country clubs in his stylish new roadster, taking meetings and playing golf with anyone who might want to finance an ambitious new media entity. Luce stayed in the Northeast to re-connect with the wealthy families who supported his family's missionary projects.[88] If Luce and Hadden had originally conceived of the magazine as a resource for the socially and economically diverse recruits they met during officers training, that intended

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[86] For accounts of how *The Daily Glonk* presaged *Time,* see Wilner, *The Man Time Forgot*, 19., Noel Busch, *Briton Hadden: A biography of the co-founder of TIME,* (New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss & Company, 1949), 13. Each issue included a racist caricature of an African American man predicting the weather, and several included condescending accounts of events held by local Jewish organizations. Copies can be found in Box 269, Folder 2, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

[87] Allan Brinkley, *The Publisher*, 27-39. W.A Swandberg, *Luce and His Empire,* (New York, NY: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1972), 18-24, 30-43.

[88] Busch, *Briton Hadden,* 47.

audience slipped away once fundraising began. In 1922, Luce wrote to his fiancé, Lila Hotz Tyng, that their new publication would "serve the illiterate upper classes, the busy businessman, the tired debutante, to prepare them at least once a week for table conversation."[89] After raising a total of $85,675 from seventy investors, Time Inc. was incorporated in November of 1922.[90] In December, Luce hired a printer and rented office space in New York City, where the magazine would be produced.[91] The first issue of *Time* went to print in March of 1923.

By naming their magazine *Time,* Luce and Hadden claimed to sell what they perceived to be at a premium. Thanks to quicker methods of industrial production, the new ubiquity of automobile travel, and a growing array of leisure and entertainment activities, many members of the middle and upper classes felt that daily life was rapidly picking up speed. With this new sense of clutter and hurry came a fetish for efficiency, which Luce and Hadden hoped to satisfy.[92] Their pitches and promotional materials described *Time* as an entirely new category of print media that would combine aspects of existing formats to better suit the accelerated conditions of modern life. Established daily papers like *The New York Times,* they claimed, provided an excess of content that was far too cumbersome for the busy reader to efficiently consume. Magazines, on the other hand, published well-chosen and well-written articles, but generally didn't aspire to cover current events.[93] Luce and Hadden's publication promised the relevance and completeness of a newspaper with the sleek packaging and smart curation of a

[89] Quoted in Brinkley, *The Publisher,* 88.
[90] "CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION of TIME, INCORPORATED," November 28, 1922, Box 445, Folder 9, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[91] Elson, *Time Inc. Vol. 1,* 67.
[92] For a detailed discussion of the conceptualization of *Time* and the perception that daily life was accelerating, see Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 52.
[93] Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 52-55, Brinkley, *The Publisher,* 89-93.

magazine. Hadden, who was fond of invented words and portmanteaus, coined a new term to describe their creation. *Time* would be the first ever "newsmagazine."[94]

This novel format required a novel production process. *Time* writers did not conduct research or write original reporting, as was the convention. Inspired by the era's new modes assembly-line production, the magazine was created through a collaborative multi-step process intended to synthesize and organize all the week's available news. Production began with an exhaustive canvass of established local newspapers and specialty magazines. Hadden, wearing his signature green eyeshade and wielding a scissor, clipped the stories he liked and sorted them into the categories that would organize the finished magazine. Every issue of *Time* began with the National Affairs section, which was organized into relevant thematic sub-sections, including The Presidency, Prohibition, and Women. The Foreign News section, comprised of sub-sections organized by location, always followed. The rest of the magazine included an array of "back-of-the-book" columns, including Religion, Business, Science and Books, which were also culled from a survey of relevant published writing.

Producing each story involved so many people and steps that the editors began attaching a labor cost to every printed letter. After Luce and Hadden gathered and categorized the week's content, *Time*'s full-time staff writers (the first staff was comprised entirely of men from Luce and Hadden's Ivy League circle) re-wrote the selected stories, condensing them into quippy briefs of approximately four hundred words each. Once all the week's content was selected, condensed, re-written, and fact-checked, it went back to Hadden, who ensured that it conformed to his desired length, style, and tone. Because all of *Time's* journalism was produced

[94] Elson, *Time Inc. Vol 1.,* 7.

collaboratively, it was printed without a byline, giving the intentional effect of omniscient narration.[95]

The writing style that emerged around *Time's* innovative production style was shaped by Luce and Hadden's elite, white milieu. Hadden engineered a written style, eventually referred to as "Timestyle," that allowed the editors to relay their chosen news items in as few words as possible, while still conveying evocative detail. Timestyle was influenced by Hadden's enthusiasm for Classical Greek and Roman literature, which were a core part of the curriculum at Yale. One important stylistic trademark, drawn from Homer, was *Time's* descriptive language. Inspired by phrases like "swift-heeled Achilles" and "wine-dark sea," *Time* writers were instructed to add vividness to news stories by preceding important nouns with carefully chosen (or invented) adjectives.[96] This was especially true when it came to descriptions of people. When Hadden first formalized Timestyle into an official style guide in 1927, several lines of detailed instruction insisted that writers always find a way to capture an individual's identity in one or two words. Hadden suggested as examples, "Banker Morgan, Actor Barrymore… Cab Driver Gottfried, Orator Depew and even so extreme a title as Purveyor Jones (if, for example, he happens already to have been mentioned in the story as a purveyor of good news.)"[97] Registering the magazine's social scene, a later version of the style guide suggested "Parkavian" for residents of New York city's wealthy Park Avenue neighborhood.[98] This style was intended to add an eye-witness effect with the use of only several well-chosen words. It was also, as one early *Time* writer recognized, useful for letting the reader know who the editors deemed impressive, average, or

[95] For accounts of *Time's* original production process, see Baughman, *Henry R. Luce,* 37-54, Brinkley, *The Publisher*, 102-107, Busch, *Briton Hadden,* 71-74, Elson, *Time Inc. Vol 1.,* 61-70, Swandberg, *Luce and His Empire,* 150-151, and Wilner, *The Man Time Forgot,* 86-98.
[96] Elson, *Time Inc. Vol. 1,* 85.
[97] "STYLE BOOK FOR TIME," Box 445, Folder 26, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[98] "STYLE BOOK FOR TIME, 1931," Box 446, Folder 11, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

ridiculous. Hadden's cousin John Martin, who wrote for *Time* in the 1920s, recalled that "at least half of the duty of a Time writer under Hadden was to find ways and means of calling nonfactors, misfactors and malefactors such names without literally doing so."[99] The assessments of "misfactors" and "malefactors" often cleaved along religious and racial lines.

The Religion column provides a poignant example of how Timestyle wove the editors' sense of religious, racial, and cultural dominance seamlessly into the news. The magazine's original prospectus observed that "There are 150 religious publications in this country, subscribed to by 13,000,00 homes… Though many of these papers have a denominational bias, it is possible through them collectively to follow the moving course of events throughout the religious world."[100] The Religion column described news from mainline Protestant denominations in curt, unadorned language. Simple, straight-forward briefs describing the appointment of a new Dean at Princeton Theological Seminary, for example, contrasted sharply with florid, almost anthropological columns about Jews, Catholics, and other religious minorities. A piece on Christmas at the Vatican gushed, "the sheen of deep-dyed silks, the richness of furs and laces and sparkling gems moved everywhere in splendid profusion," rendering Catholic leadership excessive, flamboyant and materialistic.[101] A story about how Jews in Brooklyn would celebrate Yom Kippur predicted that, "children will play with apples spiked with cloves; men will rub snuff at rheumy noses; women will sniff at phials of aromatic spirits of ammonia—for the pious do not eat that day."[102] *Time'*s repeated reference to the olfactory quality of Jewish ritual draws attention to the nose, echoing longstanding antisemitic tropes.

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[99] John Martin, "Notes for Additional Time (and Life) Reminiscences," undated, Box 368, Folder 19, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[100] "TIME The Weekly News-Magazine (A Prospectus)," undated 1922, Box 445, Folder 12, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[101] "Jubilant," *Time,* January 5, 1925, 16.
[102] "Holy Days," *Time,* September 13, 1926, 19.

Time's Religion column described the activities of mainline Protestants as the expected, unremarkable "moving course of events," establishing them as the dominant religious norm. Jews and Catholics, on the other hand, elicited all of Timestlye's excesses, rendering them theatrical, exotic and bizarre. Marshall McLuhan writes of early *Time* magazine that "the reader is never on his own for an instant, but, as though at his mother's knee, he is provided with the right emotions for everything he hears or sees as the pages turn."[103] Smoothing news stories into Timestyle, as McLuhan observes, meant wrapping facts in judgments, shaping readers' perception of people and events.

Time found its first audience among the same exclusively white and exclusively Protestant social networks Luce and Hadden harnessed to launch the magazine. In 1927, four years after the magazine debuted, ninety-five percent of the magazine's paid circulation came from subscriptions, and ninety percent of those subscribers were acquired through Time Inc.'s strategy of distributing sample issues through Ivy League and country club membership lists.[104] In an era when Jews and Catholics were almost completely excluded from private clubs and the Ivy League, the audience that *Time* consolidated was not only elite, but also predominantly Protestant.[105] In 1928, Hadden created *Time's* first ever market research survey, chidingly titled "Do You Own a Horse?" The 80-point questionnaire was sent to a random sampling of 10,000 *Time* subscribers. Ninety-two percent of the 4,033 readers who returned the survey identified as "executives or professionals," seventy-seven percent were college graduates, fifty-two percent employed domestic servants, twenty percent owned more than one home, and ten percent did, in

[103] Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man*, (Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, 1951), 10.
[104] "Memo to Mr. Anderson RE CIRCULATION METHODS," March 25, 1927, Box 445, Folder 28, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[105] For a classic sociological discussion of how Jews and Catholics were systematically excluded from social networks built around private clubs and Ivy League universities, see E. Digby Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy & Caste in America,* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).

fact, own a horse.[106] At the same time, the company trained its subscription salesmen to emphasize *Time*'s clubbiness and "high caliber" readership. Instructions to salesmen urged them to "Go on the assumption that yourself, TIME and the prospect all belong to the fraternity of culture and education. People like to feel superior to the crowd."[107]

Expanding Time Inc.'s profits, however, meant expanding *Time*'s audience. While *Time* salesmen peddled subscriptions on the basis of exclusivity, Time Inc. made a major push to increase the magazine's circulation. In the late 1920s circulation manager Roy E. Larsen would regularly "walk the stands" in New York City to make sure the magazine was prominently displayed. He contacted high schools and colleges about distributing the magazine to students, and created materials that promoted *Time* as a Christmas gift every December.[108] Larsen's efforts proved successful. Newsstand sales nearly doubled between 1927 and 1928, resulting in a more diverse array of readers.[109] Meanwhile, Luce and Larsen increased Time Inc.'s profits by promoting *Time* as an advertising medium. In 1927 *Time* printed 72 percent more advertisements than it had in 1926, and by 1930 *Time* was the third-most advertising-heavy magazine in the United States.[110] As more advertising filled the magazine it grew thicker and more colorful, and Time Inc. accumulated enough capital to expand the staff and consider new ventures.

When they took stock of Time Inc.'s late 1920s surge in circulation and profits, Luce and Hadden found themselves at complete odds as to what should come next for Time Inc. Important cultural differences began to show. As early *Time* staff writer David Cort put it, "Hadden had represented the older code that the aristocracy was virile; Luce stood for the missionary idea that

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[106] "40% Returns from an 80-question Inquisition," Box 446, Folder 1, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[107] "On Selling Time," Box 445, Folder 28, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[108] "Memo to Mr. Anderson RE CIRCULATION METHODS," March 25, 1927, Box 445, Folder 28, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[109] Elson, *The World of Time Inc. Vol. 1,* 117.
[110] Ibid., 117, 150.

the better elements are moral."[111] Circulation was a site where this tension emerged. While Luce, who managed the corporation's finances, reflexively sought the largest circulation possible, Hadden liked the exclusivity of a magazine associated closely with his own social class.

In his biography of Hadden, Noel Busch writes that Hadden went so far as to sabotage subscription growth by condescendingly deriding the racism of rural Southerners when Larsen tried to increase circulation in the South.[112] This move provides insight into the particularities of the magazine's racial outlook under Hadden's editorial direction. In decades to come, Luce and other Time Inc. representatives would speak proudly about Hadden's insistence on reporting on lynchings at a time when publications with white audiences typically ignored acts of racist violence. These reports, while remarkable, almost always acted as a vehicle for condescending to white southerners. Take for example a report from May 5, 1923, which read, "James Scott is dead. He was put to death by yokels who believed in their gross way that they were maintaining the honor of the race that bred them."[113] Items like these, and many others that ridicule the behaviors of "yokels," "bumpkins" and "hill billys," demonstrate how Hadden's *Time* was at once profoundly bigoted, and built on pretentions of espousing enlightened racial views relative to other U.S. Americans. As his gestures during *Time*'s initial period of growth suggest, Hadden's overwhelming interest in producing a publication for his own Northeastern, Ivy League demographic was motivated by patronizing assumptions about the rest of the national market.

[111] David Cort, *The Sin of Henry Luce: An Anatomy of Journalism* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle and Stuart, Inc. 1974), 26.
[112] Busch also writes that Hadden subverted efforts at expansion by running celebratory stories about unruly schoolchildren in the Education section when Larsen attempted to sell magazine subscriptions to school. Busch, *Briton Haden*, 115.
[113] "Saturday Night," *Time*, May 5, 1923, 6.

While Hadden frankly and openly preferred some regions and sectors of white U.S. society over others, Luce was an undaunted enthusiast for all things "American." In late 1927, Both Luce and Hadden set to work on new magazines. Each captured the two founder's increasingly opposed sensibilities. Luce was working with *Time's* business writer on plans for a large, elegant monthly of long-form business journalism. Still a relatively recent inductee into the world of U.S business elites, Luce wanted Time Inc.'s first act of expansion to express his solemn admiration of prestige, power and success.[114] As Luce and Larsen doggedly courted new advertisers, Hadden expressed his irreverent sensibility with *Tide,* a monthly supplement to *Time* that satirized the advertising industry.[115] Luce used Time Inc. to make earnest headway into the U.S. elite. Hadden used it to express his established upper-class status through aloof mockery and sarcasm, sometimes even directed at industries instrumental to his livelihood. Early Time Inc. employees recall tense conversations that would escalate until Luce and Hadden would depart for the Yale Club to rent a room and argue furiously in private.[116]

A sudden turn of events determined which vision prevailed. In late December of 1928 Hadden began to feel ill. When he checked into The Brooklyn Hospital in early January doctors found a streptococcus infection in his bloodstream. On February 27, 1929, Hadden died at the age of 31. Ann Douglas writes that the period between the First World War and the Great Depression was, "the first age of the media." Douglas goes on to enumerate the myriad new

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[114] Throughout the 1930s Luce made a series of public addresses describing the importance of maintaining an aristocracy in the U.S., arguing that elites could guide the nation towards shared prosperity. These addresses include, "Dean Hicks of Princeton was…," delivered November 21, 1930 at the Forsyth Club, "Indispensable Men," delivered at the University of Chicago April 19, 1933 and "Education and Aristocracy," University of Chatanooga, April 24 1936. Box 70, Henry Robinson Luce Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.
[115] *Tide* was offered as an optional monthly supplement to *Time,* for one dollar a year for approximately one year, between 1927 and 1928. In one characteristic article, *Tide* responded to a Marlboro campaign that featured Napoleon Bonaparte by finding historical evidence that Napoleon hated tobacco. *Tide* itself did not feature any advertising and was funded only by subscription sales. Roy Larsen, Time Inc. Oral History Interviews, October 29, 1956, Time Inc. Bio Files, Box 280, Folder 11, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[116] Swandberg, *Luce and His Empire,* 61.

forms and styles of media that proliferated during this period. Book clubs, phonographs, cinema, and professional sports were all innovations of the 1920s that contributed to the production and consolidation of a national U.S. audience with shared cultural reference points.[117] By helping to create the first nationally circulating newsmagazine, Hadden became one of the many innovators to usher in a national, commercialized mass culture.

At the same time, the 1920s also saw marked efforts to affirm and secure the notion that the United States was rightfully lead and dominated by white Protestants. In 1924, one year after *Time*'s first issue, the federal government passed the National Origins Act, which severely restricted immigration from predominantly Jewish and Catholic regions of Europe. The act was advanced and supported by the nation's flourishing array of antisemitic and anti-Catholic organizations, including the growing Ku Klux Klan. [118] Expressions of racial and national superiority were finding different forms across the globe, with fascism slowly tacking hold in Germany, Italy and Spain. *Time* magazine embodied all these hallmarks of 1920s. culture and politics. Timestyle brought the excitement and clip of new entertainment media into the realm of printed news, and simultaneously conveyed white Protestants' entrenched sense of religious and racial superiority. With his talent for evoking drama and fervor for adjectives, Hadden helped to produce a powerful tool for the propagation and naturalization of Time Inc. writers' and executives' religious and political perspectives.

[117] Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1995), 20.
[118] For an overview of U.S. nativism in the 1920s, see Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 203-234.

"… A Sort of Superman:" Timestyle and Global Authoritarianism

Luce took a brief reprieve after Hadden's death, and then went about expanding Time Inc. according to his own designs. In early 1930, *Tide* was sold to the advertising firm Young & Rubicam, on the basis that it conflicted with Time Inc.'s best interests. It went on to become a conventional advertising trade magazine.[119] News proved to be a commodity that could weather the Depression, and Time Inc. expanded consistently throughout the 1930s. Less than a year after the stock market crash of 1929, Luce went ahead with plans to produce his business magazine. The first issue of *Fortune,* which he toyed with calling "Power," was sent to approximately 30,000 subscribers in February of 1930.[120] Aesthetically striking and decadently priced at one dollar per issue (in 1930 *Time* cost fifteen cents), *Fortune* was designed to host an insider's conversation about U.S. corporate productivity.[121] With ample funds on hand, Luce empowered his colleagues to experiment across media. Larsen explored broadcasting. *The March of Time,* a news program meant to promote *Time* magazine, began airing regularly on CBS radio in 1932, and became a national cinema newsreel beginning in 1935. In his recollections of Time Inc. in the 1930s Cort wrote, "the people at Time Inc. hardly knew there was a Depression. To some extent this was because the company was doing wonderfully well in the Depression. … But in a subtler, more pervasive sense, Luce's dementia that an American Depression was inadmissible (symbolized by *Fortune*) had penetrated the organization."[122] Here, Cort alludes to Luce's vehement, unwavering confidence in the U.S. business sector, which was only confirmed by his own corporation's ongoing successes. In 1933, when 277,485 families in New York City alone

[119] "Re: TIDE," May 6 1965, Time Inc. Subject Files, Box 445, Folder 9, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[120] Elson, *Time Inc.* 134-6.
[121] For an excellent discussion of the sensibility advanced in *Fortune* magazine in the 1930s, see Michael Augspurger, *An Economy of Abundant Beauty: Fortune Magazine and Depression America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).
[122] Cort, *The Sin of Henry Luce*, 17.

depended on Federal Unemployment Relief, Time Inc.'s net profits exceeded one million dollars for the first time, with *Time* as its most profitable product.[123]

Time was the engine of Time Inc.'s success and its boastful mouthpiece. In a letter to a fellow journalist Luce explained that "*Time* is conceived as written by one man. Not any one man you can see, but a sort of superman—the sum total of the very men who really 'make it.'"[124] Luce's casual personification of the magazine as a masculine, superhuman, success story merged it's ongoing commercial success with its signature tone. It also resonated with the discourses propagated by authoritarian regimes gaining ground in Europe. In *Dictators, Democracy and American Public Culture: Envisioning the Totalitarian Enemy, 1920-1950s,* cultural historian Benjamin L. Alpers describes a "romance" with dictatorial leaders that pervaded U.S. popular culture in the 1930s. Alpers describes an array of popular films, novels and essays that celebrated Italy's Benito Mussolini, and to a lesser degree the Soviet Union's Joseph Stalin, as enviably tough, impressively masculine, and uniquely modern.[125] *Time* participated in this trend. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, *Time* lionized Mussolini and produced rapt, salacious and uncritical accounts of the dictatorial machinations of Stalin in the Soviet Union and Adolf Hitler in Germany. The effect of *Time'*s print reporting was compounded by the *March of Time* cinema news reels, which were consistently accused of presenting pontificating dictators and goose-stepping troops in a positive light.[126] Timestlye's jeering tone and selective use of adjectives

[123] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee for the Relief of Unemployed Persons Within the United States, *Federal Unemployment Relief Act: Report (to Accompany S.J Res. 149)* 71st Congress, 2nd Sess., 1933., TIME INCORPORATED Annual Report to Stockholders, 1933, ProQuest Historical Annual Reports.
[124] Quoted in Baughman, *Henry R. Luce,* 46.
[125] Benjamin L. Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy & American Public Culture: Envisioning the Totalitarian Enemy, 1920s-1950s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 15-58.
[126] Two examples of this accusation can be found in the entertainment magazine *Variety*, see "The March of Time," *Varity,* February 5, 1935, 8, and "Newsreels," *Variety*, July 8, 1936, 4.

provided a mode through which *Time* could romanticize dictators and belittle their opponents, while shrouding these accounts in the language of objectivity.

A growing staff of writers, guided by Hadden's style guides and embodying Luce's desired "superman" stance, consistently indulged many of the Timestyle's most offensive flourishes. Wielding the injunction to introduce individuals with characterizing adjectives, writers assertively racialized non-white and non-Protestant newsmakers throughout the magazine. In 1929 the Foreign News section described Mahatma Gandhi as "always nine-tenths naked, and to Occidentals often ridiculous in appearance."[127] In a review of his 1934 anti-Nazi novel, *Time* described German-Jewish author Lion Fuetchwanger as "twitchetty, bespectacled, he has a big nose, prominent mouth, receding chin, looks like a fat-cheeked rat."[128] In 1935, a National Affairs column about New York mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia's interfaith activism called him "a hot-tempered little Mayor."[129] Viewed in the context of swelling authoritarianism in Europe, many of *Time's* non-Protestant readers found the magazine's offensive language and growing visibility deeply concerning.

Timestyle's constant marking of newsmakers' identities and the magazine's intentionally arrogant tone each drew unique complaints from non-Protestant members of the magazine's public. Jewish readers were most frequently frustrated by *Time's* tendency to use "Jew" as an adjective when introducing Jewish individuals, as in a review of a new musical score by the composer "Jew Gershwin."[130] During the interwar years, U.S.-based antisemitic discourses typically insisted that Jewish difference was intractable and unassimilable. At the same time, U.S. Jews watched with horror as Nazi fascism took hold in Germany. In this context, interfaith

[127] "Saint Fined," *Time,* April 8, 1929, 27.
[128] "Heil Hitler!," *Time,* March 19, 1934, 75.
[129] "Occult Forces," *Time,* August 5 1935, 16.
[130] "Gershwin Bros." *Time,* July 20, 1925, 14.

activists argued that invisibility through assimilation was Jewish-American's best option. *Time's* practice of noting individual's Jewishness made invisibility impossible, activating well-warranted anxieties.[131]

Time's Catholic readers were motivated by a different set of concerns. As they observed the proliferation of popular media, Catholic laypeople and clerics actively took account of which venues seemed to support their church's religious aims and which undermined or contradicted them. This effort resulted in the creation of organizations like the Legion of Decency, which monitored the motion picture industry, and the National Organization for Decent Literature, which listed and proscribed books and magazines that contradicted Catholic doctrine.[132] Catholic's disputes with *Time* were largely sparked by the magazine's tendency to trivialize Catholic activities, commitments, and concerns.

Time did not apologize in either instance. Rather, *Time's* editors used their Letters column to defend their journalism as frankly and rigorously based on fact. As the examples below demonstrate, *Time's* claim to "the facts" diminished Jewish and Catholic reader's complaints, relegating them to the realm of subjective suspicions. This move exemplified *Time's* intent to occupy a "superman" stance in relation to its public, and coalesced its tendency to celebrate authoritarian leaders.

Time Magazine Meets Samuel Untermyer and Father Walsh

During the 1930s *Time* took aim at high-profile representatives of U.S. Jewish and Catholic communities. On November 13, 1933, less than a year after Adolf Hitler was appointed

[131] Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race and American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006) 125-132.
[132] Una M. Cadogan, *All Good Books Are Catholic Books: Print Culture, Censorship and Modernity in Twentieth Century America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: 2013), 127-132.

chancellor of Germany, *Time's* National Affairs section covered a dispute between a prominent Jewish-American lawyer, Samuel Untermyer, and the German ambassador to the U.S., Dr. Hans Luther. During a meeting of the American League for the Defense of Jewish Rights, Untermyer publicly accused Dr. Luther of using his position to build pro-Nazi organizations in the United States and called on the federal government to monitor the flow of German goods and assets into U.S.-based German organizations.[133] *Time*'s account of the meeting described the German ambassador as a victim of Untermyer's paranoid zealotry. "For two months Ambassador Luther, whose conservative, bankerish nature is not a bit like the hot-headed crowd whose emissary he is," *Time* wrote, "has suffered from anti-Naziism in the U.S." Untermyer, on the other hand, was described as "shaggy-haired" and "furious," and his statements in the meeting were not spoken or delivered, but "cried" and "blazed." The terms used to describe Ambassador Luther, "bankerish" and "conservative," would likely have made him relatable to *Time's* elite, white readership. Untermyer's descriptors, on the other hand, painted him as outside the norms of polite and professional white society. In this instance, Timestyle was wielded to situate the German ambassador as the victim of an activist cause that was at once unreasonable and ethnically other. This reporting was laid out around two portraits, one of Luther and the other of Untermyer. The images were captioned "Jew Untermyer" and "German Luther."[134]

Two weeks later, *Time* published a collection of letters expressing outrage and confusion about the apparently pro-Nazi stance expressed in the Untermyer story. Two letters alluded to the Jewish community's particularly vulnerable circumstances. Harry C. Neubuerger of New York City wrote, "it is beyond comprehension in these times, in this stage of human instability, that

[133] For more on Samuel Untermyer and his organizing, see Richard A. Hawkins, "'Hitler's Bitterest Foe:' Samuel Untermyer and the Boycott of Nazi Germany, 1933–1938," *American Jewish History* 93 no. 1 (March 2007), 21-50.
[134] "Masquerader!," *Time,* November 13, 1930, 9-10.

you should display so little tact, to say the least, as to flaunt your anti-semitic tendencies before the eyes of readers." Another letter, from Lee Gertner, also of New York, asked, "Have we not suffered sufficient bigotry without having so unbiased a publication as yours add wood to the already too long burning fire?" A final letter printed in *Time* was from Untermyer himself. He asked outright if *Time* intended to sew antisemitism and demanded a statement from the editors themselves. The editors obliged with the following retort, printed bellow the readers' letters,

> In decrying Nazi activities in the U.S. and agitating for a boycott of German goods and services, Lawyer Untermyer is acting not as a lawyer, not a U.S. citizen, not as religionist, but as a Jew outraged by persecutions of fellow Jews… In labeling Lawyer Untermyer "Jew" in contrast to "German" for Ambassador Luther, TIME was strictly, significantly accurate. TIME did not deliberately intend affront to Jewish sensibilities or express sympathy with the Nazi cause.
>
> In TIME'S impartial eye, all races, creeds and colors receive the same objective inspection, analysis, description. TIME is impatient of supersensitive members of any group who suspect and complain that it does otherwise.—ED.[135]

The claim that *Time's* "impartial eye" saw Untermyer "not as a lawyer, not a U.S citizen, not as religionist, but as a Jew" asserted and stabilized Jewish-American's insurmountable, inscrutable difference. *Time's* language implied that to be Jewish was to possess an identity that exceeded, and even confounded, the categories of nationality and religion. Eric Goldstein writes that during the interwar years antisemitism in the U.S. often manifested as "the need to expose the irritating distinctiveness of Jews" in order to name and monitor how they were influencing the broader culture.[136] Jewish readers of *Time* rightly noted that the magazine's use of "Jew" as an adjective mimicked this dynamic.

In the context of growing global antisemitism, some observers likened *Time* to Germany's Nazi party. In "The Subtle Anti-Semitism of the Magazine 'Time,'" a 1934 article for *The Jewish Exponent,* Dr. Israel Bram criticized the magazine's use of "Jew" as an identifier.

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[135] "Letters," *Time,* November 27 1933, 2-4.
[136] Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness,* 32.

Bram compared *Time* to Germany's recently ascendant Nazi party, observing, "The adjective 'Jew' seems to satisfy your needs quite as amply as it does the instincts of the Nazis who, having built a ghetto within the school rooms of Germany, call upon Jewish children as 'Jew Blum' or 'Jew Kaufman,' to the amusement of their 'Christian' class mates. *Time* is building a Nazi class all its own."[137] Bram's specific use of the name "Jew Blum" was likely intentional. Léon Blum, a leader of France's Socialist party who became the first Jewish Prime Minister in 1936, was a particular object of *Time'*s derision. Throughout the 1930s *Time* called him "Jew Blum," "Socialist Blum," and at one point, "sad featured, droop mustached, Socialist Blum." *Time* even went so far as to celebrate after the Prime Minister was attacked and beaten by far-right agitators.[138] It was not a stretch for readers like Bram to assume that *Time* was echoing and amplifying the antisemitism taking hold in Germany and endured by Prime Minister Blum in France.

During this time period, defending the conventions of Timestyle was instituted as a matter of company policy. Within months of Bram's article, Time Inc. produced a form letter that would go out to any readers offended by *Time'*s descriptions of people and groups. The letter insisted on the importance of characterizing news makers with choice adjectives, "I am sorry you feel that TIME is too disrespectful in the adjectives we use to give a flash picture of the men and women mentioned in the column," the letter began. "But really, these adjectives are most important."[139] This letter was distributed to the staff alongside a statement from Luce. "…don't show yourselves to be saps by assuming that TIME is wrong just because somebody

[137] Israel Bram, M.D "The Subtle Anti-Semitism of the Magazine 'Time,'" *The Jewish Exponent,* May 11, 1934, 1-2.
[138] For a discussion of *Time'*s antisemitic coverage of Léon Blum, see Swandberg, *Luce and His Empire,* 129-130. For this particular language, see, "Very Prudent Game," *Time,* May 9, 1932, 19.
[139] "I am sorry you feel…," October 15, 1934, Box 446, Folder 21, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

says so," he wrote, "The fact of the matter is this; it is not TIME's errors which cause most of its grief, it is TIME's truth that makes people sore."[140] Here, Luce echoed public facing defenses of *Time's* journalism by insisting that the magazine's offending adjectives were "truths." At the same time, he warned writers against becoming "saps," encouraging his staff to embody the hyper-masculine "superman" stance he used to personify the magazine.

In the spring of 1930, *Time* issued a similar defense of its journalism after antagonizing a prominent Jesuit academic, Father Edmund A. Walsh. In the early 1920s, when the Soviet Union was waging a widespread campaign against religious institutions, Walsh was appointed by the Vatican to direct the Papal Relief Mission to Russia. When Walsh's correspondence with *Time* began, he was the president of Georgetown University, president of The Catholic Near East Welfare Association, and a popular speaker on the Catholic lecture circuit.[141] *Time* first contacted Walsh regarding a widely circulated pamphlet he wrote about the ongoing persecution of religious groups in Russia. The pamphlet, titled "Why Pope Pius Asked for Prayers for Russia on March 19, 1930," began with the Pope's recent call to prayer, and went on to describe a decade's worth of discrimination against religious groups in Russia. To evidence the urgency of the Pope's call, an appendix included three anti-Catholic Soviet cartoons.[142] Walsh distributed his research to priests across the United States, hoping to rouse concern about the Russian situation. When a *Time* staff member contacted Walsh for more details about his pamphlet, Walsh determined that *Time's* correspondence "merited a courteous, an immediate and objective reply." He wrote *Time* a detailed response the same day and included four additional cartoons to

[140] Correspondence from Mr. Luce to all TIME Staff, October 15 1934, Box 446, Folder 21, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[141] Patrick J. McNamara, "'Argument of Strength Justly and Righteously Employed': Edmund A. Walsh, Catholic Anticommunism, and American Foreign Policy, 1945-1952," *U.S Catholic Historian* 22 no. 4 (2004): 62.
[142] Edmund A. Walsh, "Why Pope Pious Asked for Prayers for Russia on March 19, 1930," (New York, NY: Catholic Near East Welfare Association, 1930).

emphasize the ubiquity and rancor of anti-religious sentiment in Russia. Walsh even followed his letter with an expensive overnight telegram, to ensure that *Time* would have ample information before reporting on the situation.[143]

Rather than covering the persecution of Russian Catholics, as Father Walsh had hoped, *Time* followed the magazine's established pattern of dismissing oppressed communities and romanticizing dictators. The March 31, 1930, issue of *Time* magazine featured a page-long article titled "Petrus vs. Satanus" in the Foreign News section. The article used Father Walsh's pamphlet to report that the international Catholic community was being whipped into an irrational frenzy by paranoid leadership. Using Walsh's pamphlet as evidence, *Time* reported that Catholics in the U.S. and abroad were up in arms about badly out-of-date reports of persecution in Russia. *Time* claimed that the only recent anti-religious act perpetrated by the Soviet government was the banning of Passover matzah in Moscow. Despite this fact, the article continued, "a stupendous throng" of 60,000 gathered in St. Peter's Square to obediently answer Pope Pius XI's call to pray for persecuted Catholics in Russia. *Time* pointed out that the cartoons Walsh included in his pamphlet were from the early 1920s (which he had disclosed in his letter and telegram) and went on to insist that the acts of oppression described in the body of his pamphlet were all also nearly a decade old. *Time* concluded that Walsh himself had amplified anti-Catholic sentiment by circulating offensive Soviet cartoons in the United States. To underscore this point, *Time* reprinted one of the additional cartoons Father Walsh had mailed them. The deeply anti-Catholic cartoon, which parodied the eucharist with an image of a disemboweled Christ being eaten by caricatured Russian peasants, was one that Father Walsh

[143] Edmund A. Walsh, "Misleading the Public," *America,* April 12, 1930, 15.

had described in his telegram as especially, egregiously offensive. *Time* published the cartoon with the caption "A SOVIET POSTER… *broadcast to U.S Catholicism.*" [144]

The U.S. Catholic press seized on *Time's* affronts to Father Walsh, insisting that *Time* was not a valid journalistic outlet. Walsh re-printed his entire correspondence with *Time* in the Jesuit journal *America* under the title "Misleading the Public." The piece recounted his exchanges with the magazine's editors, concluding with the emphatic warning that Catholic readers should not trust *Time* magazine's reporting.[145] *The N.C.W.C. News Sheet,* an aggregate of stories from local Catholic papers compiled by the National Catholic Welfare Conference, published several stories on Father Walsh's encounter with *Time* throughout the month of April. In one, re-printed from *The Tablet*, the author criticized *Time's* charge that Father Walsh's information wasn't timely. "Father Walsh protests against the persecution and denounces the persecutors… Time comes along with pencil and paper and questions whether each job done by the same tyrants occurred in 1918, 1923, 1925 or 1929."[146] This author points out that *Time*'s stated investment in chronological detail missed Father Walsh's essential point, and provided recourse for the magazine to belittle and dismiss his efforts. Their allusion to *Time's* "pencil and paper" is especially apt, given that *Time* used printed claims to accuracy and objectivity to undermine Walsh and claim the superior perspective.

Just as they would do in response to accusations of antisemitism, *Time* referred to the objectivity and precision of their editorial process to render Catholic readers' complaints unreasonable. In response to an onslaught of angry letters and cancelled subscriptions, *Time*'s editors wrote a statement that they sent to Catholic periodicals and printed in their Letters

[144] "Petrus vs. Satanus," *Time,* March 31, 1930, 21.
[145] Edmund A. Walsh, "Misleading the Public," *America*, April 12, 1930, 15.
[146] Patrick F. Scanlan, "The Tablet states that…" *The N.C.W.C News Sheet,* April 21, 1930, 33.

column. The statement defended *Time's* actions with further recourse to the editor's meticulous adherence to facts. The magazine's staff, the statement claimed, had scrutinized every atrocity mentioned in Father Walsh's original pamphlet and concluded that only one occurred after 1923. This chronology, they went on, entitled them to undercut Father Walsh's research and re-print the offensive cartoon,

> There is no question that both pamphlet and cartoons were put forth in such a way as to persuade the Catholic priest or layman into thinking that the old era of anti-religious atrocities in Russia is in full swing. …TIME's sole function is to keep the record of facts as straight as it can. If the Soviet again reverts to savageries, TIME can be counted on to record them. Not only so, but TIME will continue to record trustworthy reports of any sort of religious persecution.[147]

In this statement the editors insisted that the magazine's "sole function" was the communication of facts, but also alluded to a secondary aim or function, shielding "the Catholic priest or layman" from becoming unnecessarily concerned about the state of Catholics in Russia. By characterizing Father Walsh's Catholic audience as in need of *Time's* rational, factual reporting, and insisting that they would report on valid acts of prejudice when they arose, *Time* reproduced old anti-Catholic tropes of Catholic credulity and groupthink, and further asserted the superior truth value of their editorial perspective.

Time's disputes with Walsh and Untermyer both coalesce around the magazine's tendency to glorify powerful political leadership, and exhibit how the editors' cloaked their politics with appeals to objectivity. In later decades *Time* would become a major critic of the Soviet Union, particularly regarding its position on organized religion. *Time's* defense of the Soviet Union in this instance, however, reflects the early magazine's strong proclivity to support political power and trivialize those who opposed it. Luce biographer W.A Swandberg writes that

[147] "Sirs: Various publications have…" April 17, 1930, Box 446, Folder 9, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Time's glorification of dictators resonated with Luce's confidence in political and business elites. In both instances, uneven distributions of wealth and power were celebrated and naturalized. This stance triggered Jewish readers' anxieties about German fascism, and Catholic readers' interlocking concerns about anti-religious communism abroad, and dismissive media representation at home.[148] The effects of *Time*'s journalism were justified by the editor's claim to "the facts," rendering the claim to objectivity an adjunct to the expression of cultural dominance.

Conclusion: Plans for Expansion

Several years into its second decade, Time Inc. faced a looming crisis of legitimacy. As Time Inc. grew, larger and more varied audiences noticed the media conglomerate's disturbing tendencies. In the years immediately following *Time's* confrontations with Walsh and Untermyer, Time Inc. threw tremendous resources into producing a revolutionary new magazine. In November of 1936, Time Inc. premiered *Life,* the United States' first affordable, mass market magazine comprised primarily of photography. *Life'*s immediate success, which will be discussed at length in Chapter Two, cemented Time Inc.'s status as a multi-media empire.[149]

Time Inc.'s expanded visibility drew further attention to the prejudices articulated in its flagship publication. Months before *Life* premiered, *The American Spectator* issued a warning about Time Inc.'s expansion. The more media Time Inc. produced, the literary magazine warned, the more audiences could see "the Fascist viewpoint emerging unmistakably.[150]After *Life's* premier, criticisms of *Time* came from a range of high-profile venues. Shortly after *Life's* triumphant debut, *The New Yorker* printed a profile of Luce written entirely in Timestyle. *The New Yorker's* Walcott Gibbs used *Time's* characteristic language to mock the magazine and

[148] Swandberg, *Luce and His Empire,* 70-71.
[149] Brinkley, *The Publisher,* 220-221.
[150] Hy Karvif, "Behind the Scenes of 'March of Time,'" *The American Spectator,* March 1936, 1-2.

paint Luce as power-hungry, secretive, and scheming. "Accused by many of Fascist leanings, of soaring journalistic ambition," Gibbs wrote, "much & conflicting is the evidence on Luce political faith, future plans."[151] In 1937, former *Time* editor Dwight MacDonald wrote a three-part exposé of Time Inc. for *The Nation.* MacDonald criticized Time Inc.'s politics in a more serious tone. Drawing on examples across *Time, Life* and *Fortune,* MacDonald argued that *Time'*s antisemitism and positive characterizations of dictators were only two examples of Time Inc.'s generalized contempt for anyone who did hold political and economic power.[152] Both articles framed *Time'*s antagonism toward religious minorities as evidence of authoritarian political leanings, and worried about the consequences of Time Inc.'s rapidly expanding audience.

Concern about the magazine's politics came from readers and Time Inc. employees alike. In early 1936, three junior writers wrote to Luce to address the widespread accusations that *Time* magazine was fascist. "I don't think anyone up here has ever thought *Time* was fascist in intention," they wrote, "It is however true that quite a lot of us think *Time* has a strong unconscious bias." The editors attached several examples, including *Time'*s derisive coverage of the French Prime Minister Leon Blum. Luce responded receptively. "Thanks for your notes and exhibits," he wrote. "This is the kind of 'steering' criticism which is most valuable to TIME at this stage in its career." [153] Almost a year later, Ralph Ingersoll, a respected editor who worked on both *Time* and *Fortune*, wrote Luce a long memo outlining how to change course. He began by confessing that he could identify with many of Time Inc.'s critics, writing "I can entirely understand those people who saw evidence that TIME's editors were well-fed, newly rich Yale

[151] Walcott Gibbs, "Time… Fortune… Life… Luce," *The New Yorker,* November 28, 1936, 25.
[152] Dwight MacDonald, "*Time, Fortune, Life,*" *The Nation,* May 22 1937, 583-586.
[153] "Harry: Walter Winchel's crack…" February 24, 1936, Box 446, Folder 26, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

boys."[154] Ingersoll's observation struck at the heart of Time Inc.'s problem. Thanks to its best-known magazine's religious prejudices and antagonistic tone, many had come to understand Time Inc. as a biased and partial news entity, overdetermined by the particular interests of socio-economic elites and members of the religious majority. During the interwar years, when communities across the U.S. were wrought with economic precarity and victimized by religious prejudice, Time Inc. established itself as an entity totally aloof from and dismissive of both prevailing social problems. In order for *Time* to maintain its impressive circulation figures without stoking popular anxiety, and for Time Inc.'s new and future products to find a large audience, they would have to create a different corporate persona. The premier of *Life* in November of 1936 made this task all the more urgent, and all the more complex.

[154] "Dear Harry…," 31 March 1937, Box 446, Folder 30, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Chapter 2: 'To See, and to Be Instructed:" Public Relations at the Dawn of Photojournalism

In late 1936, when asked about how Time Inc.'s sensational new *Life* magazine was faring, one company representative exclaimed, "Having *Life* isn't like having a baby. It's like having quintuplets."[155] The magazine's debut threw Time Inc. into disarray. *Life'*s first issue smashed through all established records of magazine circulation. The first run of 200,000 copies sold out within hours, and Time Inc. quickly determined that 1.5 million copies of *Life* needed to be printed weekly. This costly adjustment disorganized all pre-publication plans.[156] Time Inc.'s 1937 Annual Report to Stockholders indicated that the new magazine had lost the corporation $3,424,000. Yet, the future was bright. Stockholders were told that "LIFE is the magazine which millions of Americans like so much that, week after week, they pay more to read it than any group of people have ever paid for any magazine."[157] This level of visibility paid dividends that exceeded the bounds of any balance sheet. Time Inc. was now a massively visible arbiter of public tastes, a financial firm with the capacity to influence U.S. culture in myriad and untold ways through its exciting new media.

In making photojournalism more accessible, the periodical introduced the U.S. public to a novel way of apprehending local and world events. At the same time, the debut of this enormously popular new media product launched Time Inc. from a medium-sized firm, still deeply shaped by the founder's patrician sensibilities, to a massive media corporation, negotiating the values and desires of multiple complex constituencies. This chapter examines how these concurrent circumstances—Time Inc.'s introduction of photography and experience of

[155] Elson, *The World of Time Inc., Vol. 1,* 297.
[156] Elson, *The World of Time Inc., Vol. 1,* 297-298.
[157] "TIME INCORPORATED, NEW YORK: Annual Report to Stockholders, 1937." ProQuest Annual Reports.

fast and significant corporate growth—resulted in new standards and priorities for representing religion.

In the years following *Life'*s debut, Time Inc.'s media gradually and haltingly shed its overt antisemitism and anti-Catholicism. This shift might be read as a confirmation of existing historical narratives. Several studies have described the late 1930s as a moment of expanding pluralism, ecumenicism, and experimental religious seeking.[158] In this telling, the specter of global authoritarianism alongside a more open and varied marketplace of popular media encouraged white, middle-class U.S. Americans to assertively embrace an inclusive, ecumenical cosmopolitanism. According to Wendy L. Wall, "In the late 1930s and early 1940s, a growing number of opinion molders argued that a distinctive—indeed defining—feature of American life was the ability of diverse individuals to live together harmoniously."[159] These works have disproportionately defined "opinion molders" as liberal organizations like National Conference of Christians and Jews or the Religious Book Club.

While Time Inc.'s readers and editors were socially proximate to the "bookish New Yorkers" described in these studies, bringing the related questions of religious diversity and national identity into the corporate board room discloses a different set of motives and dynamics.[160] In this chapter, I document how the concurrent adoption of photography at *Life* and various "public relations" strategies across the corporation resulted in the gradual decision that Time Inc.'s media should "take sides" on contemporary issues, rather than aim to document "the facts." Efforts to define and stabilize Time Inc.'s overarching corporate purpose and tone were

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[158] Matthew Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012) 52-115, Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar American to its Protestant Promise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15-44, Wendy L. Wall, *Inventing the 'American Way:' The Politics of Consensus From the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 63-102.
[159] Wall, *Inventing the 'American Way,'* 64.
[160] Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion*, 112.

bound up with the larger problem of identifying how to wield the firm's new photographic medium. In response to considerable bad press in 1937, Luce and his colleagues undertook efforts to reform Timestyle and project a more trustworthy corporate persona. At the exact same time, *Life'*s photos presented new possibilities and problems for gaining public trust. In the course of these concurrent projects, editors consistently deferred to their own upper class, white Protestant judgements to discern what audiences should and should not see. So, unlike some of their contemporaries, Time Inc.'s gradual move away from its most offensive reporting and towards an assertion of positive values was not motivated by a desire to celebrate U.S. diversity in the face of ascendant fascism abroad. Rather, I argue that the corporation's gradual, often patchy efforts to find a corporate voice capable of retaining diverse readers was governed by uninterrogated Protestant assumptions and equally uninterrogated rubrics of "good taste."

In this chapter, I begin by showing how early efforts to determine *Life'*s photographic formula betrayed the editor's Protestant assumptions about religious others. Some of the magazine's first experiments with photojournalism evidence a failure to perceive that their readers might not share their subjective tastes. In the final sections of chapter, I return to *Time* to interpret how efforts to modify the magazine's signature written idiom unfolded according to similar dynamics. In his classic work on taste, the anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu writes that "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier."[161] In the late 1930s, when Time Inc. was still searching for its publications' appropriate outlook, content, and tone, the editors' determinations about what content was "in good taste" most often worked to mold public perception about the corporation itself.

[161] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* tans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 6.

Life Begins: Religious Outsiders and the Making of a Magazine

Just as *Time* had conveyed the 1920s' fervor for efficient production through bureaucratic organization, *Life* embodied the 1930s' volatile global politics. The magazine's origins, which are the subject of this section, reflect the technological innovation and tense religious politics that characterized the interwar years.

On a biographical level, the magazine's creation was motivated by Luce's personal life. In 1934, Luce met Clare Booth Brokaw at a dinner party. The two were in the same social orbit—Clare had spent several years as a managing editor at *Vanity Fair* (where she wrote an admiring profile of Luce in 1930), and in 1933 she left the magazine to pursue playwriting. After only several brief encounters at social events, Luce declared his all-encompassing love for Brokaw at a "Turkish ball" celebrating the Broadway premier of Cole Porter's *Anything Goes.* After a short period of intense emotional turmoil, Luce asked Lila Hotz Tyng for a divorce, and Henry and Clare Luce were married on November 23, 1935. [162] Years earlier, Clare had suggested that Condé Nast, *Vanity Fair's* parent company, produce a picture magazine similar to those already circulating in Europe.[163] After their engagement, she encouraged Luce to develop a photography magazine at Time Inc. Some contemporaries speculated that their shared excitement around producing the nation's first "picture magazine" animated the Luces' early romance.[164] In October of 1934 Luce hired Daniel Longwell, a former picture book editor from Doubleday, Doran and Company, to bring more photographic content to *Time.* In 1935, Longwell was transferred to a new Experimental Department dedicated to exploring the possibilities of

[162] Allan Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2010), 191.
[163] For more on early European photo magazines and their influence on *Life*, see Terry Gervais and Gaëlle Morelle, *The Making of Visual News: A History of Photography in the Press* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2017).
[164] For more detail on Clare Boothe Luce's role in the founding of *Life* magazine see Brinkley, *The Publisher,* 202-209, or James Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 82-86.

producing a publication dedicated entirely to photography.[165] Once plans for the magazine were finalized, Clare was excluded from editorial leadership.[166]

Clare was attuned to the technological advancements making the mass production of photography less expensive and labor intensive. One such development was the tiny new Leica camera. The device's small size allowed photographers to easily use it on the go, and the camera's exceptionally fast lens allowed more light to reach the film, eliminating the need for huge flash bulbs and improving the quality of indoor photography.[167] Meanwhile, new printing technologies enabled photographs to be printed with the speed and efficiency required for a mass magazine. Up until the early 1930s, most magazine photographs were printed using an ink made primarily of linseed oil, which set through air drying. This technology was too slow and delicate for a weekly photo magazine. Fortunately for Time Inc., the corporation's printer, the Chicago-based R.R. Donnelly & Sons, was at the forefront of experimenting with technologies to enhance the speed and quality of mass-produced photographic printing. At the end of 1935, just as Luce was returning from his honeymoon in Cuba, R.R. Donnelly & Sons successfully piloted a new petroleum-based ink that got very hot and dried quickly, so photos could roll through massive presses without smearing. *Life,* when it premiered, was a petroleum product.[168]

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[165] Dan Longwell Oral History Interviews, March 5 1956, Folder 2, Box 226, Daniel Longwell Papers, Columbia University Rare Books and Special Collections, New York, NY.

[166] Weeks before *Life* rolled out, several leading Time Inc. executives invited the Luces to diner. According to Clare's oral history reminiscences, both presumed that they were meeting to confirm her editorial position at the magazine. When the group convened, Ralph Ingersoll told the couple that their romance was distracting Luce from his duties. This unpleasant encounter was the first of repeated efforts to ensure that Clare, a successful writer and editor, could not meangingfully influence the content of *Life.* Her contributions were thereafter limited to rare, invited essays. Loudon Wainwright, *The Great American Magazine: An Inside History of Life* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 56-58.

[167] Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 84-86.

[168] Time Inc.'s long relationship with R.R. Donnelly & Sons (and the printer's anti-union labor politics) are discussed at length in Ellen Handy's "Printing *Life* at Magazine at R.R. Donnelly & Sons," in *LIFE Magazine and the Power of Photography* eds. Katherine A. Bussard and Kristen Gresh (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020): 86-97.

The development of *Life* was aided by technological and political circumstances alike. Time Inc.'s early forays into photojournalism benefitted from the influx of Jewish creatives fleeing Germany. In 1934, a German colleague wrote Luce to introduce Kurt Korff, a photography editor at the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung,* one of the European photo magazines that had inspired Clare during her years at *Vanity Fair*. After Adolf Hitler's election in 1933, Korff and his colleague Kurt Safranski left Germany to seek permanent employment in the U.S. publishing sector.[169] Starting in 1935, Korff and Longwell began a close collaboration. Longwell relied heavily on the recent immigrant for insight into how to select, organize and frame news photographs. He later recalled that Korff "… largely taught me what was a good a picture and what wasn't… he taught us to look at pictures for a little something more than the content."[170] At Longwell's urging, Korff also introduced Time Inc. to other experienced photojournalists fleeing the Nazi government.[171] One was Alfred Eisenstadt, who would become one of *Life*'s first and most lauded photographers.[172]

Korff's tenure at Time Inc. was brief but influential. On July 31, 1936, when plans for the first issue of *Life* were well underway, Korff wrote Luce to thank him for his one-year contract with Time Inc., which was not being renewed. "The spirit of your organization is my spirit too." He wrote, "It was easy for me – although I had to overcome the handicap of foreign language – making friends and working in this milieu with my usual joy, having fun in everything. … I am

[169] Letter from Frau Dr. Rosie Graefenberg to Mr. Luce, October 20, 1934. Folder 32, Box 356, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[170] Elson, *The World of Time Inc., Vol. I,* 272.
[171] Letter from Longwell to Kurt Korff, March 2, 1936. Folder 32, Box 356, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[172] Dan Longwell Oral History Interviews, March 5 1956, Folder 2, Box 226, Daniel Longwell Papers, Columbia University Rare Books and Special Collections, New York, NY. One of Eisenstadt's best-known photos features a sailor dramatically kissing a nurse in Times Square on V-J Day. The image first appeared in *Life* on August 27, 1945.

grateful to you for that. I am the only German who can really say: Heil Hitler!"[173] As Korff cheekily suggests, his contributions to *Life* were made possible by the ascent of Nazism. Thus, at the very same time that Jewish readers were accusing *Time* of stoking antisemitism, Time Inc. was benefitting from Jewish professionals' aesthetic expertise, made more readily available thanks to the rise of German fascism. When the first issue of *Life* was in production, Longwell sent Korff an advance copy. His attached note confessed, "I don't believe LIFE would ever have come into being if it hadn't been for you and Mr. Safranski coming to call on Mr. Luce that day."[174]

Religious others made vulnerable by the rise of global authoritarianism provided *Life's* creators with crucial backstage expertise, and served as early inspiration for photographic content. In September of 1935, when plans for a photography magazine were still uncertain, Longwell suggested that Time Inc. produce a photographic supplement to *Time* to capture Benito Mussolini's impending invasion of Ethiopia. Longwell presciently predicted that "a war, any sort of war, is going to be natural promotion. …. If the Italians march into Ethiopia and if eight days later we can have a magazine of the stands, it ought to sell 100,000."[175] While this proposal wasn't logistically feasible, Luce increased *Time's* usually negligible photography budget, allowing Longwell one of his first experiments with photographic storytelling. Longwell purchased photographs from Eisenstadt, who was on the ground in Ethiopia thanks to a European

[173] Letter from Mr. Korff to Mr. Luce, July 31, 1936. Folder 32, Box 356, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[174] Letter from Dan Longwell to Kurt Korff, November 19, 1936. Folder 32, Box 356, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[175] Elson, *The World of Time Inc. Vol 1,* 271.

photography agency. The document that resulted was *Life*'s first "dummy," or unpublished sample issue, a section of which is shown below.[176]

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 3: Two pages from *Life*'s first "dummy." Eisenstadt's images of Ethiopian Christianity, shown above, were never published. In January 1936 *Time* named Haile Selassie "Man of the Year" for 1935, and published several other images from Longwell's dummy. Photographed at the Daniel Longwell Papers, Folder 3, Box 227, Columbia University Rare Books and Special Collections, New York, NY.

In his "dummy," Longwell assumed that the religious gestures of racialized others would make a compelling spectacle for U.S. readers. His pasted and stapled packet of photos from Ethiopia had a decisive role in launching *Life* magazine and anticipated the publication's longstanding interest in representing religion. Rather than chronicling the triumph of Ethiopian forces over Italy's invading army, Longwell's unpublished predecessor to *Life* aspired to "tell people what Ethiopia is like" via photography of the Ethiopian Coptic Church. Importantly, the objective that animates these photos is not primarily news-y. Rather than depicting a series of pressing contemporary events, the turn to photography initiated an effort to capture the truer and more ephemeral elements of a culture.

[176] On February 28, 1951, Daniel Longwell sent this compilation of photographs to Time Inc.'s Archives, with a note identifying it as *Life*'s earliest inspiration. "This document I suggest should be carefully preserved…," Folder 19, Box 446, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

The images Longwell selected, captioned, and wove together provide a seminal example of how Protestant assumptions would organize *Life*'s religion photography for decades to come. A photograph of three people bowing deeply was contrasted with a portrait of a priest draped in thick robes holding an ornate, decorated staff. The pairing of these photographs suggested that Ethiopian Christianity was shaped by a dramatically uneven power dynamics and peopled by unthinking supplicants. In an attached document, Longwell offered drafts of possible captions for the assembled images. One read, "a Coptic priest (center) reads from a Bible in a jargon of Greek and Arabic which neither he nor his parishioners fully understand."[177] The negative appraisal of Ethiopian Christianity that emerges across these images and caption are premised on two fundamentally Protestant sensibilities. First, the uninterrogated impetus to critique ostensibly over-powerful clerics registers enduring anti-Catholic anxieties around domineering religious authority. Second, the condescending accusation that neither priest nor congregant could "understand" their scripture reflects the long-standing the Protestant investment in transparency and "clarity in discourse," as opposed to complexity, poetics, or esotericism.[178] What's more, Longwell failed to recognize that Ethiopian Coptic services were held in the liturgical language of Ge'ez. Finally, these images are organized around an ambition to disclose "what Ethiopia is like," thereby eliding an apparently unfair, ill-informed religious culture with an entire population's essential essence. When the Luces received a copy of Longwell's "dummy" during their honeymoon, Henry determined decisively that Time Inc. would launch a new photography magazine.[179]

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[177]"EMPORER HALLIE SELASSIE," Undated, Folder 3, Box 227, Daniel Longwell Papers, Columbia University Rare Books and Special Collections, New York, NY.
[178] Here 'I am borrowing language from Robert Yelle, *Language of Disenchantment: Protestant Literalism and Colonial Discourse in British India* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 28.
[179]"This document I suggest should be carefully preserved…," Folder 19, Box 446, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Longwell's attached commentary and personal jottings indicate that he assumed racialized, non-Protestant religions would be a reliable source of photographic intrigue for U.S. readers. In the note he attached to the dummy, Longwell suggested that Father Divine's Peace Mission Movement would be another excellent subject for a photo series. Among his correspondences leading up to *Life'*s premier and during the magazine's early months were efforts to secure photographs of a Bavarian woman with stigmata, "the best possible picture of any Cardinal," and an unnamed Indian yogi living in London.[180] As these formative documents suggest, representations of religion quickly became a *Life* mainstay, and those images would typically be framed within the editors' Protestant judgments.

*Life'*s premier issue, for example, included a photographic spread on a Catholic school for Chinese children in San Francisco. The article imagined the school as odd and ineffective, explaining, "… for five hours a day, nine years of their lives, they read, pray, sing, and play in the U.S. manner under the tutelage of nine-black clad nuns of the St. Joseph order. But when the 3 o'clock bell clangs the end of school, home they skip to Chinatown to lapse again into the speech of their ancestors."[181] *Life'*s figuring of the students' enduring connections to Chinese languages and communities as a "lapse" glibly naturalized the superiority of white, U.S. culture for the benefit of predominantly white, U.S. readers. In this example and myriad others, the magazine's captions functioned like *Time'*s contentious adjectives. Like Timestyle, *Life*'s religion photography created a view of the world that centered whiteness, Americanness, and Protestantism, and bathed it in a patina of objectivity. These sorts of condescending spot features, however, did not constitute a unified guiding approach or editorial formula. *Life'*s first

[180] See correspondences with various foreign news photography agencies throughout 1936 and 1937, Folder 7, Box 227, Daniel Longwell Papers, Columbia University Rare Books and Special Collections, New York, NY.
[181] "Chinese School," *Life,* November 23, 1936, 24-25.

several years of publication would be dedicated to determining, often through trial and error, how images could be put to good use.

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 4: A photo spread from *Life* magazine's first issue. Spectacle is created through both the looming black figures of the nuns, who are denied faces, and the exotic outfits of the school children. *Life*, November 23, 1936, 24-25.

"Nice, Cute Doggies-Woggies:" Discerning Desirable Photographic Subjects

Echoing *Time's* fraught claim to objective representation through the distillation of "facts," *Life* presented tightly curated arrangements of images, authorized by photography's unique claim to transparent representation. This impulse comes through clearly in *Life's* poetic prospectus. It's opening paragraph read:

> To see life; to see the world; to eyewitness great events; to watch the faces of the poor and the gestures of the proud; to see strange thing—machines, armies, multitudes, shadows in the jungle and on the moon; to see man's work—his paintings, towers and discoveries; to see things thousands of miles away, things hidden behind walls and within rooms; things dangerous to come to; the women that men love and many children; to see and to take pleasure in seeing, to see and be amazed, to see and be instructed.[182]

Embedded in this catalogue of potential photographic subjects are powerful assumptions about the naturalness of social hierarchies. "The faces of poor," are contrasted with "the gestures of the proud," imagining a political terrain wherein the poor cannot be proud, but might benefit from

[182] "NOT FOR PUBLICATION: A Prospectus for a New Magazine," August 1936, Folder 26, Box 431, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

witnessing a proud gesture. In a similar move, the prospectus promises images of "the women that men love and many children," rendering women's visibility in terms of their attractiveness to men and procreative capacities. The final lines of this opening paragraph disclose how Time Inc. imagined their publics would receive photographic content. The expectation that readers would be "instructed" expresses what Erika Doss calls the magazine's "overt educational imperative," wherein photographs were imagined as "didactic tools" capable of directly influencing viewers.[183] *Life'*s prospectus thus intimates that the magazine could instantiate the prospectus's naturalized social hierarchies by representing them photographically.

Unlike *Time,* which was intended to canvas important current events, *Life'*s charge was to catalogue photogenic moments. *Life'*s purview included science, the arts, current events, sports, and popular culture, which were all organized into rotating departments. While *Time* was built around columns that appeared reliably every week, some issues of *Life* would carry a feature in the Science or Theatre department, while the next one might not. Luce determined that the quality and availability of photos would decide each department's weekly fate. *Life,* he said, "is not obliged to report on all the significant news: its obligation is to report in pictures all the significant news which the camera has succeeded in making a pictoral record of."[184] This flexible focus provided the magazine's editors with substantial latitude to include or exclude whatever they deemed sufficiently amazing or instructive on any given week.

It wasn't long before this openness presented problems. Once the magazine was in circulation determining what, precisely, constituted *Life'*s capacious charge to "amaze" and "instruct" emerged as a complex challenge. Indeed, *Life* staffer Loudon Wainwright later wrote

[183] Erika Doss, "Introduction," in *Looking at* Life *Magazine* (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001), 8.
[184] Baughman, *Henry R. Luce*, 90.

that the early issues were a "very much a grab bag" united mostly by a "note of prideful chauvinism."[185] Finding a more unified outlook prompted repeated efforts to articulate a stable editorial formula. In one such effort, Luce insisted that the nature of the magazine's unique medium meant it must inevitably emphasize the positive, wholesome, and charming. Amidst a larger reflection on Time Inc.'s animating values, Luce indulged colorful language to describe how images provoke affects:

> It is in the nature of LIFE to be <u>for</u> things. LIFE likes life. … And curiously this attitude of LIFE's was not an invention in an editor's mind. It arose from the nature of pictures, so far as we know about pictures. You simply cannot take a wholly dispassionate, a wholly aloof attitude toward pictures. You print a picture of a dog, and most of the time you simply cannot say simply 'this is a dog,' – you have to say 'Isn't this a nice, cute doggy-woggy' or – 'I never saw such damn mongrel son of a bitch.' – So, if you are going to edit a picture magazine, you have to make up your mind whether you are going to print mostly pictures of nice doggies or mostly of mongrel bitches. Unless you are definitely morbid or sadistic, your decision will inevitably be to seek pictures of nice doggies. That is, you will desire and plan to sing out the good news and you will sing out the bad news only when you are compelled to do so by conscience or journalistic necessity.[186]

In this memo, Luce uses a canine metaphor to set up a stable binary. In his formulation, images of the benign or charming, the "nice, cute doggy-woggy," provoke simple, positive emotions, while images of the aberrant or disgusting provoke strong, negative feelings. His elaboration of this binary betrays two important assumptions. First, Luce's evocation of the term "mongrel" resonated with contemporary discourses around race and racial purity. The causal use of this loaded language provides insight into the logics that resulted in images and captions like the one of the Chinese Catholic school children in the first issue. At the same time, his determination that to print charming photos was to "sing out the good news" makes clear reference to Christianity's

[185] Wainwright, *The Great American*, 75-76.
[186] "The Principles, Policies, Attitudes Etc. Which Govern and Motivate Time Inc." January 18, 1938, Folder 1, Box 414, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

"good news." Luce thus subtly elides photographs of the unappealing with the racialized, and imagines the work of circulating charming photographs in Christian terms.

What Luce failed to account for in his "nice, cute doggy woggy" formulation is the complex, often equivocal nature of the moods provoked by images. Cultural theorist Sianne Ngai argues, for instance, that the "cuteness" Luce confidently conjures here is a particularly complex aesthetic judgment, which evokes "a desire in us not just to lovingly molest, but also to aggressively protect."[187] Luce's felt need to produce such simplistic aphorisms about the nature of photographs suggests that *Life's* first forays into instructive imagery were not as clean and simple as the editors apparently hoped. In the words of Terry Smith, the debut of *Life* "dramatically shifted the weight of Time Inc.'s energy from the elite to the popular."[188] With this shift came expanded audiences, whose reactions to *Life's* photography were varied, complex, multivocal and unpredictable. It quickly became clear that efforts to "amaze" and "instruct" through images were not as easy as denouncing the aberrant and pointing-up the appropriate.

The Birth of a Baby and the Unpredictable Reception of Images

As they had been with *Time,* religious audiences' reactions to *Life's* journalistic experiments were forceful and formative. This was especially true of *Life's* earliest efforts to circulate overtly educational content. On April 11, 1938, two years into the magazines' lifespan, *Life's* editors decided to aid in public health efforts initiated by The American Committee on Maternal Welfare. In 1936, the medical organization produced a film intended to address the concerning incidence of maternal fatality by promoting public understanding of the birthing

[187] Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 4.
[188] Terry Smith, "*Life*-style Modernity: Making Modern America," in *Looking at Life,* ed. Doss, 27.

process. The film, titled *The Birth of Baby,* was a dramatization of a woman learning about her pregnancy, visiting doctors, and ultimately delivering a baby. As of 1938, it had only been shown to private audiences for educational purposes. Roy Larsen, Time Inc.'s circulation manager, recalled that, "the fact that the picture was around was general knowledge." After a series of discussions, Larsen and his colleagues determined that *Life* should publish a series of stills from *The Birth of a Baby*, alongside an article about its production.[189]

Printing photographs drawn from the film, they determined, would be sophisticated but provocative, an opportunity to use photographs to expand the limits of what was considered polite to discus in public. The magazine had recently received positive feedback for a photo essay on cancer research (which included an image of a naked breast) and the editors determined that *Life* might make a niche for itself in the field of medical journalism. "Sure, it was bold," Larsen recalled, "but I thought it was in line with our own journalistic principles."[190] Cognizant that the film stills might be received as indelicate, the editors sent a letter to subscribers, warning them about the forthcoming feature. The letter promised that it's photographic treatment of maternal welfare would be "wholly and sincerely frank," "responsible," "dignified" and "scientific." In other words, it promised that it would conform to taken-for-granted rubrics of middle-class taste. Further shoring up this assumption, the letter concluded with a series of quotes from doctors and other experts affirming the accuracy and importance of *The Birth of a Baby.*[191] The article that appeared included no nudity at all, and the images representing birthing

[189] Tape Interview with Roy Larsen, Part II, July 3, 1957. Folder 12, Box 280, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[190] Tape Interview with Roy Larsen, Part II, July 3, 1957. Folder 12, Box 280, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[191] "This letter is advanced notice…," April 4, 1938, Folder 19, Box 432, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

were all schematic line drawings. The standards of "tastefulness" presumed here, however, were not universally accepted.

The article launched an explosive controversy. An interdenominational variety of Christian clergy and laypeople snapped into action, boycotting the magazine and bombarding Time Inc. with angry mail. Most significantly, The Knights of Columbus successfully called on law enforcement agencies across the country to remove the magazine from newsstands.[192] The first municipality to ban the magazine was in the Bronx, where the District Attorney stated that the magazine violated a law against "the possession and sale of lewd, lascivious, obscene literature or pictures."[193] A total of forty-five U.S. cities, including Memphis, Tennessee, St. Louis, Missouri, Portland, Maine and New Orleans, Louisiana, made legal efforts to prevent the sale of the magazine, resulting in tens of thousands of issues being seized from newsstands.[194] These efforts climaxed in an elaborate trick wherein a plainclothes police officer summoned Larsen to the Bronx to discuss the magazine's legal issues, asked him to make change for a quarter, and then promptly arrested him claiming that Larsen's receipt of the currency constituted a sale of the magazine in a region where it was banned.[195]

An internal report summarizing the mail received in response to *The Birth of a Baby* found that the visuality of the article was a consistent cause of moral outrage. For example, the report found that "the general attitude of men writing was 'How would you like such pictures

[192] Tape Interview with Roy Larsen, Part II, July 3, 1957. Folder 12, Box 280, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[193] "Controversy Over Publication by Life Magazine of Photographs from the Film 'The Birth of a Baby,'" April 8, 1938, Folder 19, Box 432, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[194] "The attached is the most complete list…," April 15, 1938. Folder 19, Box 432, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[195] Tape Interview with Roy Larsen, Part II, July 3, 1957. Folder 12, Box 280, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY. Time Inc. archivist Samantha Brown offers a summary of this incident, alongside a reflection on her discovery of the incriminating quarter amidst other corporate paperwork, in "LIFE's Mysterious Quarter," available at: https://blog.nyhistory.org/lifes-mysterious-quarter. Accessed February 23, 2022.

taken of your wife?'" suggesting that visualizing women's healthcare would certainly cause embarrassment or shame. Many readers, especially those affiliated with Christian organizations, complained that visualizing content related to sex and sexuality was fundamentally "indecent," and that the magazine was endorsing loose sexual morality. One outraged reader wrote that *Life* had "crassly publicized something so solemn, great and wonderful, that it should rightly be shrouded in secrecy."[196] For this reader, the very visibility that *Life* was premised on was precisely the problem. Concerns about *Life'*s *The Birth of Baby* were representative of larger anxieties about the moral capacities of visual media. In the 1930s, mass media, and especially visual mediums like cinema, were subjected to strict censorship codes, often authored by clergy.[197] Like *Life'*s editors themselves, readers invested in censoring depictions of sex assumed that audiences were malleable and imitative, that if people saw something represented on the page or on the screen, they were much more likely to do it. The rubrics each party used to determine what kinds of behaviors photography would cultivate, and how, were by no means universal.

Although the case against Larsen, and all other efforts to penalize Time Inc. for the publication of stills from *The Birth of a Baby*, were dismissed, the incident presented the corporation with a series of problems to consider. First, *The Birth of a Baby* imbroglio demonstrated that if substantially offended by photographic content, readers and advertisers alike could negatively impact the corporate bottom line. Several of *Life'*s advertisers made it known that they did not want their products associated with any publication stoking public conflict,

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[196] "Unfavorable letters received on 'The Birth of a Baby,'" June 7, 1938. Folder 19, Box 432, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

[197] For discussions of Catholics' role in media censorship, see Una M. Cadogan, *All Good Books Are Catholic Books: Print Culture, Censorship and Modernity in Twentieth Century America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: 2013) and Thomas Dougherty's *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007) and *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema; 1930-1934* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999).

intentionally or otherwise.[198] What's more, the conflict dovetailed with Time Inc.'s existing tensions with Catholic audiences. Finally, it became strikingly evident that what emerged as tasteful to Larsen and his colleagues appeared indecent to large swaths of readers. Editing *Life* was not so simple as selecting for photos of "nice, cute doggy woggies." The impulse to educate pivoted around the editor's presumptions of what was tasteful and edifying, and these standards were by no means shared.

Almost exactly a year later, *Life* experimented with visualizing and decrying a dangerous element in U.S. life—the domestic far right. During the interwar years racist and fascist tendencies blossomed in the United States as they did in Europe. From Father Charles Coughlin's virulent antisemitic radio tirades to Willian Dudley Pelley's "silver shirt" movement, the 1930s saw a marked uptick in organized far-right activity in the U.S.[199] Shortly after *Time* exhibited a tendency to tacitly endorse dictatorial power abroad, *Life* made a point of denouncing authoritarian leanings when they emerged at home. From roughly 1937 to 1939, the magazine printed occasional short stories raising alarm about the U.S.'s flourishing array of far-right groups.[200] On March 9, 1939 the magazine published, "Fascism in America," its first long form piece addressing far-right tendencies in the United States. The article began with an alarming full-page photo of U.S. Nazi-sympathizers blandishing a massive banner of George Washington alongside smaller flags with swastikas. *Life* then went on to reproduce several examples of antisemitic propaganda. "LIFE, believing that public exposure is the best treatment for such

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[198] "Several advertisers have complained…," April 22, 1938, Folder 19, Box 432, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

[199] For a discussion of the U.S. far right during the interwar period, see Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1983).

[200] See for example, "The American Nazis Claim 200,000 Members," *Life,* March 29, 1937, 20, "German-Americans and Italian-Americans Hold a Fascist Rally at Yaphank," *Life,* September 13, 1937, 30-31, "Nazis Hail George Washington as First Fascist," *Life,* Mach 7, 1938, 17, "Coughlin Praised," *Life* January 30, 1939, 14,

festering sores in the body politic," the magazine wrote, "herewith reproduces some of their work." This double page spread was followed by four full pages profiling domestic far-right leaders under the headline, "THESE ARE MEN TO WATCH."[201]

The "Letters to the Editor" published three weeks later indicate that the feature provoked a disturbingly mixed response. Guy Emery Shipler, who was identified as the editor of New York City's *Churchman* magazine, declared that "It is a striking demonstration of the evidential power of the picture, it is worth more than thousands of words in uncovering for the benefit of your readers a menace which has only recently been suspected by the people of the United States." Other printed letters, however, suggested that not all readers interpreted the groups depicted as a "menace," nor did they imagine that their exposure was a "benefit" to readers. One reader wrote, "Why, I could laugh without half trying at these puffed-up, bellowing little men!" and credited *Life* for appropriately lampooning domestic fascists, rather than describing them as a credible threat. Still other letters indicated that some of *Life's* readers subscribed to the ideologies the magazine sought to condemn. One thanked the magazine for spotlighting such "American patriots," while another threated to burn down the magazine's offices to stop them from further advancing Jewish conspiracies.[202] In a May 12, 1939 memo, one editor cryptically reported that although the magazine presumed it's representation of domestic fascism was appropriately stern and condemning, "the exposure seems on balance to have done more harm than good."[203] As the editors continued to experiment with *Life's* photographic pedagogy, and craft Time Inc.'s outlook more broadly, the concerningly mixed response to "Fascism in America" became an influential touch point.

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[201] "Fascism in America," *Life,* March 6, 1939, 57-63.
[202] "Letters to the Editors," *Life,* March 27, 1939, 2.
[203] Memo Messrs. Luce, Larsen, Hodgins, Gottfried, Grover, Davenport, May 12, 1939, Folder 7, Box 414, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

"The soul of man is in his words; the fate of a nation in its sentences:" Applying Public Relations to Time Inc.'s Tone

Efforts to determine what counted as edifying, appropriate, and saleable photographic content were simultaneous with Time Inc.'s first effort to adopt a coherent "public relations" strategy. With *Life* commanding a massive audience, and *Time* and *Fortune* enjoying steady success, Time Inc. confronted what one of the corporation's later public relation's reports would call "the problem of power."[204] In this instance, power became problematic when audiences grew suspicious of Time Inc.'s outsized cultural influence. The emergent discourse and practice of public relations was explicitly intended to diffuse such concerns. In *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Business*, Roland Marchand describes public relations as "the corporate quest for social and moral legitimacy," spurred by increasing worry that large corporations would overpower "the traditional potency of the family, the church, and the local community." Marchand goes on to write that many firms practiced this search for moral legitimacy by "uniting the interests of the corporation with the interest the people and the nation" through advertising, employment policies, and public events.[205] Marchand's overview is instructive for interpreting how public relations efforts unfolded at Time Inc. First, his observation that corporations sought to defray fears about corporate power overwhelming religious institutions draws attention to Time Inc.'s efforts to appease religious critics, and later, the corporation's increasing use of religious idioms to describe its activities. Additionally, Marchand's observation that public relations sought to align

[204] "A REPORT ON THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OF TIME INC." February 2, 1943, Folder 4, Box 443, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[205] Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Business* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 2998), 1-3.

the corporation with "the nation" foretells Time Inc.'s increasing use of nationalist discourses to describe the corporation's aims as its prominence increased.

Ralph Ingersoll, the editor who earlier worried that Time Inc.'s public perceived them as "well-fed, newly rich Yale boys," spearheaded public relations efforts at Time Inc.[206] In one of the first memos on the topic, he wrote that to gain public trust, the corporation needed to change the story it told about itself. The goal was to depict Time Inc. as a well-meaning participant in national life, rather than a self-interested, domineering force. A narrative he called "success, success, success," wherein two precocious college men produced the newest, cleverest magazine, needed to be replaced with one of "service, service, service," which would situate *Time* as "the best damn information service of its kind."[207] Bethany Moreton has argued that the common business jargon of "service" draws on longstanding Christian tropes of humility and self-sacrifice.[208] Moreton's analysis is certainly true in this case. Rather than overwhelming traditional, religious sources of cultural authority, Time Inc. could mimic their call to public service. What's more, Time Inc.'s public relations would need to embody a greater level of ecumenism. Ingersoll went on to advise direct, open, and consistent conversation with the "Jewish and Catholic TIME-baiters" who had protested *Time'*s content during the magazine's first decade.[209]

The impulses evident in this memo bore out in Time Inc.'s efforts to produce a more steady and saleable tone. While *Life's* editors experimented with the appropriate uses of

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[206] "Dear Harry…," 31 March 1937, Box 446, Folder 30, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[207] Correspondence to Mr. Luce from Mr. Ingersoll, March 26, 1937, Box 446, Folder 30, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[208] Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Walmart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 67-85.
[209] Correspondence to Mr. Luce from Mr. Ingersoll, March 26, 1937, Box 446, Folder 30, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

photographs, efforts to reform Timestyle were underway. In 1937, Time Inc. leadership began plans for a revised style guide. The 1938 style guide exhibited a substantial shift away from the chiding antagonism Hadden instituted in the late 1920s. In a significant aesthetic departure, the 1938 style guide opened with a philosophical quote. The guide's cover page contained a reflection on the power of language from David Urquhardt, a nineteenth-century Scottish diplomat: "It is by thoughts that States are built up. It is by thoughts that States are brought down. But thoughts pass through speech, and speech is a matter of habit… Nations then are changed by their speech. The soul of man is in his words; the fate of a nation in its sentences." The serious stakes implied here represent a substantial change from the jocular, ironic tone encouraged by Hadden's first style guide eleven years earlier. While Hadden had encouraged writers to emphasize the singular traits of individuals, just over a decade later writers were encouraged to conceive of themselves as creators of a national collectivity.

Further evidence that *Time* was trying to re-orient the writers' approach appeared on the guide's first page of instructions. One underlined statement, "Avoid the use of adjectives," indicates that Timestyle was undergoing substantial reform.[210] For over a decade, adjectives allowed writers to poke fun, cast aspersions, and inject judgment. By 1938, this stance was no longer encouraged. With the new style guide, Time Inc. was directing *Time*'s writers toward a style of journalism that took seriously mass media's capacity to shape public morals, thereby enacting public relations' demands to "serve" readers and unite the interests of the corporation with the interests of the nation.

Other elements of the 1938 style guide suggest that Time Inc. was attempting to manage how *Time* discussed religion. For the first time, *Time*'s style guide contained a six-page

[210] "TIME STYLE BOOK," Undated, 1938, Box 447, Folder 2, Time Inc. subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

subsection on religion writing. Despite the fact that *Time*'s Religion column routinely covered non-Christian subjects. The rules provided in the religion subsection were only relevant to discussions of Christianity, most of the new religion section listed various Protestant denominations' specific organizational nomenclatures. In a few instances, writers were advised on how to indicate differences between Catholics and Protestants, as in how to distinguish between Catholic, Episcopal and Methodist Bishops. The guide also contained a precise summary of the Vatican hierarchy and instructions for describing the different roles therein.[211] The revised style guide, however, failed to curtail the magazine's well-known antisemitism. In a memo to his colleagues, Ingersoll proposed that the new style guide "ban the use of the word Jew as an adjective proceeding a proper name." He suggested that prohibiting the use of "Jew" as an adjective would both "remove 75% of the taste of Anti-Semitism," and second, save Time Inc. the labor cost of three printed letters.[212] The memo received no reply, and the 1938 style guide failed to include Ingersoll's proposed ban.

Continued complaints from Catholic readers demonstrate that detailed instructions on how to refer to representatives of the Church missed the heart of the matter. In November of 1939, less than two years after *Life'*s imbroglio over *The Birth of a Baby* article, Francis P. Matthews, the Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, sent Luce a notarized copy of an official resolution passed during the Knights' most recent Supreme Council. The resolution accused *Time* of "flagrant and deplorable attacks upon the Catholic Church and its beloved Bishops and Clergy" and promised that "effective and vigorous steps will be adopted to register the wholehearted indignation of the Catholic people throughout the country." This statement was followed by an exhaustive, five-page list of articles that had

[211] "TIME STYLE BOOK," Undated, 1938, Box 447, Folder 2, Time Inc. subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[212] Memo from Mr. Ingersoll to Messrs. Gottfried and Norris, undated 1938, Box 414, Folder 2, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY

most offended the Church during the previous year.[213] The intimation that U.S. Catholics might take organized action against *Time* certainly rang out after the Knights of Columbus's successful efforts to rally local law enforcement around the cause of outlawing *Life's* piece on *The Birth of a Baby.* In keeping with the corporation's new approach, Luce offered to meet with Matthews immediately.[214]

Internal correspondences from the late 1930s indicate that *Time's* antisemitism also endured. In October of 1939, for example, one junior *Time* writer wrote directly to Luce, earnestly requesting that he do something about antisemitism in the magazine. "I have all too frequently heard Time Inc. (and especially Time magazine) accused of being anti-semitic," he wrote, "I prefer to think we are not. And yet I must acknowledge that I myself have found instances wherein this supposition appears very much like fact. I am writing to you, Mr. Luce, because somehow I feel certain this cannot possibly spring from you. … You <u>will</u> do something to keep us from being anti anything – except injustice – won't you?"[215] This writer's plaintive appeal suggests that Time Inc.'s nascent public relations efforts were not effectively improving the reputation or content of *Time* magazine.

Although halting and piecemeal, Time Inc. ultimately prioritized reducing offensive writing, and eliminated "Timestyle" entirely. One memo from Luce to *Time's* writers discloses that while reader complaints were not stymied by the new style guide, Time Inc. leadership was increasingly invested in honoring offended readers' concerns. In a 1939 memo to *Time's* editors Luce wrote that, "The first job of the <u>Letters</u> column is to do justice by correcting errors or unfairnesses which may have harmed people. If in any week dull correction letters would fill up

[213] Correspondence from Francis P. Matthews to Henry R. Luce, November 6, 1939, Box 447, Folder 16, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[214] Correspondence from Henry R. Luce to Francis P. Matthews, November 11, 1939, Box 447, Folder 16, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[215] "Dear Mr. Luce…," October 19, 1939, Box 447, Folder 13, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

the whole Letters section, making a dull if not shameful section, then that's just too bad—and may it incite the Managing Editors to incite the editorial department to make fewer unfairnesses."[216] Luce's admission that *Time* "harmed people" and committed "unfairnesses" was a fry cry from the instructions he issued five years earlier, warning his writers not to "become saps" by taking reader complaints seriously.[217]

Ultimately, however, it was a judgment of taste, rather than an effort to avoid offense, that provoked the decision to abandon "Timestyle" completely. In 1939, *Time* staff writer Sidney Olson penned a particularly flowery report on the death of a panda at a local zoo. To conclude the short column, Olson wrote, "And just like all pandas, death came to Pandora." When the copy crossed Luce's desk, he immediately deemed it too ridiculous to print. Sixteen years after Hadden crafted Timestlye to enact the magazine's twin promises of color and brevity, Luce concluded that his writers were not capable of using the style within the bounds of good taste. Wielding Olson's panda story as the negative example, Luce announced the decisive end of Timestlye. "After that," Olson recalled, "No one dared to use it."[218]

While Time Inc.'s recent history of antisemitism and anti-Catholicism were not ultimately behind Luce's determinative decision to cease the use of Timestlye, this history emerged as influential with regards to *Life'*s approach to photography. In 1939, Time Inc. employed the council of Edward Bernays, a seminal theorist of mass media, popular persuasion, and public relations. Bernays was famously the nephew of Sigmund Freud. He made his name by

[216] Correspondence from Mr. Luce to Messrs. Norris, Matthews, Larson and Stillman, August 23, 1939, Box 447, Folder 13, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[217] Correspondence from Mr. Luce to all TIME Staff, October 15 1934, Box 446, Folder 21, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[218] Sidney Olson Reminiscence of HRL, March 1967, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

applying his uncle's theories to mass media, advertising, and business.[219] It was under Bernays's guidance that Time Inc. brought greater specificity to Luce's "nice doggy-woggy" philosophy of photographs. Notes on a meeting with Bernays indicate that Time Inc. executives asked him how to handle domestic fascism and antisemitism, with particular refence to *Life'*s March 6, 1939 "Fascism in America" feature. The summary of this meeting shows that Bernays began by walking the assembled executives through Jews and Catholic's differing approaches to antisemitism and anti-Catholicism. According to Bernays, many journalists, professors and liberal Jews advanced an "exposure" approach to antisemtism and domestic fascism. This approach held that, "if ills and abuses are exposed to public view the public will see that they are cured," thus, reporting on the far-right was a step towards its eventual eradication.

Bernays, however, counselled the opposite approach. In his telling, the Catholic Church and the National Conference of Christians and Jews held that because "most minds are not scientific in their approach to problems," reporting on bigotry would simply give those ideas greater visibility and potentially increase their spread. This, the assembled executives speculated, may have been the unintended result of their "Fascism in America" series. Bernays advised that very few audiences were "immune to contagion," meaning that Time Inc. should always avoid discussing any undesirable social phenomena, lest they catch on. Instead, the magazines should only advance positive proscriptions. Bernays concluded that "It can report active efforts to build up tolerance and civil liberties. But it should report them as positive efforts, the 'for' angle, not the "against" angle."[220]

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[219] For more on Edward Bernays, see Lawrence R. Samuel, *Freud on Madison Avenue Motivation Research and Subliminal Advertising in America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).
[220] "Re: Antisemitism," May 12, 1939, 1939, Folder 7, Box 414, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

The existing determination that *Life* would emphasize "nice doggy-woggies" now took on a particularly political edge. Photographs should exceed just charming readers, they should be used to inspire commitment to the editor's desired positive political stances. Because readers were so malleable, and images were so seductive, using photographs to inform audiences about racism, maternal health, or any other complex subject was too risky. In short, pictures needed to be used to guide, rather than inform. From spring 1939 on, *Life* would only make positive statements and proscriptions. The escalating European war would quickly supply the magazine with ample opportunity to advance statements of positive purpose.

Impending War and Public Responsibility: Luce's Address at William's College

As Time Inc. labored to smooth over and stabilize the magazine's outlook and tone, Luce's missionary upbringing and continued, high-profile participation in the Presbyterian church offered him entrée into conversations and events that would prove beneficial to Time Inc.'s revised public image. Less than a year after Ingersoll created his public relations plan, Luce spoke at a conference at the Williams College Institute of Human Relations, sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. The conference, which was attended by approximately 750 Jewish, Catholic and Protestant teachers, clergy and lay people, hosted a broad conversation about how radio, films and the press shaped public morality.[221] Luce and several other publishers were prompted to prepare speeches that responded to the question, "What must the press do to meet its public responsibility?" Luce's address positioned journalism, and particularly *Life*'s photographic journalism, as fundamental to the values that underscored U.S. nationhood.

[221] "Preliminary Report on the 1937 Williamstown Institute of Human Relations," Box 29, Folder 3, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

He began by comparing the United States to Europe, claiming that the rise of fascism was attributable to the "venal and emasculated" state of European journalism. Luce then went on to describe the kinds of content keeping U.S. journalism vital, by way of an example from *Life.* "A few weeks ago LIFE published an article on wheat—I mean wheat, growing and being happily harvested." Luce bragged, "Now can you imagine any non-photographic magazine, intended to interest millions of readers, daring to devote its first nine pages to a descriptive contemplation of the fruitful and normal and quiet labors of farms and horses and harvesters and the wheat itself ripening beneath the sun?"[222] Here, Luce's description of the "fruitful and normal" grafts perfectly onto the clichés of white Americana. When brought into conversation with earlier discussions of the pedagogic uses of photography, and Edward Bernays' advice to print only positive proscriptions, this statement discloses the which kinds of subjects Time Inc. would ultimately commit to holding up as worthy of imitation.

Luce then went on to argue that affirmative journalism, like *Life'*s reporting on wheat, supplied readers with the positive models they needed to govern themselves, making journalism fundamental to democracy. He concluded with a soaring statement of purpose,

> It is not peculiarly the mission of the Press to exorcise the Doubt which is conquering the Western World or to discover and rediscover the standards of faith and excellence by which men may live. But if there is such a mission in the world—and we here believe there is—then for peculiar reasons of circumstance, the Press is not only its most forceful instrument but, reluctant though we are to say it, that mission can succeed only if it succeeds in and through and with the Press.[223]

[222] "'What Must the Press do to Meet Its Public Responsibility?' Speech delivered by Henry R. Luce, President of Time Inc. before the Institute of Human Relations, Williamstown, Mass." September 2, 1937, Folder 3, Box 29, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[223] "'What Must the Press Do to Meet It's Public Responsibility?' Speech delivered by Henry R. Luce, President of TIME Inc., before the Institute of Human Relations, Williamstown, Mass. September 2, 1937," Box 29, Folder 3, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

In his address Luce uses the Christian language of "faith" and "mission" to seamlessly align (Time Inc.'s) journalism and democracy. In keeping with Ingersoll's suggestion to emphasize "service" over "success," Luce's address argued for a press that would serve the public by producing content crafted to engender democratic values. Importantly, photos are a medium through which this would be carried out. In his positioning of journalism, and particularly photojournalism, as the crucial (if reluctant) guardian of faith and democracy, Luce moved decisively away from *Time'*s earlier discourse of "facts" toward one of purpose and values. As Marchand observes, this public relations gesture blurred corporate and national interests. This speech at Williamstown was not just an example of Time Inc.'s concerted efforts to reach out to Jewish and Catholic communities via the National Council of Christians and Jews. It also represents the company's shift from claiming to produce a journalism determined by facts to espousing the importance of journalism guided by positive purpose.

Time Inc. saw to it that knowledge of Luce's interfaith goodwill circulated widely. Public relations executives organized to have his address broadcast live over New York's WABC and excerpted in local papers nationwide. When Luce, Time Inc. and Williams College all began to receive requests for printed copies of the speech, Time Inc. reproduced it as a pamphlet that could be easily distributed to interested readers.[224] Some evidence suggests that Luce's appearance had the intended effect. In its coverage of the Williams College event, *The Southern Israelite,* a Jewish newspaper out of Atlanta, speculated that Luce's presence at the conference and the "liberal sentiment" expressed in his address might mean that Time Inc. was less unfriendly to U.S. Jews than many assumed.[225] Approximately a year later, Mayor Fiorello

[224] See correspondences and clippings related to Luce's Williamstown Speech, Box 29, Folder 3, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[225] "Herewith, an editorial appearing in The Southern Israelite…," Box 29, Folder 3, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

LaGuardia of New York, who was a vocal and active participant in interfaith activities, invited Luce to be his honored guest at the opening of the Temple of Religion at the 1939 New York World's Fair.[226] As Luce increasingly assumed the role of Time Inc.'s public face, he became a ubiquitous presence at civic and academic events sponsored by interfaith organizations

Conclusion: "When Men Take Sides"

When Hitler invaded Poland, Luce and his colleagues were confronted with what covering large-scale war would mean for *Time.* A memo that circulated among top executives shortly after the invasion of Poland concluded that in order for Time Inc. to capitalize on the increased appetite for news precipitated by war, it would have to convince its public that *Time* was not only trustworthy, but had unique journalistic strengths.[227] The magazine's public relations team sat down to compose text intended for a promotional booklet. In their reflections on what made *Time* especially well-suited to cover war, their recent history of printing opinionated copy emerged as a potential asset. *Time* would stand apart by boldly distinguishing right from wrong as the war unfolded.

The booklet they produced, titled "Time, War and Truth: When Men Take Sides." explicitly aligned *Time* with "religion," broadly conceived. After several lines of dramatic copy about the unique instability and danger of present times, "Time, War and Truth" asked "<u>Is TIME utterly unbiased, partial, objective?</u>" and went to respond, "No, TIME is prejudiced. TIME has a pattern of basic beliefs without which it would be an aimless catalogue, a turgid compendium of trivia." The rest of the booklet detailed *Time's* three motivating "prejudices:" "Individual

[226] Correspondence between Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia and Henry R. Luce, Box 2, Folder 11, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
[227] "The war upset our applecart last week…" Box 447, Folder 11, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Liberty," "American Constitutional Democracy," and "Religion." The brief description of their third prejudice stated, "For, quite apart from Religion's fundamental truth, TIME recognizes Religion as the fountainhead and safeguard of those individual virtues of integrity, self-restraint, and public service without which no past Democracy has long survived."[228] Less than fifteen years later, Luce would declare that *Time* was "biased in favor of God." Time Inc.'s early public relations efforts laid the groundwork for many such statements in the years to come.

The booklet resonated strongly with Luce's public address at Williamstown on two counts. First, it abandoned the language of objectivity in favor of an assertion of pro-democratic purpose, and second, it aligned *Time* and Time Inc. with a vaguely construed, politically committed religiosity. Both the speech and the booklet demonstrate that over the course of the 1920s and 1930s, Time Inc. moved away from an overtly bigoted journalism that trumpeted the discourse of "facts," to media motivated by the ambition to advance particular moral proscriptions and values. Those values would quickly take shape against the backdrop of impending war.

[228] "TIME, WAR AND TRUTH WHEN MEN TAKE SIDES…", Undated, 1939, Box 447, Folder 11, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

PART II: TIME INC. AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1940-1945

A pair of remarkable correspondences are useful for framing Time Inc.'s activities during the Second World War. The first came from Clare Boothe Luce. In March of 1940, Clare departed for Paris to observe the escalating war for *Life.* On April 9, Nazi forces attacked Norway and occupied Denmark, surprising many observers and considerably intensifying the conflict. Clare knew her husband would want to see the changing situation for himself. She summoned him with a three-word cable to New York: "CURTAIN GOING UP."[229]

The second correspondence was written by Luce during his voyage to join Clare. Confronted with a slow ocean voyage, Luce penned a long, handwritten "letter of reflection" to Roy Larsen. "… the <u>one</u> reflection I have I want to make <u>before</u> becoming environmentally involved in Armageddon or whatever it is," Luce wrote, "…. is simply that our great job from now on is not to create power, but to use it."[230] These two correspondences, Clare's cable to Luce and his ensuing letter to Larsen, capture how the Luces and Time Inc.'s leadership approached the World War. On the one hand, it emerged as theatre, both spectacle and commodity. Relatedly, the war was an inescapable opportunity for Luce and his colleagues to exert influence by self-consciously working to shape U.S. Americans' religious and political self-understanding.

The onset of war precipitated an increased demand for news and the corporation flourished. *Life'*s unique capacity to gather and produce striking wartime photography brought it huge success, prompting journalist David Halberstam to reflect that "It was as if *Life* magazine

[229] Elson, *The World of Time Inc., Vol. I,* 418, Brinkley, *The Publisher,* 250.
[230] "Dear Roy—," April 1940, Folder 7, Box 12, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

and World War II required each other." [231] In 1941, 3.3 million copies of the magazine were purchased every week. At the end of 1945 that figure grew to 3.9 million.[232] *Time* also flourished during the war, with its paid circulation (newsstand sales and subscriptions) expanding from 755,700 magazines in 1939 to 1,269,400 in 1945.[233] In 1940, the corporation's annual report listed net profit after taxes at $3,494,589.[234] At the end of 1945, Time Inc. reported net assets of $21,115,000. This figure accounted for new securities investments, real estate Time Inc. purchased to de-centralize its circulation operation, and the acquisition of several small printing companies and paper mills to guarantee reliable production.[235] Wartime precipitated this huge corporate growth and ushered in the corporation's moment of peak popularity and profitability in the postwar years.

The two chapters in this section examine how Christianity emerged within Time Inc.'s uses of corporate power during the war. Chapter 3, "The Religion of Journalism and the Theology of the "American Century" analyzes Luce's framing of the global conflict and the United States' role therein. This chapter pivots around the production and reception of Luce's most famous editorial, "The American Century." Here, I argue that Luce's "American Century" concept used Christian language to ennoble U.S. business and military interests, and that his overt nationalism distanced him from his mainline theological interlocutors. The next chapter, "'The Deepest Moral Issue of the Modern World:' Time Inc.'s Christian Global Imaginary and the Second World War," interprets how Luce's favored narratives of global and U.S. history unfolded across *Time* and *Life'*s wartime journalism. This chapter pays particular attention to two

[231] Halberstam, *The Powers That Be,* 68.
[232] TIME INC. ANNUAL REPORT, 1945. ProQuest Annual Reports.
[233] TIME INC. ANNUAL REPORT, 1945. ProQuest Annual Reports.
[234] TIME INC. ANNUAL REPORT, 1940. ProQuest Annual Reports.
[235] TIME INC. ANNUAL REPORT, 1945. ProQuest Annual Reports.

intersecting wartime plotlines: first, Time Inc.'s disproportionate attention to the Pacific front, rendered in the magazines as a showdown between China's Christian leadership and the "heathen" Japanese, and second, the career of China correspondent Teddy White, one of Time Inc.'s very few leading Jewish journalists. Across these two chapters, I argue that Luce and Time Inc. viewed, and thus depicted, the war as a battle to defend world Christendom against atheistic fascist states.

Luce arrived in Europe just in time to witness the bombardment of Brussels. On May 8 at 5:30 in the morning, a hotel maid woke him with the news that the Germans were bombing the downtown of the city. "So I got up, wiping the sleep out of my eyes, and had to go and shake Clare and tell her, 'The show's begun," Luce later wrote in a letter to his colleagues. "I didn't quite have time to settle my chin in my hand, my elbow resting on the window, before 'boom,' the first bomb landed."[236] When the Luces returned to the U.S., Henry was energized by the certainty that it was time to begin preparing for war.

[236] Elson, *The World of Time Inc., Vol. I,* 421.

Chapter 3: The Religion of Journalism and the Theology of the "The American Century"

As the war escalated, Luce grew increasingly motivated to assume the role of public opinion-maker. The publisher was propelled by two simultaneous circumstances: *Time, Life,* and *Fortune'*s substantial readerships granted him unique prestige and an unparalleled platform, and, while Time Inc. operated at a successful clip, Luce could step away to think, to write, and to express himself to the audiences of his choice at a moment when many were hungry for insight. This chapter looks closely at the arguments Luce advanced during his calculated transition from the businessman behind a successful publishing entity to a self-consciously political public figure. This transition reached a crescendo with the publication of Luce's "The American Century" essay in *Life* on February 17, 1941. Ten months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, when the matter of U.S. intervention was deeply contested, "The American Century" argued that the United States needed to intervene in the Second World War. Even more polarizing, the essay suggested that the United States should assume a position of global cultural and political supremacy thereafter. The five-page editorial quickly became Luce's best-known and most infamous piece of writing.

As I will show here, "The American Century" was the most public and polished version of an argument Luce began honing upon his return from Europe in spring of 1940. In multiple editorials and addresses throughout 1940 and 1941, Luce framed the rapidly intensifying European war as an impending clash of civilizations. In this articulation of the coming calamity, the United States stood for universal, Christian values which inevitably gave way to democratic systems of governance and guarantees of individual liberty and autonomy. Germany, Japan, Italy, and briefly Russia, were dead set on eradicating those values, replacing all religions with a

craven worship of the state.[237] Promoting this vision of world events, and goading audiences to support the United States' intervention in the war, became Luce's galvanizing cause until Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

In what follows, I look closely at Luce's public statements immediately leading up to the publication of "The American Century," provide an analysis of the essay itself, and interpret the response. I use this material to make two arguments about the specific nature of Luce's civilizational vision. First, I argue that Luce situated his own industry and the industries of his colleagues' as central to the United States' global mission, imbuing corporate with transcendent meaning at moment when mass media, and corporate power more broadly, were still the objects of considerable mistrust. My second argument pertains to the theological resonances of Luce's interventionist arguments. In the early 1940s, the menacing state of global affairs instigated a realignment within elite, white Protestant intellectual circles. As I will show in this chapter, "The American Century" waded into these theological debates, but did so to an ambiguous effect. The "American Century" placed him at odds with the centrist and liberal standard-bearers. Many of Luce's nearest theological interlocutors detested his bellicose agenda, while Christians less immediately proximate to his social milieu found his message heartening. The essay's marriage of Christianity and U.S. exceptionalism found an enthusiastic audience with those contemporaries called "fundamentalists," who were more eager to embrace an overt U.S. nationalism.

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[237] Many historians have identified and described this discourse, its multiple authors, and its vast circulation from the interwar period through the Cold War. For some examples, see Benjamin Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy & American Public Culture: Envisioning the Totalitarian Enemy, 1920s-1950s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011) and Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia & American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

Arguments for America: The "Religion of Journalism" and The Spirit of Technology

Luce's concerted efforts to turn public opinion toward intervention began immediately after his return from Europe. On May 22, 1940, Luce took to the airwaves to share his experience and urge listeners to support U.S. intervention in whatever way they could. Luce's broadcast, carried by the WJZ & Blue Coast-to-Coast Network, began with a first-hand description of the fearsome German artilleries he saw loosed on Brussels. He followed this dramatic account with remarks addressed directly to President Roosevelt. Luce goaded the president to put politics aside and enter into partnership with the United States' "able industrialists," those uniquely capable of building and fueling the tanks and fighter jets necessary to fight the Axis powers. He closed the broadcast by addressing the rest of his audience, "as one citizen to another." He implored each person listening in their homes to follow him in determining the ultimate values worth taking-up arms for. "… what I am willing to fight for is of course, America, but not America as a geologic mass, not for its mountains and plains and rivers…," he declared, "The America I want to fight for, is the America you too love best, the America of freedom and justice, the America which has stood throughout the world for the hope of progress in the democratic way of life and for faith in the ultimate brotherhood of man."[238] For Luce, "America" was not merely a nation bounded by borders, but a transcendent ideal capable of blanketing the globe. Those best suited to defending this "America," he suggested, were captains of industry.

Less than two weeks later, Luce delivered a second radio address that wove Christianity into his interventionist argument. On June 1, 1940, Luce took to the Columbia Broadcast Network to compel listeners to worry actively about what might have seemed like a remote conflict. Luce exclaimed that, "The gigantic conflict now raging threatens our national existence

[238] Radio Address by Mr. HENRY R. LUCE May 22, 1940—over WJZ & Blue Coast-to-Coast Network, Folder 5, Box 29, Series II: Speeches and Writings, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

in any particular way you may wish to name." He went on to list all the elements of U.S. life threatened by the global expansion of fascism, concluding with Christianity. "If you are interested in the institutions of self-government, in the right to vote, in trial by jury, in the free press, —then all these and more are threatened. And if you are interested in the right to worship God in your own way—then that most definitely is threatened. I do not say that Christian religion can perish. By all the promises we hold dear, it cannot. But the Christian Church can be driven from the face of the earth back into the catacombs."[239] Taken together, these two addresses unite productive industry, political democracy, and the persistence of Christianity together under the umbrella of U.S exceptionalism. What's more, Luce imagines these goods as necessarily embattled. Promoting the notion that industry, democracy, Americanism, and Christianity all constituted and required each other, and were all fundamentally threatened by an Axis victory, quickly became Luce's galvanizing cause.

The day after Luce's first radio address, Time Inc. vice president C.D. Jackson issued an urgent memorandum to his fellow executives. "By his radio speech last night, Harry Luce personally, and therefore Time Incorporated, completely changed their characters, … we have, for better or for worse, TAKEN A STAND."[240] As we saw in the case of the corporation's public relations' efforts, Time Inc.'s "stand" was always inseparable from its brand. Thus, the corporation leaned heavily into promoting Luce as the honorable editor and principled interventionist. His radio addresses became a regular occurrence, and as with his address at Williamstown, these addresses were reproduced and circulated as pamphlets.

[239] "Now we, the American People,…" June 1, 1940, Folder 17, Box 29, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[240]"By his radio speech last night …" May 23, 1940. Folder 8, Box 443, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

The two radio addresses discussed above were emblematic of the substantial discursive work Luce and Time Inc. undertook to ennoble and sanctify corporate power in the years immediately before U.S. entry into World War II. In addition to the aforementioned radio addresses, Time Inc. produced a massively costly advertising campaign and Luce embarked on a landmark speaking tour. As I will show in the remainder of this section, these campaigns used religious idioms and images to argue that U.S.-based industries should lead the way towards wartime intervention and global cultural hegemony in the post-war world.

These arguments came at a time when the role of corporations in U.S. life and the role of the U.S. in the world were both hotly contested. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, such ardent enthusiasm for an internationalist American project was by no means a forgone conclusion. In September of 1939 Time Inc.'s *Fortune* magazine carried out a massive battery of polling on the war. According to an excerpt published in *Life,* eighty-three percent of respondents wanted the Allies to win the war, but only three percent thought the nation should "fight with the Allies now." Twenty-nine percent of respondents thought the United States should furnish both sides of the conflict with supplies.[241] These responses register a trepidatious approach to the escalating war. With memories of the First World War near at hand, many were extremely reluctant to enter into another devastating conflict.

At the same time, corporations like Time Inc. still struggled to maintain public trust. Particular scrutiny was applied to Time Inc.'s industry, mass media. Many observers speculated that new technologies of mass mediation were playing an instrumental role in the success of authoritarianism abroad. Even more concerning, it seemed that the mass media institutions creating rapt, regimented crowds in Germany, Italy and Japan were not totally unlike the forces

[241] "WHAT AMERICANS THINK ABOUT THE WAR …" *Life,* September 25, 1939, 28.

shaping contemporary life in the U.S. At the same time that some Christian organizations (like those who protested *Life's* article on *The Birth of a Baby*) worried that the press promoted low moral values, state officials and intellectuals worried that the sheer ubiquity of mass media might absorb once-free-thinking U.S. Americans into a dangerously manipulable mass. Organizations formed to research mass media, like the Institute for Propaganda Research and the federally funded Committee for American Morale, frequently concluded that if not closely monitored, American mass media could produce the kind of mass consciousness that was thought to have facilitated both the rise of National Socialism in Germany and communism in Russia.[242] Alpers writes that in this moment, cultural producers felt themselves to be an in ambiguous position. While it was expected that they would inform and entertain the public during tense political times, they were simultaneously concerned that in doing-so they might edge towards producing "propaganda," thereby replicating one of fascisms' best-known tactics.[243]

As this context suggests, Luce and Time Inc. had ample reason to argue publicly for their role in U.S. life. While much of this discursive work was carried out in speeches and editorials, Luce and his associates also used advertising to assuage anxieties around their industry. Beginning at the end of 1939, while Time Inc.'s public relations staff was still in the midst of navigating complaints from Jewish and Catholic readers, Luce determined that a large-scale self-promotion campaign was in order. The advertisements, which cost Time Inc. a record quarter million dollars, were explicitly intended to situate journalism as a public good. Time Inc. responded to concerns that the media could turn democratic individuals into dangerous masses

[242] For more on interwar-era efforts to diagnose the relationship between authoritarianism technologies of mass mediation see Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy & American Public Culture,* 112-127, Brett Gary, *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties From World War I to the Cold War,* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), Turner, *Democratic Surround,* 15-38.
[243] Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy & American Public Culture,* 122.

by visually aligning journalism with the transcendent ideals—Christianity, freedom, democracy, and individualism—which Luce and others were increasingly posing as fascism's opposite. [244]

In his meetings with Young & Rubicam, the advertising agency that produced Time Inc.'s first self-promotion campaign, Luce expressed an explicit investment in describing journalism as essentially "religious." He began by listing the assumptions he wanted to undermine. Luce wanted to reverse the ideas that "people have an opium habit about the press," or that "the press is anti-philosophical." Rather, he wanted "the upper class audience of the U.S., i.e. the TIME audience," to gain a feeling for what he called "the religion of journalism." He mused that, "The use of the word 'religion' here is maybe stuffy on the surface, but actually I think that what it means is that there are basic creeds of journalism— and they are the very essence of responsibility, decency and ethics."[245] In this meeting, Luce expressed an overt investment in describing journalism as governed by a set of laudable, religious ethics at a moment when many worried that mass media was antithetical to individual moral reasoning. His conceptualization of Time Inc.'s first self-promotion campaign indicates that he was explicitly invested in locating his industry on the "American" side of the civilizational conflict he was trumpeting on the radio and in public addresses.

[244] Memo from Isabel Van Meter to The Staff of Time Inc., June 10, 1940, Folder 5, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[245] "Notes from Discussion with H.R.L," June 16, 1939, Folder 4, Box 411, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 5: The above advertisement for *Time* magazine circulated during the Spring of 1940. Time Inc. Subject Files, Box 411, Folder 4.

The advertisements that emerged clearly reflect this ambition. From February to November of 1940, shortly after Luce's initial radio addresses and during his landmark speaking tour, a series of double-page print advertisements for *Time* appeared in major newspapers nationwide and throughout Time Inc.'s own magazines. In one of the advertisements, pictured above, a clergy person is shown standing before a large crowd of political delegates at a podium emblazoned with the logos of radio stations. The convention depicted here would have been a clear reference to the upcoming political conventions in anticipation of the presidential election. In a tone at once wistful and mocking, the copy above the picture recalls the issues that characterized historic elections since the nineteenth century, "What were the Bull Moose doing in 1912?," the advertisement asks, and then pantomimes their concerns, "'We stand at the Armageddon and battle for the Lord!,'" the ad goes on, "They were saving us from William Howard Taft and the Payne-Aldrich tariff Bill." The religious fervor of previous political contests is made even more absurd though comparison to the present, "Strange things we Americans have quarreled over…" the copy reads a few phrases later, "in light of this hour, when mankind is being crucified upon the hook-armed cross, and Armageddon flares into world-

wide fury."[246] The "hook-armed cross" alluded to here would have been recognizable to contemporary readers as the swastika. In using such overtly Christian language, and featuring an image of a clergy person, this advertisement cast the stakes of the war, and the upcoming election, in decidedly Christian terms.

The copy lining the right-hand page circles back to journalism. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," the right-hand column reads, "Without the press in these still-free United States, we could not exercise that vigilance however much we tried. We cannot be alert to the dangers or benefits of a situation unless we understand it." The advertisement thus suggests that today's voter, well-informed by *Time* magazine, does not direct their prayers toward the success or failure of a soon-to-be obscure act. Rather, the reader, the journalist, and the clergy person, all brought together here, direct their justifiably serious prayers toward a real civilization crisis, the defeat of fascism, thanks to the earnest efforts of the press. Of course, the notion that a free press is crucial to democracy was not Time Inc.'s invention. The corporation did, however, amplify and re-inscribe this discourse at a moment when it was particularly politically useful.

While these advertisements ennobling journalism were in circulation, Luce embarked on a speaking tour that brought his religiously resonant, interventionist message to a strategic series of elite audiences. Between October of 1940 and February of 1941, Luce delivered four high profile addresses wherein he worked out the ideas and arguments that would ultimately appear in the pages of *Life* as "The American Century" essay. These speeches and the resulting essay were among Luce's earliest and most visible efforts to use Time Inc. to advance his desired political outcomes and religious affects. The first address was at a Philadelphia social club for advertising executives, the next was at the year-end meeting of the Association of American Colleges, and

[246] "Conventions that will <u>really</u> be opened with a prayer," Folder 4, Box 411, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

the final two were at banquets for the Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association and National Automobile Dealers Association. All four addresses advanced a series of similar arguments, tailored slightly for their particular venues. Each address diagnosed the state of global and domestic politics in dour tones and then went on to pose U.S. intervention, and ultimately world leadership thereafter, as the solution. All four speeches pushed audiences to imagine how their particular industries could participate in the effort to advance U.S. intervention in the Second World War, ultimately establishing the U.S. as global superpower.

During his first two addresses, at a luncheon for members of The Poor Richard Club of Philadelphia (described in Luce's paperwork as "probably the oldest and the most venerable of advertising clubs in the country") and the Association of American Colleges' annual banquet in Pasadena, California, Luce emphasized his audiences' unique capacity to make U.S. global supremacy imaginable.[247] Key to imagining wartime victory and global leadership, he argued, was wielding and taking inspiration from the United States' unique material wealth and technological capacities. Luce's address to educators in Pasadena, titled "America as a World Power," began by lamenting that U.S. Americans were not united around any single, motivating principle. "… surely our humiliation as a generation must lie in this," he declared, "that in the minds and hearts of the greatest, freest, richest people on earth, there has lived no exalting vision. … In this failure both Education and Journalism have been deeply involved." He went on to urge the assembled educators to teach about transcendent, universal truths, and look to U.S. American technological achievement as their source of inspiration in this project. "Doctors and masters, you seemed to have hesitated in these years of pragmatic liberalism to establish universal principles of Truth and Justice in the minds of your pupils," he scolded, "Is it too late now to

[247] "Re: Poor Richard Luncheon," December 9, 1940, Folder 1, Box 30, Series II: Speeches and Writings, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

regain the intuition that behind American technology, no less than behind the great cathedrals, there lay a great spiritual vision?"[248] Luce's insistence that the educators assembled in Pasadena advance an "exalting vision" echoed Time Inc.'s own move away from the ideal of objectivity. Like Luce's address at Williamstown and *Time'*s 1939 promotional pamphlet, "Time, the War and Truth," his message to the American Association of Colleges advised that even-handedness could easily become cowardly, and suggested that U.S. exceptionalism was the bold, moral stance.

In a slightly different register, Luce told the advertisers gathered in Philadelphia that their task was to use their trade, which he characterized grandiosely as "the promotion of the dividends of our great civilization," to translate a universal, spiritual vision for their vast audiences. "The creation of the vision of a world cannot come primarily from us," he demurred, aligning himself with the assembled advertisers, "But we are they who stand between the philosophers and the seers and the great mess of the people."[249] In both speeches, Luce positioned himself as a colleague and ally, inviting his audiences to work with him to inspire their constituencies. He also pushed both audiences to overcome the common idea that material wealth undermined earnest spiritual purpose. It was the task of advertisers and educators, he claimed, to show that U.S. American material plenty was in fact *made possible* by a universal "spiritual vision." At The Poor Richard Club, he posited that the advertising industry could help to "fuse the material and the spiritual to a greater degree than mankind has ever succeeded in

[248] Speech to the Association of American Colleges by H.R. Luce, Jan. 9, 1941, Pasadena California. Folder 2, Box 30, Series II: Speeches and Writings, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[249] Notes for Address Made by MR. HENRY LUCE At Poor Richard Club, Philadelphia, December 10, 1940. Folder 1, Box 30, Series II: Speeches and Writings, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

fusing them."[250] In these speeches, Luce called on his audiences to use their practical skills and institutional faculties to produce a powerful, galvanizing "vision" capable of readying the nation for wartime victory and global leadership thereafter. The object and inspiration of this vision was the greatness of the U.S. nation, and all the technologies and comforts the nation's industries could produce.

While Luce's addresses to educators and advertisers decried the nation's lacking sense of vision, his addresses to oil and automobile executives foretold unmet potential. The speeches that Luce made to representatives of the oil and automobile industries argued that U.S. business and technological savvy justified the nation's predestined ascent to superpower status, which would in turn lead to even further business opportunity. In these final two speeches he indulged fewer abstractions, speaking more directly about the status of the world war and what U.S. intervention should look like. In both speeches, he stated that only U.S. involvement would guarantee a triumph over the Axis, and that the U.S. would rightly become "senior partners" with Great Britain. In his address at the Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association's huge annual banquet in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Luce told over 1,500 oilmen that U.S. American global leadership in the twentieth century would allow the oil industry to reach its full potential.[251] Using explicitly imperialist language, Luce called on his audience of petroleum executives to bring about the century in which their industry would reign. He goaded representatives of the oil industry "not to stop at any frontier," and proclaimed that, "the necessary purposes of the American people – or, to use a phrase which once rang resoundingly across this the continent, the 'manifest destiny' of

[250] Notes for Address Made by MR. HENRY LUCE At Poor Richard Club, Philadelphia, December 10, 1940. Folder 1, Box 30, Series II: Speeches and Writings, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[251] "Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association December Bulletin," December 31, 1940, Folder 4, Box 30, Series II: Speeches and Writings, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

the American people is and can be nothing less than to create the Twentieth Century."[252] These remarks collapsed space and time, eliding the oil industry's physical expansion past all "frontiers" with the actualization of an limitlessly abundant future. It's worth recalling that *Life* magazine, Time Inc.'s most powerful medium, was itself a petroleum product. Time Inc. was thus deeply entangled with the success and expansion Luce foretold in Tulsa.

Less than two weeks later, Luce delivered a speech titled "The American Century" to the National Automobile Dealers Association. This address was almost identical to "The American Century" essay that appeared in *Life* less than a month later. Drawing together themes that appeared across his previous three addresses, Luce stated that the United States' cultural and economic leadership had thus far failed to articulate the nation's animating principles, let alone make them into reality. The opportunity to proclaim U.S. American ideals and bring them to fruition was quickly approaching. He encouraged representatives of the auto industry to imagine themselves as world leaders, insisting, "Our only chance now to make it work is in terms of a vital international economy and in terms of an international moral order with America at the head of the table."[253]

A similar argument resonated across Time Inc.'s self-promotion campaign and Luce's four high-profile public addresses. All these statements, and Luce's concurrent radio addresses, situated U.S. industries as the agents and beneficiaries of an expansionist global project. This argument was wrapped in the religious languages of "spirit," "destiny," and "vision," and in the case of Time Inc.'s self-promotion campaign, used imagery of Christian clergy. Luce's assertive

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[252] Address by Mr. Henry R. Luce at the Annual Dinner of the Mid-Continent Oil & Gas Association, January 11, 1941, Folder 4, Box 30, Series II: Speeches and Writings, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

[253] Address delivered by MR. HENRY R. LUCE at the National Automobile Dealers Association Banquet in Pittsburgh on January 22nd, 1941. Folder 5, Box 30, Series II: Speeches and Writings, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

arguments for intervention and industry came at a time when the nature of both were deeply contested. In using religious terms and images, Luce aligned his industry and the industries of his colleagues with religion, fascism's supposed opposite.

Luce's 1940 and 1941 speeches and radio addresses marked his transition from a businessman in the media industry, to a self-conscious director of elite and public opinion. In these statements, he honed his galvanizing religious and political causes. The braiding together of U.S. industry, U.S. exceptionalism, and spiritual purpose would go on to galvanize his career for decades to come. During these same years, arguments over intervention provoked an enduring schism in Luce's Protestant circles. Bringing Luce's various acts of corporate speech into conversation with contemporaneous theological debates shows how both depended on similar logics about U.S. Christian nationhood and the moral necessity of war. Luce's "American Century" essay would ultimately fuse the arguments he made before advertisers and oil executives with those circulating in contemporary Protestant publications.

Protestant Theology and "the Great Debate"

The contentious question of U.S. involvement in the Second World War, which historians have since come to call "the Great Debate," provoked a schism in the white, liberal Protestant establishment. Following the calamitous violence of World War I, liberal Protestant institutions, including the Federal Council of Churches and *The Christian Century* magazine, held that war was an abject evil to be avoided at all costs. Luce and his family were deeply connected to these institutions. Protestant organizations argued that compromise and moral suasion, the same practices undergirding their theological ecumenicism, could and should successfully preempt violent conflict. This political orientation was based in liberal theology's characteristic in

millennial progressivism. By consistently and ardently acting on their most moral and benevolent instincts, humans would inevitably gain the divine favor necessary to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. These organization's resulting policy held that the United States should lead the world toward peace by staunchly abstaining from conflict, no matter the cause. [254] For example, *The Christian Century* consistently printed articles celebrating the notion of a new global legal regime banning all wars.[255]

As violence erupted across Europe and Asia, the enactment of world peace through Christian persuasion and moral example appeared increasingly naïve. Throughout the late 1930s, *The Christian Century* began to host articles dissenting from its core anti-war editorial outlook. Union Theological Seminary professors Reinhold Niebuhr and Henry Pitney Van Dusen used *The Century'*s pages to issue challenges the editor's longstanding pacifism.[256] Niebuhr and his allies drew on the work of European theologians, particularly those often categorized under the umbrella of "neo-orthodoxy," to articulate a response to liberal Protestant pacificism.[257] This burgeoning theology centered the fallenness of humanity, arguing that sin and its manifestations in violence and suffering were unavoidable and permanent hallmarks of the human condition. Beginning from this premise, the goal of world peace through pacifism emerged as an utterly unrealistic. Instead of striving toward peace under the teleological assumption of human goodness, this new coalition of Protestant interventionists, ultimately called "Christian realists,"

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[254] For discussions of liberal Protestant pacifism in the interwar years, see Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States Between the Great War and the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 47-144, Heather A. Warren, *Theologians of a New World Order: Reinhold Niebuhr and the Christian Realists, 1920-1948* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), Andrew A. Preston, *Sword of Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Knopf, 2012), 297-314.
[255] Coffman, *The Christian Century,* 80-82.
[256] Coffman, *The Christian Century,* 121-138.
[257] For a detailed study Christian realism, neo-orthodoxy, and both theological discourses' trans-Atlantic influences, see Mark Thomas Edwards, *The Right of the Protestant Left: God's Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), and Warren, *Theologians of a New World Order,* 40-47.

held that Christian action in the world should be motivated by the pursuit of justice rather than the dream of peace. Because Western-style democracy was undeniably more just than fascism, waging war on behalf of the Allies was more than justified. In fact, insisting on peace in the face of profound evil was irresponsible.[258]

This theology resonated with, and very likely informed, Luce's rendering of the Second World War. In 1941, Niebuhr and Van Dusen's coalition created a new magazine explicitly intended to fracture *The Christian Century*'s public along political lines.[259] The first issue of *Christianity & Crisis,* which premiered the same week that Luce's "American Century" essay appeared in *Life*, hosted essays advancing the Christian case for assertive action against the Axis powers. The new periodicals' opening salvo was dedicated to defining the "crisis" alluded to in the title. The founding editors wrote: "We mean *the* Crisis itself… We mean that as Protestant Christians we stand confronted with the ultimate crisis of the whole civilization of which we are a part and whose existence has made possible the survival of our type of faith and our type of Church."[260] Like Luce, these theologians saw fascism as an existential threat and Christianity's diametric opposite. They also shared Luce's investment in quick and forthright action. Just as Luce goaded his elite audiences to advocate for intervention, the editors of *Christianity & Crisis* advanced a theology that would motivate concrete actions against Axis expansion.

This theological schism was enacted as a schism in print, and no one was more influential in the world of midcentury print publishing than Luce. The media mogul underwrote the launch of *Christianity & Crisis* with a five-hundred-dollar contribution and the promise of more support

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[258] Preston, *Sword of Spirit, Shield of Faith*, 303-314, Warren, *Theologians of a New World Order,* 95-115, Mark Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left: Christianity & Crisis Magazine, 1941-1993* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 24-30.

[259] Hulsether's history of *Christianity & Crisis* opens by stating, "*C&C* was created for the specific purpose of attacking another journal, the *Christian Century,* on a specific issue, its opposition to U.S. involvement in World War II." Hulsether, *Building a Protestant Left*, 1.

[260] "The Crisis," *Christianity & Crisis,* February 17, 1941, 1.

if needed. Perhaps even more valuably, he connected Van Dusen (who was quickly becoming a close correspondent) with Time Inc.'s circulation expert, Perry Prentice, who helped the fledgling theological magazine find and retain readers.[261] Luce was socially connected to the editors of *The Christian Century,* and ideologically aligned with the realist theologians in their efforts to challenge established mainline politics. His most visible and highly publicized publication, "The American Century," would ultimately offend both theological camps.

"We Americans are Unhappy:" "The American Century" Essay

On February 17, 1941 Luce's essay, titled "The American Century," appeared in *Life* magazine. The longform opinion piece totaled five printed pages of text. This density of text sat at the center of a magazine explicitly geared toward images, demanding that the reader change their pace. The piece also bore Luce's byline, suggesting an interruption of the usual content to announce a statement of editorial purpose. The essay's grave tenor was set even more decisively with the first line. "We Americans are unhappy," it began, "We are not happy about America. We are not happy about ourselves in relation to America. We are nervous—or gloomy—or apathetic." Echoing his addresses in Pasadena and Philadelphia, Luce attributed this low mood to pervasive cultural failings and resulting political indecision. Despite the exceptional riches enjoyed by "two thirds" of Americans, Luce argued, the nation's sense of futurity and collective purpose was "befogged," rendering its collective material and intellectual wealth an embarrassment. The long essay to follow argued that happiness could be won through U.S. global supremacy.

[261] Letter from Henry Pitney Van Dusen to Henry R. Luce, January 15, 1941, Folder 5, Box 285, Time Inc. Biography Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

"The American Century" essay's length and ambition were tempered by a colloquial and folksy tone. Luce hardily alluded to specific policies, battles or military maneuvers, allowing broad generalities to consume most of the text. As he elaborated the causes and consequences of United States' unstable foreign relations situation, Luce used "we," "us," and "our," gathering the reader's presumed opinions and anxieties together with his own and that of his magazine. At other moments he wrote of "the average American," "the American mind," and "the American people," further imagining a unified national collective, characterized by shared circumstances and priorities. Like he had done with audiences of businessmen weeks earlier, Luce conjured war as a collective opportunity.

"The American Century" began with two sequential, interlocking arguments about the United States' status vis-à-vis the world war. Luce began by arguing that, regardless of the niceties of official policy, the United States was already deeply embroiled in the war. This was true because the United States would benefit unequivocally if the Axis powers were defeated, and would be presented with the challenge of keeping Hitler at bay if his armies decisively conquered Europe. After establishing that United States was already "in the war," however geographically distant it might seem, Luce went on to argue that the present task was to compellingly articulate the nation's "war aims." Returning to the theme of lacking ideological direction that emerged in his address to educators, Luce blamed arenas of cultural leadership, specifically, "educators and scientists and churchmen," for failing to instill the populace with a sense of purpose suited to the epochal, civilizational clash at-hand. Journalists, according to Luce, were less to blame. "Journalists," he wrote, "of course, are implicated. But if Americans are confused it is not for lack of accurate and pertinent information. The American people are by far the best informed people in the history of the world." Here, Luce echoes the message of

Time's recent advertising campaign, suggesting that unlike the "churchmen," the journalist can help the nation navigate frightening and unprecedented world events by providing carefully collected and soundly interpreted information. Echoing his addresses in Tulsa and Pittsburgh, Luce quoted a *London Economist* article stating that the United Kingdom would submit to the United States' goals and agendas once the nation decisively intervened. These circumstances meant that the current task was to articulate common causes that would animate the United States' ascent to superpower status. "The big, important point to be made here," Luce wrote, "is simply that the complete opportunity of leadership is *ours.*"

Luce's essay reached its crescendo with a description of what U.S. global leadership might look like. He lambasted all forms of isolationism as "moral and practical bankruptcy," declaring "America and America's environment" fundamentally inseparable. Luce's vision of U.S. global involvement was defined by the export of commodities. He claimed that "American jazz, Hollywood movies, American slang, American machines and patented products," already beloved worldwide, had laid the groundwork for U.S. global hegemony. American "Engineers, scientists, doctors, movie men, makers of entertainment, developers of airlines, builders of roads, teachers, educators," could pick up the mantel of the United States' beloved cultural exports. American farmers, he claimed, could and would feed the entire world, eliminating hunger. Ultimately, Luce wrote, the United States would become the world's "Good Samaritan" through the generous sharing of their products, skills, and values.

He concluded the essay with triumphant lines that drew together Biblical references and a nostalgic image of the United States' colonial past,

> For the moment, it may be enough to be the sanctuary of the ideals of civilization. But not for long. It now becomes our time to be the powerhouse from which the ideals spread throughout the world and do their mysterious work of lifting the life of mankind from the level of beasts to what the Psalmist called a little lower than angels. America as the

> dynamic center of ever-widening spheres of enterprise. America as the training center of the skillful servants of mankind. … Throughout the 17th Century and the 18th Century and the 19th Century, the continent teemed with manifold projects and magnificent purpose. Above them all and weaving them all together into the most exciting flag of all the world and of all history was the triumphal purpose of freedom. It is in this spirit that all of us are called, each to his own measure of capacity, and each in the widest horizon of his vision, to create the first great American Century.[262]

In connecting U.S. intervention back to the "manifold projects" of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Luce figured contemporary foreign relations as a continuation of white conquest of the American continent. What's more, he echoed the rhetoric of previous imperial endeavors in using Christian sources to claim that these projects permitted the betterment of lesser populations. Although Luce closed his essay by repeating refrains used to justify territorial expansion, the bulk of "The American Century" essay imagined U.S. hegemony as primarily cultural. It would be enacted by the educators, advertisers, and industrialists Luce had addressed throughout the previous year. Luce thus closed his year of interventionist campaigning by folding his elite audience into a fundamentally Christian expansionist project, wherein patriotism and corporate productivity were brought together through divine providence.

"Well Done, Thou Good and Faithful Nation:" Responses to "The American Century"

"The American Century" saw a tremendous response from both readers and expert commentators. Time Inc.'s letters department estimated that the essay provoked a staggering onslaught of approximately 4,500 reader letters.[263] Some readers sent postcards with punchy words of encouragement, while others penned long, detailed conversations with the essay that consumed many pages. In their appraisal of readers' response to the landmark essay, public

[262] Henry R. Luce, "The American Century," *Life,* February 17, 1941, 61-65.
[263] Elson, *The World of Time Inc. Vol I,* 463. For reference, very controversial articles in *Time* and *Life* typically received between three and five hundred letters.

relations professionals at Time Inc. determined that the reception was largely positive. The letters department estimated that about half of all the letters requested reproductions of the essay to distribute to friends, family, students and congregants. Recounting the variety and quantity of letters received, one report read, "There were nurses, teaches, professors, students, and hundreds of John and Mary Does who wanted to express their gratitude for an answer to their gropings in a world darkened by the shadow of war."[264] Positive responses also came from fellow journalists. In her nationally syndicated newspaper column, commentator and radio host Dorothy Thompson called the essay "Honest, bold, imaginative," and declared it an "American document" on par with those authored during the Revolutionary period.[265] This appraisal echoed that of several readers who called Luce a modern-day Thomas Paine.

Many other readers and commentators did not welcome the essay's message or tone. Critical readers took Luce to task on a variety of counts. Some felt that the augmentative editorial was an inappropriate use of Luce's platform. Colin K. Lee of Bowling Green, Missouri wrote of Luce, "… he would do well to remember that people buy his magazine for pictures and factual spot news, not for five solid pages of vague, cloudy emotionalism. … Let him restrain his evangelism!"[266] Others critiqued the essay's glorification of industries that depended on economic inequity, reflecting ongoing conditions of low employment and labor unrest. Referring to Luce's suggestion that U.S. American agriculture would feed the postwar world, Rudolph E. Viehweg of Carpentersville, Illinois asked, "Do you think for a moment that a sharecropper in the south, or men for years out of work, or farmers driving off their farms, do so strongly believe

[264] MEMORANDUM RE: RESPONSE TO MR. LUCE'S THE AMERICAN CENTURY, February 1941, Folder 23, Box 414, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[265] Dorothy Thompson, "On The Record: 'The American Century,'" *New York Herald Tribune,* February 21, 1941, 17.
[266] Letter from Colin K. Lee to LIFE Magazine, Rockefeller Center, N.Y.C, February 14, 1941, Folder 1, Box 107, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

in that 20th Century American Freedom?"[267] Carl Spencer of Miami, Florida excoriated Luce's expectation that millions of laborers would conform to his vision, "I ought to wise you up Henry," he wrote, "Your magazines shouldn't try to pose as authorities on the American scene. Because there are more than 8 million organized laborers that know your stuff is printed on scab presses, so you can't possibly be unbiased."[268] Numerous other readers perceived that the essay was promoting an imperialist agenda no more moral or justifiable than that of the Axis powers. Expressing a sentiment that appeared throughout many letters, and would motivate some prominent Protestant responses to "The American Century," John J. Klein of Meadville, Pennsylvania wrote, "… I am sure that no good can come from any nation or group of nations controlling the whole world."[269]

The editors of *The Christian Century* took a similar line of criticism, determining decisively that Luce's essay was an indefensible call for U.S. imperialism. The magazine's March 19, 1941, issue opened with an untitled paragraph denouncing Luce's essay before the beginning of the usual editorial content. *The Century*'s pacifist editors echoed many readers in observing that, "Boiled down what Mr. Luce wants is to have United States embark on the greatest imperialistic policy in world history. …. For all his self-proclaimed candor, Mr. Luce does not say that in so many words. But that's what he means." *The Century'*s opening statement went on to argue that Luce's emphasis on U.S. American world leadership would certainly place him on the wrong side of history. "This call for an American imperialism makes an appeal to our national egotism, but it masks a deadly threat to our democracy," *The Century*'s editors wrote,

[267] Letter from Rudolph E. Viehweg to Mr. Henry R. Luce, Chairman, Time-Life Building, February 15, 1941, Folder 1, Box 107, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
[268] Letter from Carl Spencer to Henry R. Luce, Publisher, Time, Life, Fortune, February 15, 1941, Folder 1, Box 107, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
[269] Letter from John J. Klein to Editor of Life, March 6, 1941, Folder 2, Box 108, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C

"because no democracy can assume the master-slave relationship implicit in world empire without imperiling its democratic soul."[270]

Perhaps giving Luce's essay more concentrated attention than any other single publication of its time, *The Century* ran a long critique of "The American Century" by Oswald Garrison Villard, the founder of the American Anti-Imperialist League, in its next issue. Villard's heated statement ended with an ironic pantomime of Luce's perceived position, "We shall raise our boys not only to be soldiers and sailors, but as great transoceanic bearers of our culture and religion to the outermost places of the world, as the leaders of the legions of Rome when they conquered England and most of Europe," he chided, "If that doesn't produce the millennium—why but of course it will. God's chosen people cannot go wrong. They will produce a world that will make heaven seem shoddy indeed."[271] In both responses to "The American Century," representatives of *The Christian Century* did not accept Luce's favored clash-of-civilizations metanarrative. Rather, they assumed that asserting U.S. power worldwide would inevitably produce an imperialism, regardless of who the nation sought to constrain.

Christianity & Crisis did not publish an explicit response to Luce's essay. The magazine did, however, issue a short piece disagreeing with *The Christian Century's* decisive objections to imperialism. In an essay titled "Imperialism and Irresponsibility" Reinhold Niebuhr wrote,

> Imperialism at its worst is the subjugation and exploitation of the national or international community by the powerful. At its best it represents an egoistic corruption of a responsible attitude toward the task of organizing human communities. The sin of imperialism in its less grievous form may well be a less dangerous form of selfishness than an irresponsible attitude toward the task of organizing the human community. Most

[270] "By means of a two-page advertisement…," *The Christian Century,* March 19, 1941, Vol. LVII, Number 12, 381.
[271] Oswald Garrison Villars, "Are we to Rule the World?" *The Christian Century,* March 26, 1941, Vol. LVII, Number 12, 421-422. Villard's statement was not *The Christian Century's* final word on Luce's "The American Century Essay." On December 2, 1942, the magazine published an editorial titled "The Tribune Turns Luce," bemoaning the once ardently isolationist *Chicago Tribune's* editorial endorsement of U.S. world leadership in the postwar world.

> moralists have an almost morbid fear of imperialism, but they are frequently complacent toward the more covert but the more grievous sin of irresponsibility.

In Niebuhr's formulation, "moralists" in the tradition of *The Christian Century* allowed their objections to imperialism to bleed into "complacency." While Luce may have called on his readers to take responsibility for the state of the world by supporting intervention, he did so on different terms than those articulated above. The stance captured in "Imperialism and Irresponsibility" avoided Luce's ardent celebration of the U.S. exceptionalism, and explicit interest in U.S. commercial goods.

Niebuhr would make these core differences between his and Luce's perspectives explicitly clear in *Discerning the Signs of the Times,* a collection of sermons published in 1946. In a longer reflection on Biblical ways of understanding nationhood and nationalism, Niebuhr used the same language he had used in 1941 to criticize Luce's famous essay, "…. now each nation mixes a certain degree of egoistic corruption with its more generous hopes." Niebuhr wrote, "Thus Americans hope not only for a reign of peace but also for an 'American century,' while Russians hope for the realization of a communist world society…"[272] In "Imperialism and Irresponsibility" Niebuhr used the term "egoistic corruption" to describe imperialism in general. Here, he applies this descriptor to the notion of an "American century" specifically. What's more, Niebuhr places Luce's concept in the same category as Russian communism, which was then quickly emerging as the next great threat to freedom, Christianity, and the individual.

This indirect exchange between Luce and Niebuhr is suggestive of how Luce situated his religious and cultural authority vis-à-vis that of traditional clerics. In a series of private notes on *Discerning the Signs of the Times,* Luce thought through Niebuhr's rejection of his essay. In his

[272] Reinhold Niebuhr, *Discerning the Signs of the Times: Sermons for Today and Tomorrow* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's & Sons*,* 1946), 79.

notes, Luce expressed his "admiration for Niebuhr and gratitude for him," particularly regarding Niebuhr's commitment to popularizing the idea that "The purpose of God is in history, in the clash of arms." Luce was critical, however, of the theologian's tendency to condemn ideas without offering a preferable positive program. "Very well, I acknowledge and confess and repent of the 'egoistic corruption' contained in the title (more in the title than anywhere else in the essay)," Luce wrote, "and then I say to Dr. Niebuhr, as to my spiritual pastor – now, for the rest, what don't you like about the American Century: or, more simply, what, Dr. Niebuhr, is your program? … In the last analysis, what risks inherent in action and of power, what risks of 'corruption' are you willing to take?"[273] Luce's charge that Niebuhr and his own pastor both lacked actionable agendas and were unwilling to take real, moral risks bespeaks his relationship to clergy, and where his sense of moral purpose diverged from theirs.

While Protestant thinkers and clerics worked through the abstractions of Biblical proscriptions, judging others' plans and policies just or immoral, Luce acted with the understanding that his dictates could have profound, tangible influence. When compared to Luce, even the self-described "realists" were still operating primarily in the realm of abstractions. Luce's impatience with the register of Niebuhr's theological thought recalls his address at the Poor Richard Club, when he situated himself and his colleagues in the advertising industry as mediators between the philosophers and the people. In his reflections, Luce apologizes for the "egoism" of "The American Century" idea, but defends his essay's practical proscriptions. Luce's ability to directly influence policy and public opinion left him impatient with his theological critics. While they held themselves to high moral standards, they declined to wielding actual power.

[273] "Discerning the Signs of the Times, Sermons by Reinhold Niebuhr," Undated, 1946, Folder 26, Box 414, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Unlike the theological elites at *The Christian Century* and Union Theological Seminary, many of *Life's* readers responded positively to the "The American Century," and framed their approval in Christian terms. A significant portion of positive reader letters wrote that Luce was correct in describing the United States as the redeemer of a corrupt world. Some readers were excited to see an essay "preaching Christianity" in a magazine typically filled with "the decrepit tendencies of the day," like editorials on women's swimwear and liquor advertising.[274] Several went so far as to urge Luce to "watch what your sub-editors are doing," so that a greater proportion of his magazines would reflect the Christian values so clearly stated in "The American Century." These notes demonstrate that those readers who embraced the particular Christianity espoused in "The American Century" also held conservative cultural positions, like temperance and objections to suggestive photography.

Other letter writers relished Luce's blend of Christianity and patriotism. A handwritten letter from W.W. Russell of Los Angeles mused, "One can easily imagine our Heavenly Father, at the end of the First American Century, saying 'well done, thou good and faithful Nation, who have followed the example set by my Beloved Son and have helped fellow nations by counsel and action.'"[275] A reader from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was moved to write a "Prayer for America," which beseeched God to help U.S. Americans understand and embrace their nation's special purpose in the word.[276] Unlike Niebuhr, who understood attributing divine purpose to an earthly nation as "egoism," these readers appreciated Luce's description of the United States' "manifest duty" to positively influence the world.

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[274] "Dear Mr. Luce," February 16, 1941, Folder 1, Box 107, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
[275] "Henry R. Luce, Editor of "Life"…" February 15, 1941, Folder 1, Box 107, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
[276] "To the Editor of 'Life,'" February 18, 1941, Folder 2, Box 107, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The Christian content found throughout letters embracing "The American Century" concept suggest that Luce's essay struck a chord with more conservative sectors of white U.S. Protestantism, among them groups Luce and his ilk derisively called "fundamentalists" or "holy rollers." The theological statements found in positive responses to "The American Century" echoed articles and sermons found in contemporaneous fundamentalist and Pentecostal periodicals. For example, in a sermon printed in the October 1940 issue of her *Foursquare Crusader* magazine, Pentecostal evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson declared "Truly, God's hand has ever been upon this great nation!" and went on to describe the Second World War as an instance when the United States served as a bastion of Christianity, staunchly holding heathen influences as bay.[277] Other writers encouraged fundamentalist communities to revise their historic disinterest in worldly affairs and ready themselves for war against godless nations. An essay in the December 12, 1941 issue of *The Pentecostal Holiness Advocate* encouraged readers to see the United States as the only nation in the world "with a vestige of real Christianity left," and concluded with a decisive statement of commitment. The author wrote, "I am in favor of our country continuing supplies to those countries which are being invaded and attacked by ruthless and godless dictators, and if our aid brings about our invasion, then I offer my services in the defense of our country."[278] These statements, and those found in readers' written praise of "The American Century," coalesce with Andrew Preston's assessment of conservative evangelicals' response to the Second World War. "While liberal Protestantism wrestled with their recalcitrant and unenthusiastic members, conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists had no such problems," Preston writes, "So overwhelming and cohesive was Christian conservative support

[277] Aimee Semple McPherson, "The Ramparts We Watch: A Sermon by Aimee Semple McPherson," *Foursquare Crusader,* October 10, 1940, 24-26.
[278] Hubert T. Spence, "Have We as a Church Found Our Place in the World's Present Dilemma?," *Pentecostal Holiness Advocate* 24.33, December 12, 1941, 5, 9.

for the war, and so ambivalent were liberals, that World War II marked a decisive shift in religious attitudes toward patriotism. After two decades of being portrayed as extremists, the war offered Christian conservatives a lifeline back into the mainstream."[279]

Time Inc. existed beyond and amidst both mainline and Pentecostal publications. While "The American Century" displeased Luce's immediate theological interlocutors, reader letters suggest that it resonated with the evolving nationalist theology of a group of Christians he was not particularly interested in addressing, conservative evangelicals. Thus, as Luce honed Time Inc.'s political and religious positions, he hailed a Christian audience different from those he circulated in. Despite his own mainline affiliations, Luce's patriotic, Christian interventionism found an audience with U.S. conservative Christians. Two decades later, this reader base became *Life'*s most vociferous critics.

Conclusion: "But the War Came as a Great Relief"

On December 7, 1941, Henry and Clare Luce were entertaining a small party of fashionable guests at their home in Greenwich, Connecticut. During dessert, a butler interrupted the lively conversation to pass Clare a discrete envelope. Upon reading its contents, Clare tapped her glass and announced, "All isolations and appeasers, please listen. The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor." The guests immediately scattered, running for the nearest radio or telephone. Henry jumped in his car and was at Time Inc.'s Manhattan offices within the hour. He immediately began organizing all of Time Inc.'s vast resources around the task of chronicling the nation at war. That evening, he quickly penned lines that would find their way into a leading article for *Time*: "But the war came as a great relief, like a reverse earthquake, that in one terrible

[279] Preston, *Sword of Spirit, Shield of Faith,* 370-371.

jerk shook everything disjointed, distorted, askew, back into place. Japanese bombs had finally brought national unity to the U.S."[280] Here, Luce imagines war as a source of meaning and order, a shared project that would bring about the dominant, righteously bellicose nation he had imagined since his teenage years. That same night, Henry Winters Luce died quietly in his sleep. December 7, 1941, thus saw two massive changes in Luce's life and career. The onset of war affirmed his ardent commitment to a religiously sanctioned U.S. globalism, and his father's death represented the end of an older style of globally engaged Protestantism.

[280] Brinkley, *The Publisher,* 280. This language, which Brinkley attributes to Luce, appeared in "National Ordeal," *Time*, December 15, 1941, 18.

Chapter 4: "The Deepest Moral Issue of the Modern World:" Time Inc.'s Christian Global Imaginary and the Second World War

In March of 1943, Meiling Soong, the first lady of China, contacted Luce to demand that he fire Time Inc.'s premier China correspondent. Soong was outraged by a recent *Time* magazine column describing a famine in China's Honan Province in vivid, horrifying terms. The piece's author, Theodore H. White, framed his account of destitute peasants and vacant pastures as a critique of China's ruling elite. After recounting devastating scenes of starvation, he listed the many intricate dishes he was served during a meeting with diplomats.[281] Luce was not swayed by Soong's powerful position, and chose to defend his employee's reporting. In his memoir, White recalled Luce's decision to rebuff an important global leader on his behalf. "He refused her, for which I honor him." White wrote, "Our own quarrel would come later."[282]

Behind Soong's outrage was a web of complexly overlapping religious affiliations and geopolitical alliances. In 1943, the U.S. and China were allies in the Second World War. The Chinese front against Japan was made especially complicated by the tense state of Chinese politics. The nation's governing party, the Chinese Nationalist Party or Kuomintang, was in an uneasy détente with the Chinese Communist Party, who were steadily amassing physical territory and cultural influence. White's coverage of the famine resonated strongly with the Communist Party's critiques. When Soong contacted Luce to insist that he reprimand a critic of her husband's leadership, she was pulling on Luce's personal connections and commitments to China's ruling party. Soong and her husband, Chiang Kai-shek, were both Methodists, and connected to the very U.S. missionary organizations Luce's own family helped to establish and

[281] Theodore H. White, "Until the Harvest is Reaped," *Time,* March 23, 1943, 19.
[282] Theodore H. White, *In Search of History: A Personal Adventure* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1978), 161.

maintain.[283] The journalist Soong hoped Luce would censure was caught in the crux of these dynamics. White was one of very few Jews employed at Time Inc., and the only Jewish reporters with an editorial influence. His increasing willingness to critique China's Nationalist Party, which was both a crucial U.S. ally and personally associated with his boss, compounded his marginal status within Time Inc. As this incident suggests, producing news about World War II was a contentious and multi-sited endeavor, that required the negotiation of competing political aims and religious aspirations.

Viewing the religious politics of World War II from the vantage of Time Inc. draws our attention to subjects and geographies that have not yet taken pride of place in histories of U.S. Christianity at midcentury. Many studies have argued that the longstanding notion of the U.S. as a definitionally Protestant nation eroded throughout the war. Scholars including Kevin M. Schulz, Matthew Hedstrom, Deborah Dash Moore, and Wendy Wall have all argued that domestic alarm over Nazi fascism engendered greater religious tolerance, transforming a notional "Protestant America" into a "tri-faith America," with Jews and Catholics invited more thoroughly into the cultural mainstream.[284] Wartime religious politics at Time Inc. challenge this narrative on two counts. First, accounts of World War II-era interfaith inclusion assume a collective focus on Nazi fascism and Europe. In this chapter, I demonstrate that Time Inc.'s publications more frequently described the religious stakes of the war with reference to China

[283] For a thorough account of the entanglement of the Chinese Nationalist Party and U.S. Protestant missionaries, see Gordon F. Chang, *Fateful Ties: A History of America's Preoccupation with China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). Discussions of the Luce family in particular appear in Brinkley, *The Publisher,* and Robert E. Herzstein, *Henry R. Luce,* Time, *and the American Crusade in Asia* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[284] Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), Matthew Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Book Culture and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), Wendy Wall, *Inventing the 'American Way:' The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement Promise* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008).

and Japan. Here, I interpret how Luce and his magazines constructed China as a Christian nation, placing it alongside the United States within Luce's favored global metanarrative, which pitted Christian democracies against atheistic communist and totalitarian states.

This chapter further complicates narratives of wartime interfaith magnanimity by showing that the continued identification of the United States as a *Christian,* rather than generically pious or "tri-faith," nation remained salient and profoundly important. It is the case that Time Inc.'s wartime discussions and depictions of Christianity at home and abroad were more varied and encompassing than during the interwar years. In keeping with prevailing accounts of tri-faith inclusion, wartime did precipitate a departure from the dismissive portrayals of Catholicism covered in Chapters 1 and 2. During the war, as this chapter will show, *Time* and *Life* magazines frequently located Catholic people and institutions as emblematic of U.S. Christian identity and heralded European Catholicism as a bulwark against Nazi fascism. While the categories of "Christian America" and "Christian civilization" grew more expansive, Time Inc.'s antisemitism endured. Jews were not meaningfully recognized or included in either magazines' domestic or global reporting. Most notably, Time Inc.'s magazines paid little attention to violences against European Jews. In observing the career trajectory of Theodore White, a Jewish journalist, this chapter will show that Time Inc.'s antisemitism ultimately constrained which journalists could speak to the corporation's vast public.

A memo about *Time*'s Religion column, issued to staff writers at the beginning of the war, captures the core assumptions and predispositions that undergirded the media discourses and production processes I analyze in this chapter. Contributing Editor Samuel Welles wrote,

> As you know, both Editor Henry Luce and Vice President Perry Prentice, are, like myself, the sons of ministers. And, with Managing Editor Gottfried, they worked out a plan to make Religion one of the most significant and respected departments in TIME. … They all agreed that the real justification for a Religion department lies in the fact that

> American civilization is based on Christian principles and that TIME cannot properly report the news of a civilization based on Christianity without keeping our readers well informed on the key developments in this essential element of life.[285]

This memo makes two important disclosures. First and most obvious is an echo of Luce's pre-war writing, in the clearly stated belief that *Time* was in the business of chronicling "a civilization based on Christianity." Once the United States was embroiled in the war, *Time* and *Life* imagined a "Christian civilization" that exceeded U.S. borders as often as it named the United States as a "Christian nation." These discourses about worldwide Christianity were key to how Time Inc. shaped their predominantly white, college-educated readership's global orientation. Throughout the nearly four years of war, Time Inc.'s magazines used shared Christian affiliations to bond readers to ally nations and rile them against often racialized, amoral foes. The first sections of this chapter examine how Christianity figured within *Time* and *Life'*s weekly effort to locate readers within the sprawling and complex global war.

Second, Welles' instructions linked the magazine's interest in religion to corporate leadership's familial connections. The concluding sections of this chapter will show how Christian commitments within Time Inc. shaped what went to print, and led to the amplification of some journalistic voices over others. During the Second World War, Luce's missionary upbringing in China was an important force in Time Inc.'s global reporting. For Luce and Time Inc., China emerged as much more than a strategically located ally in the front against Japan. Time Inc.'s magazines depicted China as decidedly Christian, constantly contrasting an imagined Christian China with a "heathen" Japan. Complexly interwoven with Time Inc.'s project of constructing China as a Christian ally were the politics of who executed this reporting and how.

[285] "Religion in Time," May 8, 1942, Folder 7, Box 448, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

This chapter will conclude with a return to the career of Theodore White, to demonstrate how his religious identity and political analysis resulted in his marginalization.

"In the Day of Trouble:" Depicting a Democratic War Effort in *Life* Magazine

Time Inc.'s reporting encouraged readers to understand the news in theological terms. The issue of *Time* magazine that appeared immediately after the attacks on Pearl Harbor opened with an overtly Christian prayer, italicized, and set above the usual weekly news: "*Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage; We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favour and glad to do thy will,*" it read. "*In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Below this prayer, *Time* described how the world historic news interrupted an average American Sunday. The magazine conjured images of congregations filing out of church, of mothers preparing Sunday dinners, teenagers lining up at the cinema, and fathers "idly listening to the radio." "What would the people, the 132,000,000 say in the face of the mightiest event of their time?" *Time* asked. "What they said—tens of thousands of them—was: 'Why, those yellow bastards!'"[286]

This framing of the events of December 7, 1941, captures the religious, racial, and gendered grids through which Time Inc.'s magazines narrated the Second World War. In the previous chapter, I looked closely at Luce's speaking and writing during the years and months immediately leading up to Pearl Harbor. In his numerous high-profile addresses and radio speeches Luce articulated a theory of history in which the world was divided into two diametrically opposed factions approaching inevitable collision. On one side was the United

[286]"What the People Said," *Time,* December 15, 1941, 17-18.

States and its allies, which were defined by democratic governance and the preservation of individual rights—political principles that sprung from these nations' fundamental commitment to Christianity. Their enemies, Germany, Italy, and Japan, were characterized by atheistic state forms that completely subsumed and eradicated the God-given rights of individuals. According to Luce's specific account, the United States was divinely predestined to triumph in the coming clash of these two civilizational forms. Up until Pearl Harbor, Luce circulated this narrative to argue for intervention. Once the United States was officially and totally involved in the war, *Time* and *Life'*s journalism was shaped to conform to this guiding metanarrative. This is particularly evident in both magazines' representations of Christianity, at home and abroad.

In Time Inc.'s internal history, Luce recalled that *Life* magazine was Time Inc.'s primary site for advancing wartime patriotism. "There was a considerable deficiency of—to use and old-fashioned word—patriotism in this country," he mused, "What I tried to do—and *Life* was the place to do it—was to build up more feeling for the country—patriotism—to get Americans to have a stronger feeling about what their country stood for."[287] This patriotism quickly rushed in to fill the void of *Life'*s uncertain editorial formula. *Life* was not constrained by *Time'*s commitment to covering world news. Throughout the war, nearly every weekly cover of *Time* featured a white, male politician or general. *Life*, on the other hand, continued to print actresses, athletes and occasionally monumental architecture or landscapes on its famous large-format cover. This varied photographic and written storying-telling was all immediately enrolled in the project of defining what the United States "stood for," who the nation was comprised of, and how it was waging war. This section, on depictions of U.S. American Christianity, will thus focus on *Life.*

[287] Elson, *The World of Time Inc., Vol. I,* 430.

The onset of war initiated a massive, multi-sited campaign to involve citizens in the war effort. Beginning almost immediately, U.S. Americans saw the war everywhere they looked. More than 25 million people, or roughly one-fifth of the population, relocated for war related jobs between 1941 and 1947. Just under sixteen million of those individuals were employed by the military or deployed in combat.[288] Even those who were not deployed could not easily avoid becoming involved. Starting at the end of 1942, the federal government began a series of war bond drives that compelled citizens to help finance the war through the purchase of bonds. These drives were promoted through ubiquitous poster campaigns, radio shows and highly publicized live events. Alongside constant demands to purchase war bonds were policies that rationed consumer goods and everyday materials to help furnish the military with needed supplies.[289]

This expansion of the state into the lives of millions of private citizens coincided directly with what historian James Sparrow calls a "national dramaturgy of sacrifice," or, the profuse and concerted effort on behalf of both government and private industry to represent the war as a democratic project, willingly carried out through the voluntary sacrifices of millions of independent individuals.[290] *Life'*s coverage of the home front embodied this approach. For example, on March 16, 1942, *Life* ran a 13-page cover story following the trajectory of 22-year-old Charles Edward Teed, a "typical" U.S. soldier. The photo essay followed Teed to basic training, with images of him devouring huge meals to gain weight for combat, polishing his boots, and "solemnly" learning to shoot a rifle. These images were all captioned with sentences describing his sense of duty to his country, his willingness to fight for an abstract cause, and his heartfelt dedication to defending his bucolic midwestern hometown. The piece concluded by

[288] James Sparrow, *Wartime State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 113.
[289] Sparrow, *Wartime State*, 119-145.
[290] Sparrow, *Wartime State*, 167.

worrying that individual privates like Teed were discouraged by the civilian population's limited willingness to make personal sacrifices.[291] In *Dictators, Democracy & American Public Culture* Alpers argues that such media representations of individual soldiers served the crucial purpose of differentiating the U.S. military effort from that of its enemies'. Alpers writes, "Totalitarianism was the antithesis of democracy precisely because it eradicated the individual. … assurances that sons, brothers and friends remained identifiable individuals, changed perhaps, but not fundamentally, from their prewar selves, was an important part of the image of the American war effort as democratic."[292] Articles like *Life'*s photographic profile of Teed worked to represent U.S. Americans' participation in the war effort as fundamentally distinct from the rapt, enslaved crowds associated with fascist regimes.

Life's discussions of U.S. Christianity acted in concert with other representations of the war, to show that personal piety and religious community supported individuals in their wartime sacrifices. This content was often delivered through depictions of traditional gender performances. A 1942 cover story on "Furlough Brides," for example, featured five pages of black-and-white photos of young white women hurriedly arranging weddings precariously timed for the brief gaps in their grooms' deployments. The article described congregations and clergy willing to bend schedules around the needs of military couples, and documented patriotic wartime wedding trends, including replacing bridal bouquets with bunches of war bond notes.[293] A 1943 article, titled "Women Say Their Wartime Prayers," used photography to emphasize the individuality of women associated with the war effort. The article featured two full pages of portraits of women praying for deployed husbands and sons. Each woman's portrait was

[291] St. Claire McKelway, "U.S. Army Private," *Life*, March 16, 1942, 96-113.
[292] Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy & American Public Culture,* 166.
[293] "Furlough Brides," *Life,* June 22, 1942, 36-40.

captioned with their full name and their relationship to the male servicemen they prayed for.[294] In both articles, women bravely and willingly performed ritual activities oriented around a stoic commitment to absent men. "Women Say Their Wartime Prayers" and "Furlough Brides" thus represented the war through the personal sacrifices of individuals and local congregations, rather than massive state projects or abstract combat logistics.

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 6: "Women Say Their Wartime Prayers," *Life,* September 13, 1943, 69-71. Note that the article spotlights a Catholic church.

Life's account of U.S. Christianity at war was encapsulated in a 1942 essay titled "A Righteous Faith." In an example of Time Inc.'s continued affiliation with mainline voices, the invited essay was by John Foster Dulles, then a Presbyterian layman and chairman of the Federal Council of Churches. Dulles gave an account of U.S. foreign relations that argued that all U.S. policy was determined by individual statesmen's "conception of their duty as sons of God." He concluded with a discussion of contemporary World War II combatants, stating, "There is one book that cannot be kept in adequate supply at our Army camps. That book is the New Testament."[295] Dulles' characterization of the war effort was evidenced in pieces like the

[294] "Women's Wartime Prayer," *Life,* September 13, 1943, 69-71.
[295] John Foster Dulles, "A Righteous Faith," *Life,* December 28, 1942, 49-51.

November 2, 1942, cover article on Captain William A. Maguire, a Catholic Navy chaplain who became the subject of "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," a "valuable propaganda song," composed by a group of sailors to honor Maguire's experience at Pearl Harbor.[296] Like profiles of individual soldiers, punctuating war reportage with accounts of combatants and their families' Christian devotion served a political purpose. By emphasizing that U.S. Americans worshipped a Christian God (according to gendered rubrics) *Life'*s journalism reenforced the idea that their personal, individual religious convictions were not subsumed by totalizing states.

Such humanizing discussions of U.S. combatants were decidedly not extended to non-white enemy troops. The logic of *Life'*s war reporting was typified in esteemed war correspondent John Hersey's collective profile of "The Marines of Guadalcanal." The article's subtitle read, "Though they are tough, hardened fighters they are still human." This explicit statement of the U.S. Marines' humanity stood in sharp contrast to Hersey's rendering of Japanese soldiers. Halfway through the article, Hersey pantomimed the experience of U.S. Marines with a quote from a fictious "typical" soldier, "I wish we were fighting against Germans," the imagined marine opined, "They are human beings, like us. Fighting against them must be like am athletic performance—matching your skill against someone you know is good. …. But the Japs are like animals. Against them you have learn a whole new set of physical reactions."[297] While U.S. American marines, who were overwhelmingly depicted as white, are explicitly rendered "human," Japanese soldiers are baldly called "animals." In the narrative that unfolded across *Life,* U.S. Americans and their armies were pious, willing, democratic citizens, consenting to the huge sacrifices necessary to vanquish a singularly sinister enemy—the

[296] "Praise the War and Pass the Ammunition," *Life,* November 2, 1942, 43-45.
[297] John Hersey, "The Marines of Guadalcanal," *Life,* November 9, 1942, 36-37.

"animal" masses blindly following tyrannical leaders. This dichotomy—between pious democratic citizens and subhuman masses—also shaped coverage of combat abroad.

The Character of Global Conflict: European Christianity in *Time* and *Life*

Resonating with depictions of white Christianity at home were accounts of how Christian commitments shaped global politics. *Life's* 1943 Christmastime editorial summarized the global religious scene, as Time Inc. saw it. The editorial opened with wholesome, nostalgic Christmas scenes—logs aflame in fireplaces, gifts being excitedly unwrapped—and claimed that these events were happening similarly everywhere "throughout the Christian world." The editorial went on to give an account of where the "Christian world" was. *Life's* rendering of global Christendom was remarkably theologically and geographically diverse:

> We use the word loosely to include many variations of the Christian doctrine, many social mixtures and geographical anomalies. … It includes all of Europe, all of North and South America. The Eastern Orthodox Church of Russia and the Balkans is an important element of the Christian world. And even China—or at any rate what is called the New China—has a share in it. Many of the Chinese leaders are Christians; and many of their recent pronouncements about the future of civilization have been more sincerely Christian in spirit than the pronouncements of the Christian world itself.[298]

This passage names, and ranks, a large range of people and places that U.S. American readers could ostensibly count among their allies. As we'll see in this section, who counted as Christian shifted alongside who was counted as a U.S. political ally.

Coverage of Christianity in Europe worked to assert that Europe had a true, Christian essence that was only temporarily obscured by invasive forces. In one characteristic feature, *Time* dedicated a four-page story in the Foreign News column to describing how the Catholic citizens of Malta embraced a group of Protestant British troops stationed there. *Time* linked this

[298] "CHRISTMAS: The Question is Whether Christians Can Meet the Challenge of the Modern World," *Life,* December 27, 1943, 28.

story to an event from the island's medieval history, when Christian knights overcame infighting to defend Malta from Turkish "infidels."[299] *Life,* of course, used striking visuals to remind readers that despite current leadership, everyday Europeans shared their religious commitments. In a long, full-color feature timed to appear on Easter, *Life* paired vivid reproductions of medieval devotional paintings of St. Francis with the story of an exiled Polish author who had just completed a virtuosic biography of the venerated saint.[300] Throughout the war, *Life* published magnificent photography of European cathedrals, and lamented vehemently whenever such churches were bombed.[301] In addition to differentiating European heritage from the fascist present, this content suggested that Europeans themselves would be relatable allies in the postwar world.

During the war, Russia was briefly re-positioned within Time Inc.'s favored metanarrative of religious-democracy versus atheistic-statism. Up until June of 1941, the Nazi-Soviet alliance made it easy to elide fascism and communism as equivalent "totalitarianisms," both equally hostile to Christianity and individual self-expression. When the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union in June of 1941, the Nazi-Soviet pact was decisively broken, and Russia became one of the United States' most powerful and important allies. Shortly after this geopolitical shift, *Time* and *Life* dependably produced stories spotlighting the Christian piety of the Russian people, despite their government's official atheism. The most of remarkable example of this was a twelve-page photo spread in *Life,* titled "Religion in Russia: Red Godlessness Fails to Empty it's Churches." Photographs of ornate Orthodox cathedrals, grandfatherly bearded Patriarchs, and

[299] "Bulwark of Christendom," *Time*, October 26, 1942, 25-28.
[300] "St. Francis of Assis," *Life,* April 10, 1944, 65-71.
[301] For a few examples, see, "Brides of Christ," *Life*, March 6, 1944, 77-81, "The Church of England," *Life*, January 24, 1944, 75085, "Pat and the Parson," *Life,* December 6, 1941, 26-29, and "Pillars of Peace," *Life,* November 8, 1943, 34-37.

modestly dressed Russian women praying at altars festooned with flowers and icons evidenced the magazine's claim that Russians were "natively pious."[302] Months later, the same photos appeared again in *Time*. The column declared, "If Karl Marx was right in calling religion the opium of the people, the air over Moscow must have been blue with fumes this week." It went on to list scenes from Moscow that U.S. readers might have found familiar, including congregations praying for peace, rousing radio sermons, and pleasant clerics in black vestments greeting children on urban sidewalks.[303] In yet another example, the cover appearing closest to Christmas of 1943 *Time* featured a portrait of the white-bearded Russian Orthodox Patriarch Sergei standing in front of a frost covered evergreen tree and looking decidedly like Santa Clause.[304] These vociferous (and short-lived) assertions of Russian Christianity evidence the centrality of Christianity to Time Inc.'s broader efforts to locate the U.S., and U.S. based readers, within the complex and shifting domain of world politics. By rendering Russia as Christian, Time Inc.'s magazines sought to render them as true and trustworthy allies in the struggle against atheistic statism.

[302] Photography by Margaret Bourke-White, "Religion in Russia: Red Godlessness Fails to Empty its Churches," *Life*, October 13, 1941, 110-121.
[303] "Holy Russia," *Time,* October 4, 1943.
[304] Cover, *Time,* December 27, 1943.

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 7: Margaret Bourke-White's monumental photos of Russian Christianity. *Life*, October 13, 1941, 110-116.

Time Inc.'s celebrations of Russian Christianity waned as the war drew to a close. By the end of 1943, when an Allied victory appeared likely, Time Inc.'s publications were among the first to question the United States' alliance with Soviet Russia. Characteristically, Luce's magazines did so in Christian terms. In 1944, *Life* published two major features ("The Kremlin and the Vatican," published on February 14 and "The View From Rome," published on September 4) situating tensions between the Kremlin and the Vatican as the seeds of the next major global conflict. Both pieces abandoned the view that Russians were "natively pious," returning to the older discourse that communism precluded the possibility of religious freedom and individual self-expression. Both pieces worried that the Vatican, located between Britain and Russia, would be the physical site where the next civilizational clash would play out. Or, as "The View From Rome," put it, "The deepest moral issue of the modern world—the issue of man as a son of God with an immortal soul, an end in himself, against man as a chemical compound, the tool of an omnipotent state, an end in itself—may thus be fought out in Italy."[305] These pieces signaled an emerging religious and geopolitical dynamic, centered around concerns about the

[305] William C. Bullitt, "The View from Rome," *Life,* September 4, 1944, 94-109.

spread of communism, that would go on to shape Time Inc.'s religious discourses in the postwar years.

Amidst all these discussions of religion in Europe, mention of how Jews were faring was small and scarce.[306] *Time* and *Life'*s failure to thoroughly describe the persecution of Jews in Nazi Europe was typical of most U.S. publications, especially during the early years of the United States' participation in the war. According to historian David Wyman, the first reports of the Nazi's intention to exterminate all European Jews came to the U.S. in the spring and summer of 1942, however they received little coverage. Some newsmakers found the news so atrocious that it was difficult to believe, and others worried that exaggerated tales of German viciousness were part of larger wartime propaganda campaigns.[307] The Reform Rabbi Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress was at the forefront of alerting U.S. Americans to the Nazi's specific crimes against European Jews. On November 24, 1942 Rabbi Wise held a major press conference in Washington D.C., wherein he recounted the confirmed reports of systematic violence against Jews in Nazi-occupied territories. According to Wyman, after Wise's press conference, "the news of Hitler's plan to annihilate the Jews was available to everyone in the democratic world who cared to know."[308] Even thereafter, news coverage of the Holocaust was halting, with some papers printing grim statistics in their internal pages but none publishing eye-catching photos or major front-page headlines.

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[306] *Time,* with its focus on news, did make occasional mention of Nazi Germany's campaign against European Jews. These articles never received pride-of-place in the magazine and usually focused on isolated incidents, see "93 Jewish Girls," *Time,* January 18, 1943, 30. "A Brief for Jews," *Time,* July 7, 1941, 44. "Charter of Anti-Semitism," *Time*, November 24, 1941, 31-32 and "Jewish Tragedy," *Time*, March 16, 1942, 99. *Life* carried no trace of the Holocaust until after the spring of 1945.

[307] David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust* (New York, NY: The New Press, 1984), 19-42.

[308] Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, 28.

Only weeks after his landmark press conference, Wise reached out to Luce, asking him to cover the "Hitler extermination order" in *Life.* He recounted the content of his press conference and urged Luce to use his massive platform on behalf of European Jews. Cognizant of Luce's well-known Protestantism, and echoing the religious discourses propagated by Time Inc. and other major media outlets, Wise concluded with an appeal to Luce's Christianity,

> One more word and I am done. I think too little is made of the fact that involved in this crime against the Jewish population of Europe is an equally great crime against the heart and soul of Christianity and civilization itself. For it must be remembered that for every Jew killed in Europe, some Christian is responsible.[309]

Here, Wise offers a different angle on fascism's affront to Christianity. Rather than determining that the Axis powers threatened Christendom because fascism encouraged a proverbial worship of the state, or because authoritarian governments erased individual piety, Wise framed the threat in less abstract terms. For Wise, Nazi fascism threated Christianity because it actively pressed Christians into committing evil acts, rendering their religious consciences immaterial.

Luce was not able accept this proposition. His response was sympathetic but non-committal. He acknowledged the uniquely horrible violences that the Nazis were committing against Jews, but on the subject of printing a story in *Life*, he demurred, claiming, "Sometimes it is impossible to evolve a story like this with the broad out-lines of our editorial formula, and always it is difficult." On the claim that Christian actors were responsible for the mass murder of Jews in Europe, Luce said that Wise was "perhaps putting it too strongly."[310] Evidently, the notion that Christians might be perpetrating unthinkable violence on behalf of a totalitarian state could not be reconciled with his view of Christianity's role in the war. What's more, *Life'*s

[309] "Dear Mr. Luce:…" December 15, 1942, Folder 17, Box 433, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[310] "Dear Dr. Wise:—," January 7, 1943, Folder 17, Box 433, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

commitment to chronicling the positive, the "nice, cute doggy-woggies," left little space for genocide.

Wise's appeal was not the first time that *Life* declined to cover the Nazi assault on European Jews. In their article, "Karl Schwesig's *Schlegelkeller:* An Anatomy of a Rejected Warning of Prewar Violence at *LIFE* Magazine," journalism scholars Willa M. Johnson and Kirk A. Johnson document German-Jewish artist Karl Schwesig's repeated, unsuccessful attempts to have his anti-Nazi painting and writing featured in *Life.* Schwesig was a well-known intellectual, and was repeatedly introduced to *Life'*s Managing Editors by Sinclair Lewis, a writer they esteemed. In their examinations of Lewis and the editors' correspondences, Johnson and Johnson found that the editor consistently claimed that Schwesig's left-leaning politics rendered him an unreliable narrator. The rejection of Schwesig's artwork and writing presaged future instances when Time Inc. representatives would use Jewish authors' political leanings as cause to omit their writing.[311] What's more, Time Inc.'s repeated disinterest in covering the Holocaust is suggestive of how Time Inc. narrated the causes and purposes of the Second World War. The corporation's media consistently circulated discourses about the crucial importance of defending "the Christian world," and hardly addressed the brutalities of Nazism.

"…a People Activated by Such a Moderate Selfishness:" Missionary Theology and the News from China

When it came to wartime coverage of China, Time Inc.'s pattern of representing World War II as a battle to defend and expand Christendom converged powerfully with Luce's missionary background. Immediately after he finished promoting his "American Century"

[311] Willa M. Johnson and Kirk A. Johnson, "Karl Schwesig's *Schlegelkeller:* An Anatomy of a Rejected Warning of Prewar Violence at *LIFE* Magazine," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 30.1 (March 2017): 1-22.

concept, Luce threw himself into a more personal political project—encouraging U.S. American's sense of affinity with China and raising funds to support Chinese armies and civilians in the fight against Japan. The remaining sections of this chapter will show how Luce's commitment to China suffused Time Inc.'s magazines, motivated his religious and philanthropic work, and ultimately, determined which journalistic voices were empowered to address Time Inc.'s huge public.

Luce's missionary upbringing shaped the editor's understanding of how World War II figured within Chinese history, and world history more broadly. Luce's father, Henry Winters Luce, helped forge a liberal missionary theology that prioritized the eventual establishment of Christian churches lead by non-Western converts. These missionaries saw the unconverted as part of a process of constant, progressive movement toward world-wide Christianity and social betterment. Luce Sr. and his missionary colleagues saw atheism and secularism and as their true enemies, not non-Christian religions. This thinking diverged from more conservative approaches (which assumed stark divisions between the "heathen" and the convert) by recognizing that non-Christian religions possessed some true wisdoms, and that those wisdoms could be mobilized to bring converts into recognition of Christianity's ultimate superiority. Within their theological outlook, the meaningful (but inevitably incomplete) wisdom of indigenous Chinese religions meant that the Chinese people would ultimately come to accept Christianity and join the global fight against atheistic materialism on their own terms.[312]

[312] For discussions of the specific missionary theologies Henry W. Luce was immersed in, see Michael C. Coleman, "Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes Toward China and the Chinese, 1937-1900," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 56.3 (Fall, 1978), 185-200. Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 55-67. B.A Garside, *One Increasing Purpose: The Life of Henry Winters Luce* (New York, NY: Fleming R. Revell, 1948), and William R. Hutchison, "Modernism and Missions: The Liberal Search for an Exportable Theology, 1975-1935," in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* ed. John King Fairbank (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974) 110-131.

Decades later, Henry R. Luce saw Chinese politics during World War II as a confirmation of the missionary theology he was raised in. China's president Chiang Kai-shek and his wife Meiling Soong were both Methodists, who were deeply embedded in the missionary social worlds Luce knew well. Soong's father converted to Methodism in 1880 and went on to help establish the China YMCA. Chiang Kai-shek converted to Methodism in 1927, after marrying into the Soong family, and worked to firm up Chinese connections to U.S. Christian, philanthropic and business communities during his presidency.[313] Chiang's interest in "modernizing" China harmonized with the religious politics of his U.S. missionary colleagues. In the words of historian Paul Harvey, "Chiang Kai-shek spoke almost perfectly the language of religious progressivism, the direction that American missions moved in during the first third of the twentieth century. To put it more concisely, Chiang Kai-shek was (for them) an American religious progressive, full of ideas about the God-ordained movement toward freedom, democracy and progress."[314] While Protestant missionaries and their associates saw Chiang as an embodiment of their teleological theology, leftist groups in China experienced him as a ruthless and violent opponent, more invested in serving U.S. interests than improving the conditions of China's peasant class. Chiang was thus locked in disputes with precisely the atheistic forces nineteenth-century missionaries foresaw: the totalitarian Japanese to the east, and Chinese Communists at home.

Luce saw Chinese politics as evidence of the inexorable progress of Christianity worldwide. Just as he had with the promotion of his "American Century" concept, Luce threw his intense energy (and Time Inc.'s vast resources) into communicating China's world-historical importance to his U.S. constituencies. Luce organized an umbrella organization, called United

[313] Chang, *Fateful Ties*, 134.
[314] Paul Harvey, *Southern Religion in the World: Three Stories* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 7.

China Relief (UCR), to assemble charities and missionary organizations invested in directing resources to Chinese military and government institutions. As with previous campaigns, Luce used his celebrity to build momentum around UCR. He gave radio addresses, delivered remarks at elite gatherings, and was always photographed, tuxedoed and smiling, at the organization's many glamorous benefits.[315]

Luce's remarks on behalf of UCR typically argued that the Chinese people already possessed some version of the "Western values" espoused throughout Time Inc.'s magazines. At one large benefit at New York's historic Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Luce declared that, "Nowhere in God's world—no, not even in the British empire – nowhere in the whole world is there a people activated by such a moderate selfishness and by such deep devotion to the ideals of peace and decency and justice as the Chinese people."[316] In Luce's estimation, the Chinese commitment to the universal values of "peace," "decency" and "justice" exceeded that of even the United States' best known obvious ally. Here and in many other addresses at charity events and over the radio, Luce described the Chinese in a way that clearly resonated with his own magazine's descriptions of white U.S. Americans. Just like the white men and women who populated *Life,* these distant allies were self-sacrificing, peace-loving and pious.

When addressing Christian audiences, Luce emphasized the beneficence of ancient Chinese religious traditions to suggest that a mass embrace of Christianity in China was imminent. These remarks simultaneously echoed his father's missionary theology and rendered

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[315] Luce's work with the UCR is discussed in Brinkley, *The Publisher,* 274-277, Herzstein , *Henry Luce,* Time, *and the American Crusade in Asia,* 34-41. The addresses he to promote UCR's work are collected in the Henry R. Luce Papers in the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress. For contemporary coverage of UCR's high-profile events, see "Luce Urges U.S. To Give All Aid It Can to China, *New York Herald Tribune,* April 9, 1941, 23. "Allies Aid China," *New York Times,* December 14, 1942, 17, and "Luce Calls China Key," *The Christian Science Monitor,* April 23, 1942, 3.

[316] "Address made by HENRY R. LUCE at the United China Relief Dinner at the Waldorf Astoria," June 15, 1941, Folder 14, Box 70, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Chinese religion in the image of U.S. Protestantism. During a guest sermon at New York's St. Thomas Episcopal Church, for example, Luce wistfully described what he called "the holiest rite in Chinese religion." According to Luce, this ancient ritual (which was not named or linked to any particular Chinese religious tradition) involved the nation's political leader stepping away from his vast responsibilities to spend a solitary moment in a quiet, outdoor area "praying to heaven." Here, Luce made Chinese religion familiar and palatable to his Protestant audience by grafting the Christian concepts of "prayer" and "heaven" onto an unnamed Chinese ritual. From there, his sermon segued into an admiring discussion of Chiang Kai-shek's conversion and his loving partnership with Meiling Soong. He concluded by insisting that U.S. American Christians understand the Chinese as members of the Christian church, who required their help in vanquishing "a savage and perverted race" of invaders.[317] In both his addresses at the Waldorf-Astoria and his sermon at St. Thomas Church, Luce endeared U.S. Americans to China by rendering the Chinese as Christian Westerners in the making. Here as in his magazines, this description of the Chinese stood in sharp contrast to the dehumanizing and racist depictions of the Japanese.

Alongside this speaking and fundraising, Luce ensured that the readers of Time Inc.'s magazines would see Chinese politics in a Christian frame. By the time the United States entered the Second World War, Chiang Kai-shek had appeared on *Time*'s iconic re-bordered cover five times. In 1937, *Time* made Meiling Soong and Chiang Kaishek the first ever "Man and Wife of the Year." These stories always mentioned that Chiang was a committed Methodist, deadset on

[317] "Address- Dec. 13, 1942. St. Thomas Church," Folder 13, Box 71, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

defending China from the influence of communism and the aggression of the Japanese.[318] Beyond these cover stories, *Time*'s weekly news coverage periodically included discussions of Christian conversion rates in China. In one remarkable example, *Time'*s April 28, 1941, Religion column compared the conversation of China to the conversion of Rome, stating, "The conversion of Constantine will not be the only case where through political events Christianity has come into sudden power after long years of struggling growth."[319] In these instances, wartime reporting was shaped to communicate a missionary view of China's "progress" towards Christianity.

When it came to *Life*, Time Inc.'s fawning coverage of China's leadership was easily slotted into the magazine's reliable depiction of traditional gender roles. In 1942, *Life* dedicated one of the magazine's most beloved weekly features, "*Life* Goes Party," to emphasizing the Christianity and Americanness of China's leadership. In the four-page photo essay, *Life* attended the wedding of Tse-an Soong, Meiling Soong's brother, and Jih-iung Woon, the daughter of a powerful Chinese banker. The wedding, which took place at an Episcopal Church in San Francisco, was described as piously Christian and traditionally American, "The Soongs are a sternly Christian family, and Tse-an's wedding was thoroughly American rite performed by an Episcopal bishop," *Life* wrote, "Between clusters of chrysanthemums paraded choirboys, with ushers in cutaways and bridesmaids in pink satin."[320]

Endearing *Time* and *Life* readers to the Chinese required that they could tell them apart from the Japanese. This effort produced many profoundly racist articles insisting upon innate

[318] Chiang Kai-shek appeared on the cover of *Time* on April 4, 1927, October 26, 1931, December 11, 1933, November 9, 1936 and May 1, 1942. He was on the magazine's cover for a sixth time two weeks after Japan's surrender, on September 3, 1945.
[319] "Christianity in China," *Time,* April 28, 1941, 54-55.
[320] "Life Goes to a Wedding in the Soong Family," *Life*, January 12, 1942, 86-89.

racial differences between the Chinese and the Japanese. A *Time* article published shortly after Pearl Harbor provided a bullet-pointed list of tell-tale differences, with one stating "Those who know them best often rely on facial expression to tell them apart: the Chinese expression is likely to be more placid, kindly, open; the Japanese more positive, dogmatic, arrogant."[321] Predictably, *Life* cast Japanese difference in religious terms, claiming in one article that "Emperor worship unites Japan as no other nation in history has ever been."[322] With formulations like "emperor worship," *Life* neatly combined dangerous religion and dangerous government. This notion worked perfectly within the world-historic schema that Time Inc. advanced throughout its weekly magazines. When it came to domestic events, this journalism produced an imaginary wherein the internment of Japanese Americans might appear justifiable.[323] Producing these monolithic representations of benevolent Chinese Christianity and maniacal Japanese groupthink, of course, depended on the labors myriad of photographers, journalists, typists and switch board operators. The concluding sections of this chapter turns to the internal corporate dynamics the sustained Time Inc.'s external religious imaginary.

"The Right Kind of Parents and the Right Kind of Luck:" Theodore White's China Reporting and Henry R. Luce's Time Inc.

Maintaining Time Inc.'s coherent vision required a staff willing and able to advance Luce's party line. The career of Theodore White, Time Inc.'s premier China correspondent during the Second World War, demonstrates how Luce's commitment to advancing a particular narrative determined who was able to speak to Time Inc.'s massive public.

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[321] "How to Tell Your Friends From the Japs," *Time,* December 22, 1941, 33.
[322] "How Strong is Japan?" *Life,* August 16, 1943, 87-98.
[323] *Life'*s coverage of Japanese internment insisted that the forced relocation effort was utterly fair and humane, and that Japanese Americans were more than willing to sacrifice for the United States. See for example, "Coast Japs are Interned at Mountain Camp," *Life,* April 6, 1942, 15-19.

White's background was very different from the majority of the corporation's reporters and executives. White was born in 1915 to Russian immigrant parents. Growing up, he spoke Yiddish with his grandparents who lived upstairs, English with parents and siblings downstairs, and learned Hebrew at his Jewish elementary school. White earned a scholarship to Harvard, where he became fascinated with China and eager to add his stable of languages. He found a mentor in John King Fairbank, who would go on to become an eminent scholar of Chinese politics and foreign relations. Impressed by White's talent for Chinese languages and history, but cognizant that his background would likely exclude him from the patrician worlds of diplomacy and Orientalist academia, Fairbank suggested that he pursue journalism. He helped White acquire a scholarship that brought him to China immediately after his graduation in 1938. Within months, White met *Life'*s John Hersey. In 1939, Hersey hired White as a "stringer," a journalist who wrote descriptive, first-hand accounts of Chinese politics and personalities that could be quoted from or re-written as needed by Time Inc. staff journalists in New York.

The assumption that White could gain a foothold in journalism bore out, but the world of 1940s corporate news media was barely less homogenous than the elite worlds of politics and higher education. On top of *Time*'s very recent history of antisemitic reporting, White's religious and economic background made him an anomaly within the corporation. In a letter home, White observed that Hersey, his new coworker, "has the right kind of parents and the right kind of luck; and you add to that he went to the right kind of school."[324] Hersey, like Luce, was a Yale graduate and the son of Protestant missionaries to China. Hersey himself recalled that his background earned him rare journalistic autonomy and access to the executive suite. In a 1983 recollection of his career at Time Inc., Hersey wrote, "Because I, too, was a China mishkid, he

[324] Undated Correspondence, Folder 3, Box 1, Papers of Theodore White, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge MA.

[Luce] would call me to the 33rd floor, now and then, to discuss a China story. … Together we would explore a dozen approaches. Then he would say, 'Go and write it'—and it would be for me to choose which of the approaches to use."[325] Hersey was not the only one of White's immediate colleagues who shared Luce's familial connections to elite, white Protestant institutions. As I've already mentioned, two of *Time*'s leading editors, T.S. Matthews and Sam Welles, were the sons of Episcopal Bishops. Even beyond leadership positions, the corporation typically excluded Jews from influential positions. In his history of twentieth-century journalism, David Halberstam writes that, "*Time* in those days simply did not hire Jews. Jews were very much a *they.*"[326] White's language skills and engaging, descriptive cables nonetheless earned him a positive reputation in Time Inc.'s Manhattan offices.

Luce and White's shared commitment to China briefly transcended Time Inc.'s enduring parochialism. In April of 1941, almost immediately after the publication of his "American Century" essay, Henry and Clare Luce embarked on a trip to witness the rapidly evolving situation in China and meet Time Inc.'s storied new correspondent. After an arduous two week, five stop flight across the Pacific, the Luces were greeted like royalty. In White's recollection, Chinese government officials saw Luce as "China's single most powerful friend in America." The Luces were thus "banqueted endlessly" and whisked from site to site in chauffeured limousines.[327] When Luce grew tired of these orchestrated affairs, he sought out White. With White, Luce regained his language fluency and indulged his every curiosity about contemporary Chinese politics. Luce perceived in White (perhaps erroneously) a shared commitment to

[325] John Hersey, "A Portrait of the Editor as Evangel: Henry Luce's China Dream," *The New Republic,* May 2, 1983, 27-32.
[326] David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be,* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975) 71.
[327] White, *In Search of History,* 131.

Chiang's Nationalist government, and a shared optimism about the nations' future. The reporter and editor returned to the United States together, having quickly formed a meaningful bond.[328]

Upon their return, both Luce and White produced long, adoring essays about Chiang Kai-shek. Luce wrote a lighthearted, travelogue-style account of his trip for *Life*, which featured amateur photos by Clare and offered a rosy view of Chiang's pro-Christian, pro-capitalist leadership. China's first couple, he claimed, could talk "100% American faster than I have ever heard it talked."[329] During his fifteen-month return to the United States, White contributed to *Life*'s glowing accounts of Chinese politics with an admiring biographic profile of Chiang. White described China's leader as a man of simple origins and serious faith, committed to ending his beloved nation's long period of political and economic turmoil. The profile ended, predictably, with a solemn discussion of his conversion to Christianity.[330]

This glowing profile of was among the last of White's articles to tow the Luce line. When he returned to China in the fall of 1943, White witnessed circumstances that made it impossible for him to continue producing optimistic accounts of the Chinese Nationalist government. In his memoir, White described rampant government corruption, inflation that rendered everyday peoples' salaries worthless, and terrible living conditions across regions and social classes. Most jarring to White was the Honan province, an agricultural area where a combination of extractive taxation and periodic drought had created a deadly famine. Witnessing these dire circumstances made him increasingly sympathetic to China's Communist Party. In White's estimation, the Nationalist government was peopled by self-interested bureaucrats who had no interest in redressing China's colliding catastrophes. In this context, the opposition's desire to see a total

[328] White, *In Search of History,* 133-137.
[329] Henry R. Luce, "China: To the Mountains," *Life,* June 30, 1941, 82-96.
[330] Theodore White, "Chiang Kai-Shek," *Life,* March 2, 1942, 71-80.

regime change, and one that would empower everyday people, appeared absolutely neccesary.[331] These circumstances, particularly the Nationalist government's disinterest in addressing the Honan famine, made White "uncontrollably indignant." He spared no details in the reporting he submitted to *Time*. It was this reporting, White's first departure from Time Inc.'s desired wartime narrative, that drew the ire of Meiling Soong.

Starting shortly thereafter, Luce and White began to clash about how to represent the unfolding of Chinese history to U.S. audiences. In Spring of 1944, White returned to the United States to write a major piece on Chinses politics for *Life*. The first draft of his article set off a fiery exchange of voluminous memos and marked-up drafts. White's article argued that the Nationalist Government's corruption, dysfunction, and dictatorial leanings were deepening China's internal schisms at precisely the moment when a unified front against the Japanese was most crucial. It was his view that U.S. American readers needed to know the true state of affairs, and that no productive diplomatic alliance could be built on the mass circulation of sanguine half-truths.[332]

Luce, on the other hand, believed that the unpleasant realities of Chiang Kai-shek's governance could justifiably be occluded in pursuit of another, more important truth—the truth that Christian leadership in China was undeniably preferable to communism. In one long memo, he provided a thumbnail history of the nineteenth-century missionary efforts he was born into. He wrote about how nineteenth-century revivals in the U.S. motivated missionary endeavors, and how some missionaries had earnestly attempted to incorporate Confusion philosophy into their efforts. He lauded the Chinese communities that embraced Christianity and lamented those that refused it. Echoing the theology his father espoused, Luce claimed that the terrible conditions

[331] White, *In Search of History,* 161-164.
[332] White, *In Search of History,* 217.

White witnessed represented a regrettable, but perhaps unavoidable, period of growth wherein the Chinese struggled to translate the superior principles of the West into "their own indigenous morality." "China's reaction was slow, painful and confused," Luce concluded after his discussion of the missionary movement, "But it was clear that China must someday take her reformation into her own hands—a development devoutly wished for by the representatives of Christianity."[333]

White's equally dense response included no mention of Christianity or nineteenth-century missions. He wrote several pages detailing the scientific and philosophical sophistication of "the Orient," ultimately determining that the Chinese Nationalist Government was squarely responsible for all its own problems, which could thus be addressed by more democratic policy.[334] These memos reveal the degree to which White and Luce's perspectives diverged. For Luce, contemporary events could always be described within the sweeping, deterministic history of Christian global expansion. White's responses indicate that he was not operating within the same framework. His assessment of Chinese politics was devoid of the world historical grand narrative that shaped Luce's arguments. In his memoir, White noted the religious stakes of his exchange with Luce in an ironic tone, "What we were arguing about was the soul and purpose of Chiang K'ai-shek, whether redemption was possible for the sinner or whether America (meaning Time-Life-Fortune) must cast him out."[335]

Ultimately, White's landmark article, titled "*Life* Looks at China," was published with much of his analysis retained. Once the publication details were finalized, White wrote Luce a

[333] Memo From Henry R. Luce to Teddy White, Folder 21, Box 3, Theodore H. White Papers, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA.
[334] Memo from Teddy White to Mr. H.R. Luce, undated 1944, Folder 24, Box 416, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[335] White, *In Search of History,* 217.

warm note, "You and I both realize by now, I suppose, that on many political fundamentals we stand at variance," he wrote, "And I know how large a place China holds in your emotion. I know that to permit publication of such a piece in LIFE must have been a very great wrench to you."[336] In his memoir, White recalled being pleasantly surprised that Luce allowed for the inclusion of one particular line.[337] In "*Life* Looks at China" White wrote, "Today the Nationalist Party is dominated by a corrupt political clique that combines some of the worst features of Tammany Hall and the Spanish Inquisition."[338] White's particular points of comparison are worth noting. In likening Chiang's Chinese Nationalist government to "Tammany Hall and the Spanish Inquisition," White conjures the pinnacles of undemocratic, corrupt government and tyrannical, overzealous religion. For years Luce and Time Inc. had labored to prove that China was precisely the opposite—a progressive, liberal, Christian democracy. To suggest that the Nationalist Party represented both the worst of government and the worst of religion was to seriously contradict Time Inc.'s characterization of an important wartime ally. Luce would soon come to find a journalist more willing to participate in the production of his favored grand narrative.

The Ascent of Whittaker Chambers

Personnel changes in New York cemented the growing rift between White and his editor. In 1944, Luce promoted *Time* staff writer Whittaker Chambers from reviewing books to editing Foreign News. Chambers' biography and personal politics were remarkable. From 1925 to approximately 1937, Chambers was an active member of the Communist Party U.S.A. He wrote

[336] "Dear Harry…" undated 1994, Folder 21, Box 3, Theodore H. White Papers, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA.
[337] White, *In Search of History,* 217.
[338] Theodore H. White, "LIFE" LOOKS AT CHINA," *Life*, June 1, 1944, 103.

prolifically for *The Daily Worker* and *New Masses,* and even helped send classified U.S. government documents to Moscow. In the late 1930s Chambers grew deeply disillusioned with the Communist Party and defected. Anxious about how party members would receive his departure, he moved his family to a farm in Maryland and took a low-profile job reviewing books for *Time.* At the same time, Chambers embarked on an all-consuming religious conversion, instigated in part by his new position at the magazine. Sam Welles, the *Time* editor whose father was an Episcopal minister, invited Chambers to church, and ultimately facilitated his baptism at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in Manhattan. Even as Chambers arranged to become baptized as an Episcopalian, he remained drawn to Quakerism, the tradition he was raised in. Chambers yearned for the mystical, unmediated feeling of Quaker worship. In 1941, he and his family joined the Pipe Creek Monthly meeting near their Maryland farm.[339] These successive religious awakenings were simultaneous came as be processed his political disillusionment. Reflecting on his experiences inside the Communist Party, he determined that communism presented a grave and frightening danger to the world at-large.[340]

Chambers' intense disenchantment with communism and simultaneous conversions shaped his career at *Time.* In *Witness,* his voluminous memoir, he wrote that his task as *Time*'s Foreign News editor was, "to clarify, on the basis of the news, the religious and moral position that made Communism evil… it meant explaining, simply and readably for millions, the reasons why the Christians are right and the heathen are wrong."[341] Chamber's own account of his

[339] Whittaker Chambers, *Witness,* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Gateway Press, 1980) 129-130, 482-485. For a detailed discussion of Chamber's conversion, see Rebecca L. Davis, *Public Confessions: The Religious Conversions that Changed American Politics* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 43-66.
[340] Davis, *Public Confessions*, 54-60, H. Larry Ingle, "An Assessment of Whittaker Chambers, Quaker" *Fides et Historia* 50.1 (Winter 2018), 15-34.
[341] Chambers, *Witness,* 481.

journalistic duties, especially his use of the religious category "heathen" to describe communism, grafts perfectly on to the grand metanarrative that Luce and Time Inc. sought to advance.

Chamber's forceful religious and political commitments alienated him from many of his colleagues. Beyond treating his promotion as an opportunity to narrate the news in Christian terms, Chambers was committed to revealing hidden communist sympathies within Time Inc. He perceived his coworkers to be elite liberals who were naïvely unaware of how dangerous left-leaning politics could become. In a series of personal reflections on working with Chambers, T.S. Matthews, one of *Time*'s Managing Editors wrote, "This anti-Communist, anti-Russia attitude, which in a few years was to become the norm throughout the United States, seemed in those days embarrassingly peculiar to Chambers."[342] Time Inc. employees were also taken aback by his flagrantly politicized writing. A staff member responsible for fielding cables from international correspondents wrote, "Hell, I read the incoming cables and week after week and I am amazed to see how they are either misrepresented, left unprinted, or weaseled around to one man's way of thinking. I like Whit and I admire his slickness, but I wouldn't trust him with any set of facts about communism any more than I would trust John L. Lewis to ask for less wages for coal miners."[343]

Chamber's intensity, however, attracted Luce's attention and won his friendship. Chambers wrote that him and Luce, "… came to feel a bond of common editorial and journalistic intuition, and, more important, a common religious concern. For the world, which is accustomed to thinking of Luce as a publishing tycoon, does not know that he is also an intensely religious man."[344] Chambers' 1944 promotion to editing Foreign News demonstrates that his Christian

[342] "Whittaker Chambers," Undated, Folder 6, Box 17, T.S. Matthews Papers, Princeton University Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton, NJ.
[343] Quoted in Elson, *An Intimate History, Vol. II*, 107.
[344] Chambers, *Witness*, 494.

view of history and mission-driven approach to journalism ultimately earned him allies within Time Inc.'s upper echelons.

Still stationed in China, White grew increasingly disturbed by Time Inc.'s one-sided reporting. The cables he sent to New York looked less and less like what ultimately appeared in *Time.* With Chambers editing Foreign News, there was no way that any positive assessment of the Chinese Communist Party, or negative accounts of the Christian Chiang, would make it into the magazine. In November of 1944, Chambers edited a cover story on General Joe Stillwell, who commanded U.S. forces in China, such that the published story expressed a perspective completely opposite to what White wrote in his first-hand reports. This story set off a series of urgent correspondences from White, who could not contain his distress about Time Inc.'s incomplete reporting. In a letter to Matthews, White wrote, "Time's coverage of China in the past year has been unique: our columns on China, ever since the publication of the Stillwell cover, have been indistinguishable from the official propaganda of the Kuomintang party. In no other instance in world politics have we identified ourselves so undiscriminatingly with one man and one party."[345] *Time'*s editors never headed White's objections. In his reflections, Matthews admitted to empowering Chambers. "It was a bad situation: a Foreign News editor who despised his correspondents as fools (or even suspected that some of them were knaves), and an increasingly enraged crops of correspondents who considered the Foreign News editor insane or crooked or both." He wrote, "I had to make a choice: side with Chambers (Communist policy is cynical and sinister) or with his rebellious correspondents (Communist policy is humanitarian

[345] Memo from Teddy White to Tom Matthews (copy Allen Grover), undated 1945, Folder 1, Box 39, T.S. Matthews Papers, Princeton University Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton, NJ.

and hopeful). My choice was to uphold Chambers."[346] After several years of enjoying Luce's friendship and confidence, White found himself without authority or influence.

Chambers' platform only grew. He went on to write many prominent pieces for Time Inc., including a *Time* cover story on Reinhold Niebuhr and a multi-part *Life* special feature, to be discussed in the next chapter. In the years following the war, Chambers testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee and became an icon of far-right anti-communism. His memoir, *Witness,* is still widely read in conservative Christian circles. Remarkably, Chambers' religious conversion and journalistic career were enabled centrist, mainline journalists.

Conclusion: "An Eccentric Cog Which No Longer Fit in the Machinery"

As the war drew to a close in the summer of 1945, White did not join his colleagues' celebrations. He continued to send cables from China, insisting that U.S. readers receive fair and accurate reporting on the revolutionary activity, which would inevitably continue after Japan's surrender. His repeated criticisms of Time Inc.'s journalism eventually rankled Luce. At the beginning of 1946, Luce replied that because of White's evident communist sympathies, the company could no longer trust him to produce "unbiased" writing about China. He determined that White should return to New York to take-up a new assignment and "come to an understanding with your editors on what's meant by a non-partisan policy."[347] In Luce's rendering, of course, the Christian account of news was the "unbiased" one. Instead of heeding Luce's summons, White remained abroad and wrote *Thunder out of China,* a book-length work

[346] "Whittaker Chambers," Undated, Folder 6, Box 17, T.S. Matthews Papers, Princeton University Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton, NJ.
[347] Elson, *Intimate History,* 141.

of journalism on the communist revolution in China, which would ultimately win him considerable acclaim.[348]

When White eventually returned to New York, his relationship with Luce was irreparable. The media mogul's frustration with him was compounded by his simultaneous falling-out with John Hersey. While in China on an assignment for *Life*, Hersey stopped over in Japan, where he wrote *Hiroshima.* Hersey published his wrenching (and eventually award-winning) account of the Hiroshima bombing in *The New Yorker,* a longtime Time Inc. rival. In the space of a year, two of Time Inc.'s star war reporters determined that they would not let Luce's agenda constrain their writing. Luce's patience for tolerating talented writers with differing perspectives had expired. What's more, he was working alongside Chambers, who openly accused White and Hersey of communist sympathies.[349] After a tense conversation in "Luce's sunlit thirty-third-floor-offices," it became clear that White's career at Time Inc. was over. Recalling their parting conversation, White wrote, "… his voice lacked any affection; it was the voice of the organization examining an eccentric cog which no longer fit into the machinery."[350]

Viewed alongside the wartime content of *Time* and *Life,* White and Chamber's career trajectories demonstrate the priorities and exclusions that defined Time Inc. The Second World War provided the perfect occasion for Luce and his corporation to extrapolate and promote the notion that the United States was the leader of a global, Christian community, destined to

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[348] *Thunder Out of China* was co-authored with Annalee Jacoby. Annalee and her first husband, Melville Jacoby, were both Time Inc. war correspondents in the Pacific. In April of 1942, Melville was killed in an airplane accident while the couple was reporting from Brisbane, Australia. He was the first of several Time Inc. correspondents killed while covering World War II. Women correspondents were rarely allowed to remain abroad if they were not accompanied by their husbands. White, who was close with the couple, successfully petitioned Luce to allow Jacoby to continue her career. Elson, *World of Time Inc. Vol. II,* 4-5, White, *In Search of History,* 181, 221-222.
[349] In *Witness,* Chambers recalls naming White and Heresy as a Communist spies to Time Inc.'s leadership, 498. David Hollinger writes about Luce's falling out with John Hersey in *Protestants Abroad,* 37-50.
[350] White, *In Search of History,* 258.

vanquish their opponents and inherit the earth. When Time Inc. and many other U.S. American businesses experienced a postwar boom, this narrative took on a particularly triumphant tone.

PART III: THE POSTWAR PEAK, 1946-1955

On May 1, 1947 the 128 advertising salesmen of Time Inc. received a detailed update on the company's economic status since the end of the war. Howard Black, the director of the advertising division, enthusiastically announced that *Life* magazine was the most popular magazine in the history of the United States. "Until now, nobody has ever seen a weekly magazine with a circulation of 5,2000,000," Black gushed, "Nobody has ever seen such a magazine selling at 15 cents on the newsstand—and a sellout every weekend. This country's appetite for LIFE is like nothing ever heard of before." He went on to attribute this achievement to renewed editorial attention from Time Inc.'s chairman. "Harry Luce, the best editor of them all," he wrote, "is giving extra attention to LIFE, what this means for LIFE's readers is plain to see in the lively and important last few issues." Black's update went on to remind his audience of advertising salesmen that the stellar quality of the magazine was fundamentally dependent on the continued procurement of advertising dollars. Good content meant high costs, and it was up to those who acquired and maintained advertising accounts to buoy the magazine's continued success. The letter concluded with a note of warning, "From now on, the other departments and the company will be counting heavily on you to really produce."[351] In Black's telling, Time Inc.'s huge successes did not mean the corporation's salesmen could rest easy. Success needed to be stubbornly protected and exploited to reap even more success in the future.

Two months earlier, Henry R. Luce offered a similar injunction to an audience beyond Time Inc.'s corporate offices. In "The New Age of the Church," one of his occasional pieces for *The Christian Century*, Luce implored his audience of Protestant clergy and laypeople to take

[351] Correspondence from Howard Black to all Time Inc. Salesmen, May 1, 1947, Box 411, Folder 9, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

advantage their unparalleled power. “If today the laws of human society are not in conformity with the will of God, we cannot say that it is because God has not given us enough votes!” Luce declared. “Who disposes of the overwhelming economic and military power of the world? Obviously, the so-called Christian nations. We have the votes that dispose of the power. This is an awesome thing.” Luce went to speak directly to the Protestant leadership, urging them to work through their “scandals of disunity,” resist “following popular fancy,” and instead preach a rigorous, theological doctrine capable of leading their communities towards the best possible uses of global power and local influence.[352]

This article was one of many similar statements. The postwar years have been heralded as a moment of “religious revival,” wherein U.S. Americans flocked to churches and synagogues, enrolled their children in denominational programming, and watched movies about the Ten Commandments.[353] Luce was both swept up in this national moment, and had a hand in producing it. Indeed, some historical appraisals of this singular epoch in U.S. religious history have emphasized the crucial role of mass media and business in the production of a unified, national religious feeling.[354] As a well-known missionary’s son, active Presbyterian layman, and

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[352] Henry R. Luce, “The New Age of the Church,” *The Christian Century,* March 19, 1947, 362-365.

[353] For discussions of the postwar uptick in religious involvement, see Andrew Finstuen, *Original Sin and Everyday Protestants: The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, Billy Graham and Paul Tillich in an Age of Anxiety.* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) Johnathan Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America’s Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011) James Hudnut-Beulmer, *Looking for God in the Suburbs: The Religion of the American Dream and its Critics: 1945-1965* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994) Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2016), Melanie McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media and U.S Interests in the Middle East Since 1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 43-83, Jason W. Stevens, *God Fearing and Free: A Spiritual History of America’s Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010) and Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since WWII* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). In a more recent study, *Inventing American Religion: Polls, Surveys and the Tenuous Quest for a Nation’s Faith,* Wuthnow suggests that the post-war religious boom was recorded by pollsters overtly invested in evidencing the fervor of U.S. American’s faith.

[354] Studies that make this case most stridently are Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex* and Kruse, *One Nation Under God,* and Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Businessmen’s Crusade Against the New Deal* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 68-86. In *Looking for God in the Suburbs,* James Hudnut-Beulmer looks at the overlap of commercialism and midcentury religion alongside contemporary critiques.

chairman of one of the nation's most visible media corporations, Luce was frequently invited to address invigorated Protestant audiences across the U.S. Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s he dabbled in theological writing, spoke at seminary convocations, addressed ecumenical meetings, and sermonized at charity events. In 1947 alone, he spoke at fundraisers for the Y.M.C.A and a Protestant orphanage in Pennsylvania, delivered keynotes at the annual meetings of Church Federation of Greater Chicago and the New York State All-Protestants Pastorate, and wrote a fawning preface for Ohio Pastor Roy L. Burkhart's short book, *How the Church Grows.* He kept up this busy schedule of Protestant speaking and writing until his retirement in 1964.[355] In almost all instances, Luce's statements to religious audiences were enthusiastic calls to arms. He goaded audiences to dispense with "vague moralisms" and assertively "affect the laws of our country and the world."[356] He insisted that the values espoused by white U.S. Protestants were the engine of the nation's wartime and postwar successes, and that those values would surely uplift and benefit populations outside the churches and beyond U.S. borders.[357]

Both chapters in this section examine the late 1940s and early 1950s, when Luce labored to exert religious influence while Time Inc. enjoyed its moment of peak saturation. Taken together, these chapters contrast Luce and *Life'*s celebratory vision of a nation unified by Christian commitment with the disunity the corporation constantly confronted and mediated. Chapter 5, Special Issues: Christianity in *Life* Magazine," draws out the religious imaginary articulated in *Life* magazine with reference to two "special" projects, the magazines' 1947-1948 series on "Western Culture" and its 1955 special issue on Christianity. I demonstrate that while

[355] See, Index to Henry R. Luce's Speeches and Writings, Box 167, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[356] These two terms are draw from "I wish to speak about the Church…" November 11, 1947, Henry R. Luce Papers, Folder 9, Box 72, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[357] For a representative sample of Luce's speaking on Protestant topics, see Chapter 7, "Christian and Other Truths," in *The Ideas of Henry Luce,* ed. John K Jessup (New York, NY: Athenuem, 1969), 281-332.

these confident, totalizing assertions of U.S. Christian purpose registered Luce's urge to define a unifying national religious project, they were forged through assertions of Protestant superiority in the halls of Time Inc. The following chapter, "A Rise in 'Dry Sentiment:' The Postwar Temperance Movement and other Critics of Time Inc." looks at the anxieties that circulated around Time Inc. during the same years. While Luce sought to claim religious authority through his speaking, writing, and publishing, a diverse constituency of Protestants worried that he was under the dangerous influence of conspiratorial networks, namely, the liquor industry and Catholic elites. Together, these chapters show that the postwar period was marked by more religious tension and dispute than many historians have assumed.

Historian's appraisals of postwar religious enthusiasm are often stories of close collaboration and smooth collusion. Looking to objects like *Time* and *Life'*s flashy coverage of Christianity, historians have depicted the postwar years as a moment when Christian and corporate interests consolidated power and firmed-up their shared commitment to denouncing the global influence of communism.[358] Very much in keeping with this narrative, the "Christian America" Luce promoted in his speaking and imagined in *Life* magazine was geopolitical in its ambition and world historical in its conception. Luce unflinchingly championed the idea, emphasized in this historiography, that U.S. religiosity served as a crucial prophylactic against the threat of "godless" communism. This discourse continued neatly from the atheistic-authoritarianism versus Christian-democracy narrative honed during World War II.

Looking to the production and reception of Luce's religious injunctions, especially as they appeared in *Life* magazine, discloses more tension and disunity than the current

[358] Darren Dochuck, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex*, Darren Grem, *Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016) Kruse, *One Nation Under God,* Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands.*

historiography would suggest. These chapters are motived by historian Kim Phillips-Fein's observation that many studies have "read conservativism's success backward through postwar history."[359] Luce and others' assertion that Christianity and capitalism necessarily undergirded U.S. nationhood were convincing, powerful, and enduring, but they were not representative. These statements were made in a fractious religious environment that did not take easily to the assertion of corporate moral authority. Here, I emphasize disunity and dissent to render the corporate production of midcentury religion more unstable and less inevitable.

[359] Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservativism: A State of the Field," *Journal of American History* 98.3 (December 2011), 739.

Chapter 5: Special Issues: Christianity in *Life* Magazine

On December 23rd, 1955 the editors of *Life* magazine released an issue unlike any other before: a special issue dedicated entirely to Christianity. For the first time in the weekly magazine's nineteen-year history two issues were combined into one, and the cover price was nearly doubled to match the voluminous length. Subscribers received the issue in "a handsome gift envelope" and the heavy gold cover, printed on pricier-than-usual paper stock and stamped with the image of a striking medieval crucifix, stood apart from everything else on the newsstands.[360] The issue elicited a strong response from readers. "I wept without shame when I saw the Christianity issue," wrote-in Reverend Allen McClellan of the Southern Baptist Convention. Another letter to the editors said simply, "Sirs: Your Christianity issue should do more for America than anything printed since the Bible."[361] It's likely that these readers were not only moved by the magazine's impressive content and material form, but also the immense visibility that they knew it would have.

When *Life*'s special issue on Christianity appeared at the end of 1955, the magazine had been printing and promoting such high budget "specials" for nearly a decade. *Life*'s "specials" were breaks from the magazine's usual, optimistic potpourri of photographic content. Sometimes specials took the form of magazine issues dedicated entirely to one pressing theme. Other times they were long articles serialized over the course of multiple consecutive issues. In the postwar years, when the magazine was flush with cash and enormously visible, specials became a mainstay. The editors spared no expense on these features, using them to express and maintain the magazine's singular cultural prestige. Vivid images were captured by photographers

[360] "More Good Reasons for Giving Life Magazine This Christmas," *Life* 39.22, November 28, 1955, 147.
[361] "Letters to the Editors on the Christianity Issue," *Life* 40.3, January 16, 1956, 8-9.

transported to the most remote locales and urgent written commentary was supplied by esteemed experts. In the words of former staff writer Dora Jane Hamblin, "every physical or human aid known to man was pressed into the preparation of a special."[362]

In this chapter, I look closely at two postwar specials that focused on themes of Christianity and U.S. nationhood, *Life'*s 1947 series on Western Culture and 1955 special issue on Christianity. This media merits special attention because of its intense visibility. As Howard Black boasted to Time Inc.'s advertising team in 1947, midcentury issues of *Life* magazine had a larger audience than any other magazine in the history of the United States. At the end of 1955, *Life* enjoyed 5.6 million paying readers every week.[363] These paying readers represented only a fraction of those who saw the magazine. Time Inc.'s advertising and market research divisions estimated that between five and seventeen individuals looked at each copy in circulation. In 1950, the Alfred Politz Market Research Agency determined that over a thirteen week period, half of all U.S. Americans ten years of age or older had seen or handled a copy on *Life.* In 1954, the Agency raised that figure to 60 percent.[364] Special features were more likely to sell out on newsstands, producing a bump in these already tremendous figures.[365] Because of *Life* specials' immense circulation, the religious arguments and narratives advanced in these magazine issues likely found a much larger audience than many other religious discourses of their time.

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[362] Dora Jane Hamblin, *That was the LIFE: The Upstairs Downstairs Behind-the-Doors Story of America's Favorite Magazine* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 286.
[363] "TIME INCORPORATED, NEW YORK, NY." Annual Report to Stockholders, 1955. ProQuest Annual Reports.
[364] Memoranda from Ed Miller to Mr. Roy Larsen, March 14, 1951, Folder 27, Box 434, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY, James L. Baughman, "Who Read *Life?* The Circulation of America's Favorite Magazine," in *Looking at* Life ed. Erika Doss, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001), 42.
[365] The assumption that *Life* "specials" sold out more reliably than other issues is evident across Time Inc.'s midcentury financial papers. Former *Life* Managing Editor Edward K. Thompson also recalled that specials sold out more frequently in his memoir, *A Love Affair with LIFE & Smithsonian* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1995) 159.

In keeping with the editorial patterns *Life* established during World War II, specials reliably advanced confident claims about the exceptional status of the United States, the nation's place in world politics, and the crucial role of Christianity in current events. A body of scholarship has looked at religion and popular culture in the postwar years, demonstrating that, in the words of Kevin M. Kruse, "popular culture and political culture sang from the same hymnal."[366] Kruse and others argue that in the years immediately following World War II, conversative politicians, businessmen, and clergy collaborated around the production of a discourse pitting U.S. American Christianity and capitalism against the threat of an ostensibly "godless" communism, which sought to annihilate both free markets and free religion. These works suggest that religious ideas and idioms were opportunistically deployed to rile U.S. Americans against left-leaning economic policy at home, and communist states abroad.[367] Many studies follow this argument with the observation that postwar U.S. Christianity became at once more open and more generic. These scholars often look to sociologist Will Herberg's 1955 *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, which bemoaned the rise of a lay religiosity devoid of demanding ethical injunctions, or President Dwight Eisenhower's oft-quoted statement that "Our form of government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply religious faith, and I don't care what it is," to evidence a pervasive thinning of theological specificity.[368] In sum, the postwar religious "boom" has been described as a moment when precise theological injunctions were swapped out for a nonspecific piety that embraced consumerism and "the American way."

[366] Kruse, *One Nation Under God*, 130.
[367] This argument appears in Darren Dochuk, *From Sunbelt to Bible Belt,* Grem, *Blessings of Business,* Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex* Kruse, *One Nation Under God,* and Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands*.
[368] Studies that emphasize the rise of a more generic religiosity in the postwar years include Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex* Kruse, *One Nation Under God,* Hudnut-Beulmer, *Looking for God in the Suburbs.*

While Luce and Time Inc. certainly advanced the Christian anticommunist discourse this historiography describes, bringing the production and circulation of *Life'*s special issues into the archive of religion, popular culture and the Cold War deepens and complicates the existing narrative on several counts. First, when we examine Cold War-era *Life* magazines in the context of the periodical's wartime output, we see that the religious discourses permeating the magazine changed very little. In his *Spiritual Industrial Complex,* historian Jonathan Herzog notes that many politicians and journalists framed the Second World War in Christian terms, but nonetheless concludes that "World War II did not feel like a holy war to most Americans."[369] Viewed from the pages of *Life*, similar religious narratives were a constant from the early 1940s through to the mid-1960s. By the postwar years, communism and fascism were lumped together as basically equivalent "totalitarianisms," with both governmental forms serving as a foil of sinister, atheistic, collectivism against which U.S. readers were prompted to define themselves as benevolent, Christian, and entrepreneurial.[370] In all cases, U.S. Americans were encouraged to understand themselves as part of a great, embattled civilization premised on fundamentally theistic principles.

Beyond showing the continuity between wartime and Cold War discourses, looking to the production of *Life'*s special issues complicates prevailing generalizations about the content of postwar theologies. The editorial deliberations that shaped *Life'*s 1947-48 series on Western Culture and 1955 special issue on Christianity suggest that, when it came to Time Inc., the waning of theological particularity was more of an ambition than a reality. Beginning after the war, Luce became obsessed by the goal of articulating and advancing a unified and unifying

[369] Herzog, *Spiritual Industrial Complex,* 36.
[370] In *Dictators, Democracy & American Public Culture* Alpers historicizes the term "totalitarianism," emphasizing it's vague and shifting parameters. Alpers argues that the term typically functions to misleadingly elide communism and fascism, suggesting that both systems of government are essentially alike, 59-76.

"American" project. This ambition resonated across his work. While he implored Protestant audiences to find meaningful common ground, he simultaneously worried that *Life* lacked a unified voice. Luce's efforts to imagine a unified "American" public bound together by shared Christian history and moral purpose is evident in both the magazine project described in this chapter.

The specifics of the issues, however, show that despites all pretentions to "unity" Catholic and Protestant perspectives were not easily harmonized. The exchanges that ensued throughout production of both the Western Culture series and the Christianity special issue make clear that representatives of both traditions were not eager to compromise their respective theological perspectives. The Western Culture series overtly celebrated Protestantism as Christianity's ideal form. This presumption appeared in the magazine itself and in the halls of Time Inc. Less than ten years later, the special issue on Christianity made more ecumenical gestures. Because of the periodical's huge reach, it was incumbent upon the editors to represent both Catholicism and Protestantism within the pages of the magazine. Echoing the preferences exhibited during the Western Culture series, the processes through which the Christianity issue came together demonstrate the continued prioritization of Protestant perspectives backstage. What's more, the production of this singular issue shows that some midcentury U.S. Americans were not so swift to merge their Christianity with their capitalism. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the challenges Time Inc. editors encountered in securing advertisements for the special issue on Christianity.

Finally, I dwell in *Life'*s postwar special issues to show how the Christian, civilizational discourse pitting U.S. democracy, piety and capitalism against atheistic collectivism provided the narrative architecture for nearly all *Life'*s weekly non-fiction content, thereby constantly blurring

description and prescription. Pronouncements of the United States' fundamental Christianity emerged across articles on the Italian Renaissance, public schools, and advancements in ocean sciences. Beyond just opportunistically demonizing leftists and leftism at a politically sensitive moment, *Life'*s Christian content told their predominantly white, middle-class readership who they were and how they should be in the world. Ardently, repeatedly, and across its varied content, *Life* magazine delivered the message that midcentury, white, U.S. Christianity represented the apogee of all world cultures. The magazines specials typified this tendency.

The Search for Philosophical Unity

While Luce traversed the U.S., calling Protestant assemblies to action, he and his colleagues at Time Inc. approached their newly flush platform with heady excitement. In a 1946 letter to his colleagues, Luce worried that *Life* betrayed a "jittery uncertainty." Like the Protestant audiences he was addressing week after week, Luce felt that *Life* was not adequately motivated by a core, transcendent philosophy. In 1946 he initiated a formal "re-thinking" of *Life.* The goal was to "settle on a final post-war 'pattern' or 'philosophy'" for the magazine. He began this effort by circulating his "fundamental prescriptions" for *Life* to the Managing Editors and soliciting their input.[371] This correspondence initiated an enthusiastic volleying of ambitious suggestions, which continued on and off for the next several years. The editors' aspirations for *Life* were wide-ranging and often explicitly pedagogic. *Life* editor and co-creator Daniel Longwell asserted and re-asserted his conviction that that photograph is "a great instrument of education," and encouraged his colleagues to ask how *Life'*s signature visuality could be used to make complex subjects more accessible to the magazine's immense public. Longwell suggested

[371] Memo from Mr. Luce to Mr. Heiskell cc: Messrs. Billings, Larsen, Grover, Longwell, September 25, 1946, Folder 1, Box 434, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

that the magazine introduce an ambitious section on "Politics, Economics and Sociology," which would "canvas all books that are interpretive of America and world events, and if at all possible bring their value to LIFE."[372]

A series of similar memos from Luce echoed Longwell's interest in *Life*'s academic potential. In one, Luce suggested a *Life* series "that would be a combination of an introduction to, and summary of, Freshman Psychology A… done with pictures, diagrams, as well as text and also a with a certain degree of journalistic whimsy."[373] In another postwar directive to his staff, Luce asserted that the magazine's unique capacity to print high quality visuals meant they should commit to covering the art world. He proposed that "we might take a number of Big Subjects such as Woman, War, Nature, and show how Art in various times and places has conceived of these subjects." He further insisted that each art feature be "a thing of beauty and a joy, but also related to the life and 'soul' of the reader."[374] In this memo and others, Luce and his colleagues act on the assumption that their journalism should contribute to deepening readers' sense of purpose and self.

This self-cultivation was explicitly directed at the magazine's audience of financially stable, white suburbanites. In a note covered in jottings and marginalia from colleagues, editor Joseph Thorndike wrote excitedly that *Life* should guide readers' decision making at a historic juncture when many enjoyed more options and mobility than ever before. "It is a time when people wonder if they should move to California;" Thorndike wrote, "if (in the case of women) they should give up their jobs to take care of their children; if (in the case of men) they should

[372] "LIFE PLANS," Undated 1946, Box 226, Folder 2, Daniel Longwell Papers, Columbia University Rare Books and Special Collections, New York, NY.
[373] Memo from Mr. Luce to Mr. Thorndike cc: Messers Heiskell, Longwell, Hicks, Thompson, October 20, 1948, Folder 6, Box 55, Henry R. Luce Papers, Notable Memoranda Series, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[374] Memo from Mr. Luce to Messrs. Billings, Grover, Larsen and Longwell, September 25, 1946, Folder 1, Box 434, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

start a little business; if they should get divorced – or get a hobby – or get religion; if they should build a house and if so, whether in the city, suburbs or country. One thing that I think we can do is to show our readers what these various choices involve."[375] In all these correspondences, *Life's* editors assumed that their role was to guide, shape, and cultivate the worldviews of those upper- and middle-class U.S. Americans capable of building houses, staying home with the children, or starting "a little business." These readers were hailed as the denizens of a great civilization, requiring the most erudite magazine content to guide their crucial decisions.

These lofty aims required massive editorial efforts. Hamblin recalls that "Special issue were often a year in the making, produced by a small New York staff which was removed from all other duties… A stream of orders went out from this nucleus to bureaus all over the world; to artists, photographers, reporters; and a stream of requests went out to experts in whatever field the special issue was to cover."[376] Time Inc. was able to dedicate this kind of energy to specials because the editors assumed that these unique features paid dividends. Readers enjoyed specials and frequently picked them up from newsstands, so advertisers were more eager to purchase space. With these ambitious projects underway, *Life's* production took on a new tenor and scope. One staff journalist recalled that "What had once been a young, ebullient, free-wheeling staff seemed bowed down now by responsibility for the education and instruction of its vast audience."[377] For Luce, "the education and instruction" of readers entailed locating them within a view of history similar to the one he presented to Protestant audiences.

Both his efforts at *Life* and his religious speaking were galvanized by a similar search for unified purpose. Luce's keynote address at the 1948 National Assembly of the United Council of

[375] Memo to Mr. Longwell from Joseph J. Thorndike Jr., June 20, 1946. Folder 1, Box 434, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[376] Hamblin, *That Was the LIFE,* 286.
[377] Elson, *Time Inc.*, 192.

Church Women in Milwaukee, Wisconsin provides a useful introduction to the religious narratives and aspirations that ultimately shaped *Life*'s impressive special productions. Luce began this address by sharing an anecdote. He described a chat with a local pastor who assumed that his congregants would not be interested in his recent trip to Amsterdam for the World Council of Churches. Luce found this tale deeply concerning. This pastor's experience, he warned, showed that "The need for the unity of Christ's Church has hitherto meant less to American Protestants than to any other large Christians anywhere at any time." U.S. Protestants' disinterest in the global unity of Christianity, he surmised, might be because they were lulled by the comforts of living in an avowedly Christian nation. This complacency, Luce cautioned the assembled churchwomen, would have to end. Because the United States was called to "world-wide responsibilities" it was incumbent upon "American Christianity" to shed its divisions and provincialisms to become universally urgent and relevant.[378]

The rest of Luce's address performed a "reverent and imaginative sweep of Christian history," intended to remind the assembled church women that they were the contemporary inheritors of a long and noble Christian history, and citizens of a worldwide community badly in need of that tradition's wisdom. Luce's account of Christian history argued that whenever Christians took responsibility for governance or waged war on their own behalf, social flourishing ensued. He began with the conversion of the Roman Emperor Caesar (regarding this history, he claimed, "Christians were bound to become responsible for the state"), jumped quickly to the Renaissance and Middle Ages, and then concluded with the Second World War. In all instances, dangerous forms of "barbarism" were vanquished thanks to leaders and everyday

[378] "Address for The Church Women's Dinner of the National Assembly of United Council of Church Women at Milwaukee, November 16th, '48," Henry R. Luce Papers, Folder 8, Box 72, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

citizens willing to champion Christianity in the public realms of governance, economics, and war. Luce concluded by imploring his audience to do the same. It was their duty, Luce proclaimed, to "take responsibility" for the nation and the world as Christians, and in the name of a robust, ecumenical Christian unity.[379]

This dramatic address provides a useful introduction to the *Life* specials Luce was editing at the same time. First, Luce avidly took the advice he offered, bringing his own Christian commitments to bear on his work in the world. Second, *Life'*s specials framed the United States' special mission within a long, world-historical arch, as Luce did in his address to the church women. When it came to *Life'*s 1947-1948 feature on Western Culture, Luce emphasized the need for righteous violence. Echoing his earlier account of Protestant missions in China, Luce's speech to the churchwoman and *Life'*s Western Culture series both asserted that violence and suffering were an unfortunate but ultimately excusable outcome of Christianity's teleological sweep. Finally, Luce's speech imagined and insisted upon a totalizing "Christianity," free of disabling division. While this vision was brought to life in the magazines, particularly in the 1955 special Christianity issue, producing such visions of unified purpose did not evoke unity in Time Inc.'s offices.

"A Citadel, An Arsenal, and an Altar:" Christianity in *Life* Magazine's History of Western Culture Series

*Life'*s first specials were animated by the exciting possibilities of a post-war world. Longwell recalls that during *Life'*s initial re-thinking some editors hoped to publish photos of European art that had been inaccessible during the Second World War, and others wanted to

[379] "Address for The Church Women's Dinner of the National Assembly of United Council of Church Women at Milwaukee, November 16th, '48," Henry R. Luce Papers, Folder 8, Box 72, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

cover U.S. and European political history. Luce's answer to both suggestions was a series of articles on the "History of Western Culture" that could the combine the European art, politics, religion, and technology that influenced contemporary white culture in the United States.[380] Luce's framing of the series was likely influenced by Whittaker Chambers, who was obsessed by notions of "the West," and certain that this imagined civilizational form was mortally threatened by communism.[381] Chambers ultimately wrote much of the series, but did not receive a byline because his writing was so heavily edited as to make the final product a "team effort."[382] In *Witness*, he grumbled that the published series' "glorification of the gluttonous pursuit of pleasure, secular good works and progress was not the one I originally wrote."[383] Indeed, the Western Culture series blended Christian triumphalism with celebrations of "the West's" material and technological advancements.

*Life'*s "The History of Western Culture" series ran from March of 1947 to November of 1948. The first six installments of appeared between March and November of 1947, with each article appearing approximately six weeks apart. The first installment prefaced the series with a grandiose statement of purpose. "Americans need perspective on their past so they can determine their future," the editors wrote, "To an extent they have never had before, they have now the opportunity to preserve and develop the culture which they have inherited, and which has in it so much greatness and beauty."[384] With the claim that *Life'*s history of Europe would introduce readers to their own past, the magazine hailed its readers as white and European. Echoes of the civilizational discourses Time Inc. advanced leading up to and during the Second World War are

[380] Dan Longwell Oral History Interviews, March 5 1956, Folder 2, Box 226, Daniel Longwell Papers, Columbia University Rare Books and Special Collections, New York, NY.
[381] Davis, *Public Confessions,* 57.
[382] Memo from Joseph J. Thorndike to Mr. Luce, August 14, 1947, Folder 5, Box 434, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[383] Chambers, *Witness,* 508.
[384] "LIFE Announces a Series of Articles on the History of Western Culture," *Life*, March 3, 1947, 69.

clear: the U.S. and its European Allies are named as exemplars of a great world historical tradition, recently snatched from the jaws of catastrophe. Having emerged triumphant, the *Life* reader was now charged with the responsibility to study and preserve the history and culture saved through massive wartime sacrifice.

In *Life's* telling, the hallmarks of the readers' inherited tradition were Christianity, technological savvy, and capitalism. The Western Culture articles that appeared in 1947 were an episodic mélange of European history, shot through with suggestive references to the present. As per *Life'*s format, the Western Culture pieces were comprised primarily of pictures. Each article included between six and ten pages of full color images. These images included high-quality reproductions of Italian frescos and oil paintings, detailed maps, and color photographs of historical objects and architecture. Their arrangement was not neatly chronological. The first article began the series in Renaissance Italy, which was narrated as a time and place when Christianity was brought into harmony with the "optimistic" expansion of fine arts, world travel and trade.[385] The second and third installments both focused on the Middle Ages, lauded as a period of vigorous Christian faith and surprising technological sophistication.[386] The fifth article in the series returned to Renaissance Italy, and the final two Western Culture articles of 1947 covered the French Enlightenment and Edwardian England, which were both depicted as scientifically and intellectually exciting, but regrettably influenced by the pursuit of leisure.[387] The texts that wove through each article's rich visuals thus characterized the imagined reader's cultural inheritance as a blend of ardent innovation and deep religious faith.

[385] "Renaissance Man," *Life,* March 3, 1947, 70-83 and "The Glory of Venice," *Life,* August 4, 1947, 50-71.
[386] "The Middle Ages," *Life,* April 7, 1947, 67-70, continued 100-102, "Medieval Life," *Life,* May 26, 1947, 65-82.
[387] "The Edwardians," *Life*, November 17, 1947, 75-92.

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 8: The opening two pages of the second installment of *Life*'s 1947 Western Culture series, on "The Middle Ages." As this image of Reims Cathedral, built in 1212 in Reims, France, suggests, *Life'*s assertion that Christianity was central to readers' cultural heritage was expressed visually, through mulitple images of churches, Christian statuary, and devotional art throughout the series. What's more, the headline, "Out of violence and choas the Christian mind and spirit created a glowing era when men know that all things were possible to faith," captures the religious message and tone of the series as a whole. "The Middle Ages," *Life,* April 7, 1947, 67-68.

Each article literally located contemporary U.S. readers amidst great moments in European history. The series opened with an image of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, the fifteenth century polymath who became Pope Pius II. His portrait sat above the following description: "If by a miracle the young man in the fashionable hat pictured above were transported across the centuries into a Pullman-car smoker, he would find himself—except for his clothes and language and topical knowledge—pretty much at home with his fellow passengers and they in turn would enjoy his talk. He liked travel, politics, wine and women and he knew the importance of humor."[388] In a similar move, the year's final Western Culture article, on Edwardian England, likened early twentieth-century British nobility watching an imperial military display to "any small-town American sitting on their front porch to watch a Fourth of July parade."[389] With phrases like these *Life'*s predominantly white, affluent readership was slotted into a storied past

[388] "Renaissance Man," *Life,* March 3, 1947, 70.
[389] "The Age of Enlightenment," *Life*, September 15, 1947, 75-93. "The Edwardians," *Life*, November 17, 1947, 82.

in which bold, creative men pursued beauty and knowledge, inspired by honorable Christianity commitments.

In his appraisal of the first six articles of the Western Culture series, Luce found that the themes of Christianity and U.S. nationhood, and one's relationship to the other, were not stated clearly enough. He praised the articles that ran in 1947 for effectively conceiving of "Western Culture" as a unified entity, in which the reader was implied. He wrote, "…in a few rather brilliant strokes LIFE has shown a) that 'civilization' isn't just a word – it's something that 'means you'! and b) that Western Civilization (which particularly means you) has had this and that special look and feel." Looking ahead to the editors' outline for the 1948 Western Culture articles, Luce predictably worried that plans for the rest of the series lacked a "unifying dynamic theme." He went on state his desired message for the next series of articles. Luce's specific directives to *Life'*s editorial staff began, "The unifying dynamic theme is how historic forces and occurrences, under Providence, brought about the U.S.A." In the following pages of notes, which are worth quoting at length, Luce described the historical arch he wanted the next Western Culture articles to convey:

> I say there are three values which showed themselves in Western Civilization which are superlative values and which may be considered separately although in fact all three were always organically related. These values are 1) Christianity 2) Freedom – political and intellectual 3) Material advancement. … As to Christianity, my plea as a Protestant will be this that a) in fact there has been as much if not more outpouring of the Spirit of Christianity on this continent as ever there was in Europe or b) if the foregoing be denied, then in any case the U.S.A is the outstanding instance of Protestantism <u>and</u> this is vital—c) if it had not been for the Protestant Reformation, it is likely that the corruption of Christianity would have deepened and that Christianity would have all but disappeared. Protestantism saved Christianity; it gave Catholicism its chance for its counter-reformation; and today in the midst of the most wide-spread, materialistic, pleasure-yielding culture the world has ever seen, we have both of the great branches of Christianity showing many evidences of vitality.[390]

[390] Memo From Mr. Luce to Mr. Thorndike cc: Mr. Billings, September 8, 1947, Folder 5, Box 434, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

In the above memo, Luce describes the United States as the savior and bastion of global Christianity and insists ("as a Protestant") that this perspective appear in the pages of *Life*. Echoing his addresses to Protestant audiences, Luce conceives of the United States as the culmination and actualization of a progressive providential history. At the same time, he explicitly discloses his perspective on the relationship between Protestantism and Catholicism. While publicly insisting on ecumenicism, Luce states here that he is fundamentally motivated to convince readers that "Protestantism saved Christianity," thus offering the Catholic church an opportunity to reform its "corruption." Both these views—that the United States represented the apogee all Christian history, and that the Protestantism "saved" Christianity—found their way into *Life'*s special series.

Only four Western Culture articles appeared in 1948. As per Luce's instructions, each one built steadily towards the establishment of the United States, gradually arguing that the new nation would finally allow Europe's troubled Christianity to flourish. The first piece in the series, titled "The Age of Exploration," celebrated the journeys of Christopher Columbus and other European imperialists. Looking ahead to the establishment of the U.S., the article concluded that although motivated by a laudable "crusading temper," Spanish conquests "left mostly stark, sun-baked missions in the desert," which would be surpassed by the orderly, civilizing forces of British colonialism.[391] The piece made no mention of the Atlantic slave trade, the genocide of indigenous peoples, or colonists' unscrupulous and unsustainable extraction of natural resources, allowing readers to perceive the early history of the Americas as the straightforward success of triumphant, visionary European men.

[391] "The Age of Exploration," *Life,* March 22, 1948, 74-101.

The following article in the Western Culture series stridently laid out Luce's desired view on the Protestant Reformation. Titled "The Protestant Revolution," it was the longest and most densely textual in the entire series. In copy that wove between multiple, full-page oil paintings of Martin Luther and the Thirty Years War, *Life* described the Reformation as a valiant battle of ideas, and the true dawn of modernity.[392] The article described the sectarian violence waged on behalf of the Reformation as an expression of humanity's most noble qualities. As it reached its crescendo, the piece exclaimed, "It has been observed that in the name of religion the Reformation caused more death and destruction than the Huns. For when men are resolved to test in agony the three insights that constitute their highest manhood—love of truth, love of freedom and that love of God from which alone the other two derive their meaning—horror is an inevitable reflex of humanity at strife."[393] With this elaborate phrase, *Life* swiftly summed up the "highest" human qualities, attributed all of them to a universal love of God, and justified any violence those qualities might provoke. The magazine's celebration of the Reformation as a heroic battle to relinquish a corrupt faith reproduced Luce's statement that "Protestantism saved Christianity."

*Life'*s "Protestant Revolution" article concluded in sixteenth century Netherlands, describing Calvinism and Dutch commerce as evidence that Protestant societies, although won through violence, ultimately expressed humanity's best tendencies. "The spirit of freedom which found its religious expression in Protestantism found its secular expression in commerce," *Life* wrote, "Commerce was the high adventure of the age, calling forth in a supreme degree the qualities that the new faith and the wars of faith developed—individual initiative, enterprise, vigor, perseverance. To this spirit, mysticism was meaningless and embarrassing." In the

[392] "The Protestant Revolution," *Life*, June 14, 1948, 58-66, continued 82-94.
[393] "The Protestant Revolution," *Life*, June 14, 1948, 82.

discussion of the relationship between Calvinism and Dutch commerce, *Life* overtly associated this particular strain of Protestantism with reasonableness and productivity, while diminishing its religious processors as empty and "embarrassing."

The last sentences of the "Protestant Revolution" article gestured backwards to the previous pieces in the series, and set up the following two, "…Nor did the energy of the new spirit stop with the 16th Century or the continent of Europe. It leaped the Atlantic Ocean and prepared to clear a continental forest, eliminate the remnants of stone-age man and make an appropriate space where the new dignity of the individual, safeguarded by his new freedom of faith could, under God, build a citadel, an arsenal and an altar."[394] In this telling, the history of European Christianity culminated with the United States, where the tradition's best aspects—"commerce," "enterprise," "vigor" and "the new dignity of the individual"—found their ultimate expression. *Life* told its massive body of readers that Protestantism was the best actualization of Christianity, and that the capitalist conquest of the American continent was one of Protestantism's chief achievements. Importantly, this article suggested that Protestantism and commerce were perfectly aligned. Eight years later, when they were attempting to sell advertising space in a special issue on Christianity, *Life'*s editors found that this was not always the case in practice.

The United States, the "citadel, arsenal and altar" alluded to here, came into sharper view in the last two articles of the series. The third Western Culture piece of 1948 focused on Eighteenth Century England, emphasizing the "traditions of political freedom" that ultimately fueled the American Revolution.[395] The final installment of the Western Culture series addressed a jumble of topics all united around the year 1848, exactly one century before the issue appeared.

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[394] "The Protestant Revolution," *Life*, June 14, 1948, 94.
[395] "18th Century England," *Life*, September 13, 1948, 96-124.

Among the topics discussed were challenges to Austrian, German and French monarchs, the Industrial Revolution, and early innovations in photography. The article on 1848 closed out the Western Culture series with a representative example, the story of Lieutenant General Albert Coady Wedemeyer. Under a full-page portrait of Wedemeyer, *Life* brought together themes that had shaped the magazine's reporting for nearly a decade. A long caption read,

> Of the 1840s is Lieut. General Albert Coady Wedemeyer, who, in the last war commanded U.S. operations in the Chinese theater. Behind him on the wall are photographs of grandfather Wilhelm Wedemeyer and grandmother Frances, who came to America from Hanover, Germany in 1842. Members of the Old Lutheran sect, they left Germany to escape the larch laws of Prussia's Frederick William III which did not grant them religious freedom.

With this caption, *Life* used the person of Wedemeyer to bring together the wartime defense of China and the enduring threat of overbearing states that threaten the free expression of Protestantism. In the concluding lines of the series, the meta-narrative of atheistic totalitarianisms versus pious democracies is brought into conversation with contemporary communism. *Life* warned that "… Marxism has set in motion a gigantic revolution against individualism, that view of man as a free being on which Western civilization rests."[396] With this concluding salvo, *Life* brought a history that stretched back to the Middle Ages into conversation with the present. As per Luce's request, the Western Culture series situated the United States as the perfection of Europe's best cultural institutions—its imperialism, its capitalism, its commitment to individualism, and it's reasonable, productive Protestant Christianity.

"We Will Soon Have to Suspend Publication for Five or Ten Million Years to Give History a Chance to Come up With Some New Material:" Religion in *Life*'s Specials

The Western Culture series was acclaimed as an enormous success. In his address to Time Inc.'s advertising team, Howard Black claimed that the corporation was "snowed over with

[396] "1848," *Life*, November 22, 1948, 84-111.

praise" for the ambitious and sweeping series.[397] Luce and his colleagues increasingly understood these "big acts" as fundamental to *Life's* economic success. Readers responded positively to the magazine's educational content, and advertisers were therefore eager to obtain space alongside special features. "The History of Western Culture" thus laid the groundwork for a decade's worth of specials. During the late 1940s and 1950s *Life* ran expensive, colorful multi-part series on topic ranging from ocean sciences to schools to engineering.

Like their predecessor, these *Life* specials stridently and dependably trumpeted the magazine's signature blend of U.S. exceptionalism, Christianity, and giddy enthusiasm for business and technology. An October, 1950 special issue on schools, for example, included an editorial titled "OUR SCHOOLS HAVE KEPT US FREE," which declared smugly, "… when the critical pendant of the Old World disparaged American academic traditions, we are prone—and with much reason—to answer tartly: it has never been the Americans who succumbed to the evil and meretricious appeals of Fascism, Nazism or Communism."[398] Later in the issue, an article by the "Episcopal scholar" Canon Bernard Iddings Bell, blamed "modernist" Protestants for allowing Christianity to be removed from public education. "By treating religion as a dispensable diversion," he complained, "it deprives the young of allegiance to any spiritual compulsion other than love of country."[399] Four years later, a special issue on "U.S. Growth," which focused on the booming economy, argued that U.S. markets were eclipsing those in Europe thanks to the nation's particular Protestant inheritance. In an echo of a Western Culture feature six years earlier, the magazine aligned prosperity with Calvinism. "Calvinism, which took root only spottily in continental Europe, planted throughout America its unique morality of

[397] Correspondence from Howard Black to all Time Inc. Salesmen, May 1, 1947, Box 411, Folder 9, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[398] Henry Steele Commager, "OUR SCHOOLS HAVE KEPT US FREE," *Life,* October 16, 1950, 46-47.
[399] Canon Bernard Iddings Bell, "Know How Vs. Know Why," *Life,* October 16, 1950, 98.

work," one editorial proclaimed. "While we view work (and its by-product, wealth) as a path to salvation, the continental views it as a mark of Cain."[400] With observations like these, *Life's* specials continued Time Inc.'s project of naturalizing the U.S. as definitively capitalist and Protestant. In all instances "America" is imagined as one, undifferentiated community, animated by these shared predispositions.

While these two examples spotlighted U.S. culture, other specials framed the wider world in explicitly Christian terms. Natural history specials always ended on a pious note. A special on outer space and the history of the planet concluded by stating that the eventual implosion of the sun "is best predicted in Revelations."[401] Similarly, *Life* closed out a special on the oceans with a passage from line Ecclesiastes.[402] When it came to distant human cultures, *Life* always framed them in within the Christian meta-narrative Time Inc. used to report on World War II and communism thereafter. A 1951 special on "Asia" bemoaned the godless collectivism of communist China, and encouraged readers to learn from the deep, serious religiosity of Thailand and Japan. An invited essay by Yale's F.S.C. Northrop goaded readers to learn from East Asia's piety. He mused that if U.S. Americans could "incorporate into ourselves a vision of the Divine as passionate in feeling and forthright in deed as that of Asia… then posterity might look upon these times as ones of world-embracing self-knowledge and enlargement of faith."[403] All three of these specials were celebrated as great editorial successes, and some were re-printed years later as coffee table books.[404] The editorial team's interest in special features like those on Western Culture, oceans, schools, and Asia were so ardent and persistent that one junior staffer smirked in

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[400] John Knox Jessup and Michael A. Heilperin, "A New, Daring Plan to Unshackle Trade and Enrich the Free World," *Life,* January 4, 1954, 48.
[401] "The Earth in Born," *Life,* December 8, 1952, 103.
[402] "The Miracle of the Sea," *Life,* February 9, 1953, 82.
[403] F.S.C. Northrop, "The Mind of Asia," *Life,* December 31, 1951, 42.
[404] Curtis Prendergast, *Time Inc.: An Intimate History of a Changing Enterprise, Volume III: 1960-1980* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1986) 66-67.

a 1955 memo that "we will soon have to suspend publication for five or ten million years to give history a chance to come up with some new material."[405]

In 1955 *Life's* Christian project manifested in five-part special series on "The World's Great Religions." Starting in February, *Life* released special issues on Hinduism, Chinese religions, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism, each one month apart. These issues were organized into a clear progressive narrative. Hinduism, which started the series, was rendered as exotic and bizarre. *Life* gave the issue's final word to a missionary, who predicted that Hinduism might "crumble of its own backwardness."[406] From there, each "Great Religion" featured got gradually more reasonable and relatable as it got closer to home. Buddhism in Japan, visualized through austere images of meditating monks and lush green mountainsides, contained an "insistence on the liberty of thought"[407] capable of keeping communism at bay. The following special feature, on "Religion in the Land of Confucius" understood religion in China as a canon of noble philosophies, disappointingly and indelibly corrupted by the Chinese fervor for collectivism.[408] In the May 9, 1955, issue on Islam, *Life* determined that Muslims were admirably monotheistic but politically worrying, "Communism may yet offer Moslems the kind of absolute political dogma which democracy cannot provide," the magazine warned.[409]

The June 13 article on Judaism was the first set in the United States. This article positioned American Jews as a welcome but essentially unfamiliar addition to a promising revival of religiosity in the U.S.[410] The Judaism issue was not well received among the magazine's Jewish readers. A representative of the Synagogue Council, a group *Life* conferred

[405] Memo to Mr. Thompson from Mr. Breen, Folder 19, Box 435, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[406] "Change and Challenge," *Life,* February 7, 1955, 78.
[407] "The Path of Buddhism," *Life,* March 7, 1955, 102.
[408] "Religion in the Land of Confucius," *Life,* April 4, 1955, 64-88.
[409] "World of Islam," *Life,* May 9, 1955, 92.
[410] "Jews in the U.S.," *Life,* June 13, 1955, 107.

with while compiling the issue, wrote that despite the editor's best efforts, "some errors, misconceptions and grossly distorted portrayals of the Jews have crept in." This note lamented that the feature was predominantly printed in black and white, tacitly portraying Jews was gloomy and staid.[411] On the topic of photography, another reader wrote that, "*Life* is primarily a picture magazine, and the illustrations and some of the captions, are, as I feared, in the Luce tradition of picturing the Jew as quaint." This author's evocation of a "Luce tradition" demonstrates the enduring impact of Time Inc.'s antisemitism.[412]

Christianity, when it appeared, was discussed in an entirely different register. In the World's Great Religions series, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese religions, Islam, and to slightly lesser extent, Judaism, are all described as decidedly foreign, exotic, and even out-of-date. Their ideas and customs are not assumed to bear any value or meaning beyond the distant climes where *Life* intrepidly photographed them. In the six months intervening between the Judaism issue and the Christianity issue (which was timed to appear on Christmas) *Life* printed multiple ads promoting the concluding installation of the World's Great Religions series. One advertisement boasted that, "*Life* has dedicated almost two years of preliminary planning and research to ensure that this issue will reflect as nearly as possible, the grandeur and fervor of this Christian faith."[413] An advertisement for the issue appearing in *Life* on November 7 described the Christianity issue's desired reception, "… it is the hope of our editors that you will say, 'Yes, this is us. This is our Faith, as it is and always was.'"[414] In keeping with Tomoko Masuzawa's assessment of the "world's religions" discourse more broadly, *Life* situated Christianity as the only truly universal,

[411] "Dear Mr. Elson:" June 17, 1955, Folder 20, Box 435, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[412] "Well, it's worse than I thought it would be…" June 13, 1955, Folder 20, Box 435, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[413] "In December of this year… " *Life,* September 5, 1955, 111.
[414] "Announcing LIFE's Special Christianity Issue," *Life,* November 7, 1955, 154-155.

universally relevant religion.[415] In keeping with Luce's desires for the Western Culture series, *Life's* World Religions series argued that Christianity was decidedly located within the United States, and that the United States was definitionally Christian.

Life's specials were always yoked to the magazine's finances. Over the course of the decade in which these many special features appeared, *Life's* publishing division observed soberly that the magazine's profits were just keeping pace with inflation. Even worse, newsstand sales had dropped a full 30 percent between 1948 and 1955. What's more, the U.S. population was growing. If Time Inc. wanted *Life* to continue reaching a significant swath of U.S. adults, they would have to sell more issues. These circumstances prompted Luce and Andrew Heiskell, the magazine's publisher, to create the 1960 Committee, a group of Time Inc.'s top salesmen and researchers dedicated to ensuring that *Life's* circulation hit 6,500,000 copies per week by 1960, making adequate profits all the while.[416] This endeavor provoked practical appraisals of *Life's* specials. Some publishers balked at their increased production costs, while others maintained the assumption that special features were sound investments in *Life's* overall quality and reputation. The conclusion of *Life's* "Great Religions" series, on Christianity, provided the 1960 Committee with a complicated case.

The Christianity Issue: Selling Space

The production of the Christianity Issue laid bare important religious and cultural tensions percolating behind *Life*'s triumphant, glossy features. Luce's enthusiasm for crafting erudite, instructional content, and proclivity for theologically weighty memoranda, were in full

[415] Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religion: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 23-25.
[416] Memo From Mr. Heiskell to Mr. Luce, Folder 21, Box 435, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-Historical Society, New York, NY.

force throughout the production of the Christianity issue. During the mid 1950s, Luce was residing part-time in Rome, where Clare Boothe Luce served as the U.S. ambassador to Italy. Because he was not present in the Time & Life building, his directions to *Life'*s staff were issued in long letters. In the first letter, Luce stated in emphatic terms that the Christianity issue should be staged in the United States. In keeping with the historical arch he advanced during the production of the Western Culture series, he claimed that because the United States was the most uniquely Christian nation on the planet, discussing the state of contemporary Christianity essentially meant meditating on the unique culture of the United States. He went on to outline the organization he imagined for the issue. It would begin with "Christianity timeless and universal—the unique event in Palestine, the Apostles' creed, etc.," then bring the reader up-to-date with substantial coverage of Christianity in the United States. Finally, Luce advised, the issue should conclude with discussions of how U.S. Christianity fanned-out across the world through missionary endeavors and foreign policy.[417] This three-part formula structured the version of the magazine that eventually went to print.

Luce's next letter, dated the following day, was much longer and plunged into detailed descriptions of the different kinds of articles he imagined. His writing pivoted from decisive comments on suggested topics ("Hymns. Certainly. Of course.") to meandering meditations on the state of U.S. Christian institutions. Pointing to the common observation that the surge in religious interest after World War II lacked theological rigor and depth, he insisted that *Life'*s Christianity issue must be nuanced and critical, and named prominent theologians and cultural critics who might supply appropriately nimble copy. On the topic of theological superficiality, he mused that "too many Christians are not soldiers but couch-sitters or at best Christian vitamin

[417] Henry R. Luce to Phil Wootton, cc: Mr. Jackson, April, 25 1955, Box 435, folder 20, Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

consumers," and hoped that *Life* might motivate them to adopt a more soldierly Christian disposition.[418] Luce's third and final extended set of ideas and instructions for the Christianity issue (which the staff thereafter referred to as "the long memo") expanded on the second memo with an extensive, "stream of consciousness" list of story ideas and "points." These included suggestions for a piece on "the idea of sin," rambling observations about monasteries in the U.S., commentary on recent trends in academic theology ("the only intellectual force of any consequence in modern America has come from theology," he explained), and recommendations for an article about chaplains in the armed services.[419] After issuing this final note, Luce left the completion of the issue up to two trusted Managing Editors, Edward K. Thompson, a self-described "Christmas-only worshipper," and Sam Welles, the Episcopalian *Time* editor who had facilitated Whittaker Chambers' initial conversion to Episcopalianism.[420]

While the editors worked through the contours of the Christianity issue's perspective and scope, the publishing department reckoned with the ever-present demands of the 1960 Committee. The magazine's publishers often saw *Life's* specials as "bonuses" that increased the magazine's intrinsic value, making it appealing to readers and advertisers alike. During one of the 1960 Committee's first meetings, the Christianity issue was discussed as one such bonus, not only because they anticipated that the high-quality content would appeal to readers and advertisers, but also because consolidating two issues into one double-length issue would bring down production costs substantially. The Committee's conclusion was that between boosted advertising sales at Christmastime, the increased cover price, and the costs saved by producing

[418] Henry R. Luce to Phil Wootton, cc: Mr. Jackson, April 26 1955, Box 435, folder 20, Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[419] Henry R. Luce to Phil Wootton, cc: Mr. Jackson, April, 27 1955, Box 435, folder 20, Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[420] Edward K. Thompson, *A Love Affair with Life & Smithsonian* (Columbus, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 161.

one fewer issue than usual, the Christianity issue would yield $1,010,000 in additional profits. This substantial sum was of great interest to the 1960 Committee, which continued to point to the year-end Christmas issue as an upcoming windfall, until the issue's financials were settled in mid-October.[421]

Life's editorial leadership went to uncommon lengths to secure the Christianity issue's profitability. In late June of 1955, Luce and Thompson organized a lunch with heads of all the major advertising agencies to discuss the upcoming special issue. Luce flew in from Rome. Instead of meeting at Time Inc.'s famously chic offices, the advertising executives were entertained at the elite, members-only University Club. The letter *Life* sent to advertisers was celebratory and suggestive. It began with an invitation to an exclusive discussion of "the most ambitious single editorial effort LIFE has ever undertaken" and went on to claim that "The nature and scope of the editorial content will make this the first truly special Christmas issue any magazine -- LIFE included -- has ever published." The enthusiastic invitation ended on a demure note, "It has never been LIFE's policy or practice to solicit or sell our advertising space on the basis of any particular issue. Nor do we suggest that an insertion in this special number would be any more effective than an ad in any other issue of LIFE during the year. However, we felt that you would be particularly interested in knowing about this ambitious project well in advance of publication."[422] With its massive circulation and singular reputation for exciting content, *Life* did not struggle to secure advertisers. The Christianity issue's unique focus, however, made some of *Life*'s editors concerned that it would not meet the goals established by the 1960 Committee. Likely aware of perceived tensions between Christianity and commercialism, the editors cagily

[421] "Rough Estimate of the Profit Possibilities of a 2-in-1 Issue," February 4, 1955. Box 435, Folder 16, Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[422] Outgoing correspondence for Publisher's Office, June 24 1955, Box 435, Folder 20, Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

alerted advertising agencies to the upcoming Christianity issue without explicitly suggesting they purchase space in it.

Luce, Thompson, and Heiskell planned the lunch meeting minute-by-minute. Immediately after the main course was cleared, Heiskell would introduce the financial rationale for combining the Christmas and New Year's issues, making sure to emphasize that these "business reasons" were absolutely secondary to their religiously ambitious "editorial plans." Luce would then spend ten minutes discussing the "philosophical basis" of the issue and introduce editors Edward K. Thompson and Phil Wootton. Thompson and Wootton were prepared to describe the issue's content in more detail, dwelling on their earnest investment in covering Christianity in the United States, and how the issue would address the regrettable prevalence of "religious illiteracy." After Thompson and Wootton's presentation *Life's* editors solicited comments from the advertisers. The minutes they carried into the meeting concluded optimistically. After the detailed schedule, the last line read, "By this time there presumably will be a number of questions from the floor (and possibly a few conversions)."[423]

Accounts of the meeting and *Life's* financial records suggest that the desired conversions did not occur. *The World of Time Inc.: The Intimate History of a Publishing Enterprise,* Time Inc.'s self-published internal history, paints a tense picture,

> Sensing correctly that the idea might seem revolutionary to the advertising trade, half a dozen heads of the biggest agencies were invited by Luce to hear the editors explain the plan. The idealism was applauded, but the juxtaposition of the Gospel and crass advertising worried some agency men more, apparently, than it did the editors. Leo Burnett, an old friend of *Life*, made the radical suggestion that *Life* carry no advertising at all in the special issue. A somewhat embarrassed silence followed this suggestion; Luce and his associates were not prepared to go that far. Many advertisers did shift their advertisements to other issues; the liquor industry, which normally ran its heaviest advertising at the end of the year, stayed out of the issue altogether.[424]

[423] Memo to Messrs. Luce, Thompson, Elson, Wootton From: Andrew Heiskell, June 22, 1955, Box 435, Folder 20, Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[424] Elson, *Time Inc.,* 209.

The editor's suspicion that advertisers might perceive a conflict between their client's products and the issue's Christian content was correct. Leo Burnett's suggestion seems to call the editors' bluff. If the Christianity issue were in fact such a profound departure from the magazine's usual content, then should it not also depart from their usual profit motive? While Luce might have aspired to make this kind of performative statement of values, running an entire double issue without any advertising was financially untenable for the magazine. The 1960 Committee would not approve. In *Life*'s special issues on Western Culture and U.S. Growth, the magazine insisted on the perfect complementarity of U.S.-style Christianity and U.S. commerce. Yet, Luce and his colleagues' elaborate meeting notes indicate that they anticipated the advertiser's discomfort. Despite vociferous public claims to the contrary, this tense meeting suggests that age old disputes over the relationship between "God and Mammon" were by no means settled terrain.

In the weeks following the University Club luncheon very few pages of advertising were sold. The assembled advertising agencies decided to remove their liquor advertising entirely, over concerns that selling liquor alongside the magazine's Christian writing would not be well received by readers. Other regular clients including Hallmark, Marlboro and Philip Morris decided to pull their spots, citing dissatisfaction with the proposed copy. By the time the issue's specifics were finalized in October, only 42 full-page advertisements were sold. This was a far cry from the 75 pages the 1960 Committee accounted for, and well short of the publishing department's desired minimum of 50 pages. Lacking ad sales, the publisher's only possible method of yielding better than average profits from the special issue was through newsstand sales and new subscriptions, both of which were increasingly challenging to procure.[425]

[425] Correspondence from Edward Black to Clay Buckhout, October, 18 1955. Box 435, Folder 16. Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

The Christianity Issue: Writing History

The special issue's editorial content also presented challenges. Luce and his colleagues decided that the issue would open with a long, rousing essay, explaining the entire sweep of Christian history, from Jesus Christ's birth to the present. Paul Hutchison, the editor of *The Christian Century,* was invited to write this crucial piece. Hutchinson was a friend and colleague of *Life's* editors and was the first and only guest author they considered for the issue's opening essay. In late September, after deciding that Hutchinson's first attempt at narrating 2,000 years of Christian history was "very good," Thompson sent Hutchinson's draft to the other invited experts for comment. In early October, Thompson and Welles forwarded Hutchinson's history of Christianity to John Courtney Murray, a prominent Jesuit theologian and close friend of the Luces, who was also slated to produce a piece for the Christianity issue.

Murray replied with six full pages of dense, scathing commentary, arranged into a barrage of bullet points. His comments disclose both tensions between Catholics and Protestants, and between journalists and academic experts. "The gentleman is certainly a journalist; the article is highly readable," Murray began, "But as a historian he leaves a great deal to be desired. It is not the obvious Protestant bias that is striking; one expected this," he continued, "The more striking thing is the ignorance displayed." Despite acknowledging that Hutchinson's background and objectives were journalistic, Murray went on to critique Hutchinson's piece on academic terms. He identified uninterrogated assumptions, pointed out overlooked historical details, and pressed on Hutchinson's terminology. "This 'spirit of the modern age'—what is it?" he asked at one point, "The spirit of the Aufklärung, for instance; or of the Jacobin tradition; or of the Risorgimento; or of the Comtean scientism?" "The chiefly valid criticism," he wrote at the outset, "is that the scholarship exhibited, when exhibited, is at least 25 years out of date."

Murray was particularly displeased with Hutchinson's discussions of Catholic issues. Without access to the early draft Murray commented on, which was not kept, it is hard discern his precise points of theological disagreement. It is clear, however, that Murray found Hutchinson utterly unqualified to discuss contemporary or historical Catholicism. On his description of the significance of St. Thomas's *Summa Theologica*, Murray wrote "this is a proper howler," and suggested that Hutchinson should not attempt to write about it at all. Similarly, Murray wrote, "It might be as well for the author to refrain from comment on the doctrinal significance of the Council of Trent, on pain of a superficiality that is too revealing." Towards the end of his remarks, Murray pointed out the tacit Protestant universalism animating the entire endeavor. Addressing Hutchinson's repeated effort to write generally about a unified "church," Murry wrote, "It would be better to admit quite simply that the 'churches' of today are not 'parts of the same religious community' (unless the word 'community' is to be abused). Similarly, the diversities enumerated not 'one' in their 'ultimate conceptions of Reality.'" In rejecting the underlying ambition to write Christian history according to the assumption that all Christianities are essentially small parts of a larger whole, Murray gives lie to *Life'*s entire endeavor. "The fact is that a Catholic scholar would have written an entirely different piece." Murray concluded, "He could not accept this one, either in whole or in part."[426]

Life editor Edward K. Thompson "struggled mightily" with how to treat Murray's response to Hutchinson. The editors had agreed months before that they would fill the Christianity issue with the most knowledgeable and sophisticated voices in U.S. Christianity, but did not anticipate antagonism among the invited authors. After conferring with Luce, Thompson

[426] John Courtney Murray to Sam Welles, October 7, 1955, Box 435, Folder 20, Time Inc. Subject Files. Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York NY. Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

ultimately sent Hutchinson a copy of Murray's comments, accompanied by a polite note advising him that the piece needed to be shorter, and that Murray's comments did not reflect the views of the editors. Hutchinson expressed dismay at the content and tone of Murray's remarks. "Basically what he is saying, as I am sure you perceive, is that Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are two religions which merely happen to use some of the same vocabulary but do so with totally different meanings," Hutchinson wrote, "and that therefore Life should have two articles—or perhaps more logically, that it should have had two issues." In this note, Hutchinson doubled down on precisely the universalism Murray perceived. For him, it was utterly inconceivable that Catholicism and Protestantism merit unique and separate treatment. "I tried to be as irenic, even 'ecumenical,' as I could be," he wrote, "but it is evident that nothing I can do will really meet the Catholic demands." Finally, Hutchinson conceded that some of Murray's corrections were necessary and expressed thanks that several incorrect points of fact were prevented from going to print. He offered to re-write his article to the extent that he could without "getting the rap" from his readers at *The Christian Century*.[427] Hutchinson's frustration, and his anxiety about negative feedback from his readers, suggests that postwar ecumenicism was not as prevalent as some studies suggest.

Weeks later, Welles sent Hutchinson a draft of Murray's article on the state of U.S. Catholicism. Citing fundamental theological differences, he declined to send Murray comments. In his private correspondence with Welles, Hutchinson confided that he did not think Murray's piece was successful, "This article, unless I miss my guess," Hutchinson wrote, "will puzzle and/or bore Catholic laity, and bore and/or repel your Protestant readers."[428] Welles responded

[427] Paul Hutchinson to Sam Welles, November 14, 1955, Box 435, Folder 16, Time Inc. Subject Files. Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[428] Paul Hutchinson to Sam Welles, November 19, 1955, Box 435, Folder 16, Time Inc. Subject Files. Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

by confiding in Hutchinson that his exchange with Murray provoked a sweeping editorial decision. None of the pieces written by invited experts, except his and Murray's, would go to print. After reviewing the drafts *Life'*s editors solicited from theology professors and Christian writers, Thompson and Welles decided last minute that the only other theological essay in the issue would be written by long-time staff journalist John Jessup.[429] Welles edited Murray's piece without comment from other invited writers. The editors had hoped for sharp and incisive writing but were not eager to wade into the theological debates and specificities that seemed to follow experts. They concluded that for good writing looking beyond *Life's* own offices wasn't necessary.

In early December, when the copy edits were final, Welles wrote Hutchinson to thank him for his willingness to make significant revisions in response to Murray's remarks. Welles reported that after several rounds of edits, and several more candid meetings with the editors, Murray was ultimately satisfied with Hutchinson's piece. Above all else, Welles wanted Hutchinson to know that the editors were impressed by both his writing and his comportment. "This is the reward for being a Christian, Paul," Welles wrote, "and you sure have handled this whole article in a truly Christian and irenic spirit."[430] This dispute brings into relief what kinds of Christianity were favored at *Life* magazine. In addition to being a Protestant and a journalist, like the editors, Hutchinson was perfectly comfortable asserting the kind of universalizing and universal narratives Luce prized. Murray's outsider status was compounded by his insistence that not all Christianities could be easily stitched together into the same triumphant story.

[429] E.K Thompson to Mr. Luce, October 27, 155, Folder 20, Box 435, Time Inc. Subject Files. Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[430] Sam Welles to Paul Hutchinson, December 1, 1955, Box 435, Folder 20, Time Inc. Subject Files. Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

Conclusion: The Christianity of the Crowd

Two of the most notable elements of the Christianity issue, when it ultimately appeared on newsstands, was the apparent harmony between the advertising and editorial content, and the multiple images of large crowds. The Christianity issue contained four different advertisements for Bibles, when fewer than five Bible advertisements had appeared in the entire preceding year. In several other cases, the advertising appeared to subtlety collude with the content. In one example, an advertisement for the Olin Matheson Chemical Corporation featuring a man and a young boy admiring a star in the sky appeared to mirror the article next to it, which showed a church with an illuminated star hovering above. Another example was an advertisement for Hilton Hotels that featured silhouettes of the three kings, with the statement "Wise Men Still Seek Him." These advertisements created a conversation between the promises of products and *Life'*s promotion of Christianity, suggesting (misleadingly) that advertisers were in agreement with the magazine's theological content.

Editorial photography also evoked a misleading sense of unity. One of the first photos in the issue, which accompanied Hutchison's historical essay, is of a packed stadium with the crowd organized around a large, apparently glowing crucifix. The caption explained, "Two thousand years after the beginning of Christianity, 25,000 people gather on Easter morning in Hollywood Bowl to celebrate the resurrection of their savior, as the white-vestemented choir, standing in the form of a cross, sings a hymn to the risen Lord."[431] Another massive crowd is shown several pages later, accompanying an article called "Mighty Wave Over the U.S." This crowd is also gathered in song, "Crowd of 5,000 paid admission to hear and occasionally join gospel singers," the caption stated, "a dozen acts gave six solid hours of music which is bouncy

[431] Hutchinson, "Onward March of the Christian Faith," *Life,* December 26, 1955, 34-35.

and folksy but always on religious themes."[432] Yet another crowd, this time of many red-clad bishops, appears only two pages later, and shortly after that, a crowd of uniformed West Point students is shown assembled in the campus chapel. Altogether, the issue featured eleven different large images of crowds joined in song or prayer. The preponderance of crowds projected an image of a nation unified by religious purpose. The nation is imagined as multiple large groups, each slightly different but ultimately similar in their invigorated, Christian resolve

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 9: This image of West Point's school choir was part of "The Music of Worship," a larger story on U.S. American's enjoyment of Christian song. The article included fold out musical charts and lyrics, so readers could use the magazine like a hymnal. *Life,* December 25, 1955, 102-103.

This representation of U.S. Christianity, that emerged between the prayerful crowds and pious advertisements, elided the dynamics through which this *Life* special, and the earlier special on Western Culture, were both forged. In both instances, *Life'* s leadership expressed an overt preference for Protestant perspectives, despite claims to ecumenicism, and had to actively smooth-over tensions between the magazine's theological ambitions and economic imperatives.

[432] "A Mighty Wave Over the U.S.," *Life,* December 26, 1955, 46.

Chapter 6: A Rise in 'Dry Sentiment:' The Postwar Temperance Movement and other Critics of Time Inc.

Luce's "A New Age of the Church" editorial, mentioned at the outset of this section, received a number of heated responses from readers of *The Christian Century*. A handwritten note from Emma S.P Lum of Washington D.C. declared, "You said, 'God is not the author of confusion.' Do you know of anything in the world that causes more confusion, sorrow, sin and destitution than the use of intoxicating drinks and drugs? Do you not see that the very enticing, alluring and deceptive advertisements of these things in magazines and papers lure many to begin the drinking that leads to their downfall?"[433] Another note on the same theme intimated that Clare Boothe Luce might be behind Time Inc.'s irresponsible printing of liquor advertising. "How a man like yourself can reconcile those ads with your manifestly high conceptions, I am absolutely at a loss to understand," Walter E. Lanphear wrote, "My only sense of possible justification in this is that Mrs. Congresswoman Luce has espoused the Romanist faith."[434] These two responses to "A New Age of the Church" index a web of overlapping anxieties and accusations that encircled Time Inc. during the postwar years. A resurgent temperance movement, represented in these letters, organized against Time Inc. on the basis that Luce betrayed his own religious commitments by profiting from the sale of liquor advertisements. [435] At the same time, Clare Luce's very public conversion to Catholicism activated anti-Catholic

[433] "My Dear Mr. Luce…" April 18, 1947, Box 73, Folder 1, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
[434] "Dear Mr. Luce:--," March 27, 1947, Box 73, Folder 1, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
[435] The midcentury temperance movement has received very little scholarly attention. Business historian Pamela Pennock has offered most the extensive discussions to date. See, Pennock, *Advertising Sin and Sickness: The Politics of Alcohol and Tobacco Marketing 1950-1990* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 15-61, and "'The Number One Social Problem of Our Time': American Protestants and Temperance Politics in the 1950s," *Journal of Church and State* 54.3 (Summer 2012): 375-405. In this article Pennock goes so far as to describe the midcentury temperance movement as collectively "forgotten" by historians of the United States.

rumors stipulating that Luce and Time Inc. were controlled by the Catholic church. At this moment of peak influence, when each issue of *Life* reached as much as half of the U.S. reading public and *Time* and *Fortune* expanded the corporation's reach even further, Time Inc. was confronting new expressions of the same suspicion it had combated since the late 1930s: the suspicion that Time Inc.'s influence on U.S. life was nefarious, excessive and ill begotten.

This chapter uses Time Inc.'s encounter with the postwar temperance movement as a means of further complicating accounts of religion, media, economy, and corporate power at midcentury. As we've already seen, Luce imagined U.S. Christianity as a force that motivated and authorized the nation's ambition to dominate the economic and geopolitical world stage. Attention to Time Inc.'s postwar critics brings another, competing Christian sensibility into view. Negative responses to Luce's religious gestures show that the midcentury conflation of corporate power and religious leadership was more contentious and anxiety-provoking than many histories suggest. While Luce and the other executives who dominate the historiography consistently emphasized Christian action in the realms of global politics and commerce, temperance activists and anti-Catholics worried that domestic expressions of U.S. Christianity were imperiled by clandestine networks of influence.

For temperance activists, advertisers, media makers, brewers, distillers, and vintners were all engaged in a conspiracy to profit immensely at the cost of sober, Christian homes. In a similar vein, anti-Catholic critics of Time Inc., who almost always self-identified as Protestants, worried about the Catholic Church's apparent ability influence power brokers like the Luces. In both instances, diverse Protestant publics identified the corporation as dangerously interconnected with other elite intuitions. Rather than seeing corporate connections as empowering to U.S.

Christians, as Luce did, anti-Catholics and temperance activists worried deeply about how elite actors were consolidating power to re-shape U.S. American politics, religion, and daily life.

In attending to the simultaneous discourses of temperance and anti-Catholicism as they emerged in Time Inc.'s crowded mailrooms, this chapter argues that while corporate power worked to amplify certain American exceptionalist, anticommunist Christian discourses, it simultaneously emerged as a religious problem for a diverse range of midcentury Protestants. Anxieties about alcohol advertising and the Luces' proximity to Catholicism came from both mainline and evangelical spaces. Actors including evangelical radio hosts and housewives and prominent mainline clerics were all united in their mistrust of the Luces and Time Inc. This chapter shows that while Time Inc. drew together varied religious actors through the production and circulation of media, it also galvanized the anxieties of diverse parties beyond the magazines. Disparate Protestants' shared expressions of fear and mistrust around Time Inc. suggest that a suspicious stance toward corporate elites and their powerful networks were a salient aspect of mid-century Protestantism.[436]

"The Minimum Creed of the Decent Cynic:" *Life* Magazine and the Advertising Industry

Observing Time Inc.'s entanglements with other sectors of the U.S. economy, particularly the advertising industry, helps to contextualize the kinds of religious anxieties the corporation provoked. Luce's 1946 memoranda initiating *Life*'s formal "re-thinking" dedicated

[436] My argument in this chapter is inspired by two articles, Michael McVicar's "Charts, Indexes, and Files: Surveillance, Information Management, and the Contested Boundaries of American Protestantism," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, 30.3 (December 2020): 1-54, and David Brion Davis' "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic and Anti-Mormon Literature, *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 47.2 (September, 1960): 205-224. While both dealing in different time periods, these pieces suggest that anxieties around elite conspiracies and internal subversion are rife in U.S. religious history. With this chapter, I hope to continue the work of showing that conspiratorial thinking has had wide and pervasive appeal within U.S. Christianity.

considerable attention—three dense pages of writing—to the magazine's Modern Living section. This semi-weekly column was dedicated to reporting on the latest consumer products, which ranged from to coats to toasters to resort vacations. Modern Living, Luce explained, merited considerable, concentrated thought because it mediated between the magazine's editorial content and its profuse advertising. "The magazine as a physical entity includes a powerful amount of advertising," he wrote, "if we really want a 'philosophical unity' we have got to get one which does not pretend that the advertising does not exist." The role of advertising in *Life* thus demanded both clarification and justification. Luce's ensuing meditation on advertising is worth quoting at length:

> It is more and more the style these days, even among businessmen, to denounce Russian Communism as "materialistic." But there is, of course, no greater propaganda of materialism than American Advertising. Is it therefore just plain and unqualifiedly wrong in any serious moral philosophy? No – not at any rate in Christian morality, for Christian morality based on Christian theology does not separate matter and spirit into two different worlds of evil and good. Christianity knows of the corruption of both body and spirit. Christianity knows of the inherent dangers to the life of the spirit in the life of the flesh. … What does all this mean with regard to our materialistic culture and in special particular to LIFE adverting? It means, as to general principles: a) that there is noting per se immoral or wrong with material goods – their production and distribution; but that: b) the more goods you produce and distribute the more you must be concerned with their use for 'good' rather than 'bad' ends and the more you must be concerned that an excessive hankering for material goods does not in itself produce evil.[437]

On the most basic level, this extrapolation of the morality of advertising demonstrates that for Luce, Time Inc.'s activities always demanded a Christian justification. In the above memo, Luce goes to pains to insist that despite advertisings' evident "materialism," the hallmark sin of Axis fascism and Soviet communism, it could doubtlessly be assimilated into a sound "Christian morality." What's more, this memo suggests that the perfect complementarity of Protestant Christianity and capitalism celebrated throughout *Life'*s midcentury specials (several of which

[437] Memo from Mr. Luce to Mr. Heiskell cc: Messrs. Billings, Larsen, Grover, Longwell, September 25, 1946, Folder 1, Box 434, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

would go into production shortly after this memo was issued) was not so simple in practice. The editor's frustrated attempt to sell advertising space in the Christianity issue nine years later would bear this out.

Luce's concerted effort to insist that modern advertising was religiously sound and morally valuable worked to validate advertising's crucial, structural role within the operations of Time Inc. It is impossible to overstate the importance of advertising to Time Inc., particularly in the postwar period. Once *Time* began circulating widely in the late 1920s, advertising became the corporation's most significant source of revenue. *Life* was practically conceptualized as an advertising medium. In his initial imagining of the new magazine, Luce wrote, "Let the Picture Magazine advertisers put on a good show. Let them compete photographically with the editorial content. If we had 40 pages of striking photographic ads plus 40 pages of editorial photos, then there could be little doubt that the reader was getting a remarkable package of photographs for his dime."[438] Here, advertising is envisioned as a core part of the reading experience and a rationalization for the new magazine's unique form.

It wasn't until the postwar period that Time Inc. could maximize *Life*'s potential to host glamorous and profitable advertising. Starting in 1943, just as the magazine was beginning to gain steady economic footing, the federal government placed strict wartime rations on commercial paper. Rather than trimming editorial content, Time Inc.'s leadership decided to print less advertising. They determined that amidst the wartime scarcity magazines crowded with advertisements for out-of-reach products would alienate readers, and potentially even compromise "the good reputation of advertising."[439] These uncommon circumstances meant that

[438] Loudon Wainwright, *The Great American Magazine: An Inside History of* Life (New York, NY: Alfred A Knopf, 1986), 29.
[439] Elson, *Time Inc. Vol II,* 40-41.

even though *Life* was perhaps the nation's most popular periodical, Time Inc.'s profits from the magazine were middling. As soon as rations were relaxed, Time Inc. went to great lengths to secure the corporation's ability to print as much advertising as possible. Time Inc. abandoned a long-standing aversion to acquiring in costly real estate properties and purchased three paper mills. Executives reasoned that guaranteed access to paper meant the corporation would have no reason to turn down advertising going forward.[440]

Taking account of *Life'*s immense popularity and new access to paper, one memo to the advertising department projected that "No other comparable advertising force has ever existed."[441] Motivated by this assumption, Time Inc. charged handsomely for space in *Life,* and profited in turn. By 1947 *Life'*s total advertising revenue was $75,872,000 annually, more than $16,000,000 ahead of the closest competitor.[442] On September 17, 1951, *Life* published its most profitable issue ever, which included 2.5 million dollars' worth of advertising. The announcement of this record attributed financial success to "magnificent" photographic content, alluding to the codependence of advertising and editorial.[443]

As Luce himself acknowledged in 1946, advertising was an unavoidable aspect of *Life's* aesthetic. Because color remained slow and expensive to print well into the 1950s, advertisers supplied most of the magazine's color. By the late 1940s each issue of *Life* was between 40 and 50 percent advertising.[444] In her characterization of *Life,* Erika Doss observes that the combination of vibrantly colorful advertising and black-and-white editorial content shaped the magazine's over all pedagogical effect, "This juxtaposition of 'instructive' articles and photo-

[440] Elson, *Time Inc. Vol. II*, 170.
[441] Elson, *Time Inc. Vol. II*, 170.
[442] Elson, *Time Inc., Vol. II,* 182-4.
[443] Memo from Bill Holman To ALL NEW YORK LIFE SALESMAN, September 12, 1951, Folder 27, Box 434, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[444] Erika Doss, "Introduction," in *Looking at Life* ed. Erika Doss, 8.

essays in monochrome hues and 'pleasurable' advertisements in color gave the magazine a certain rhythm and flow, and guided readers between what to think about (politics, Elvis, the Suez Canal) and what to buy (rings, hams, soups, cars.)"[445] It was precisely this flow between advertising and content that Luce hoped to ennoble, and even sanctify, in his 1946 memo on Christian morality, advertising and *Life*'s Modern Living section.

Time Inc.'s dependence on advertising, and profound entanglement with the advertising industry, is made clear by the corporation's 1949 Advertising Campaign. In an echo of Time Inc.'s 1940 campaign promoting journalism as a public good, the corporation rallied its resources to promote the social and economic benefits of advertising. Just as the 1940 campaign sought to refute the idea that ubiquitous trashy journalism could create a dangerous, unthinking mass populace, the 1949 Advertising Campaign worked to counteract the common sentiment that advertising was an annoying intrusion into the enjoyments of daily life. Time Inc.'s six double-page, full color advertisements argued that advertising was an engine of midcentury material comforts. A memo circulated to advertising professionals in advance of the campaign explained that the ads for ads would argue that "*Advertising helps create the demand that boosts the production that lowers the cost."*[446]

The campaign consisted of six advertisements that each explained how advertising aided a specific industry, benefitting their customers in turn. The first advertisement in the series, for example, focused on the food industry. It showed a blond, rosy-cheeked white woman smiling widely as she presented a brown, spiky fruit to an enthusiastic looking man in a brown suit and an overjoyed young boy in a red sweater. The advertisement explained that the strange looking

[445] Erika Doss, "Introduction," in *Looking at Life* ed. Erika Doss, 8.
[446] "TIME-LIFE-FORTUNE Presents to America…," Undated, Folder 11, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

item was a delicious durian fruit, which this mother was able to introduce to her family thanks to the "ingenuity and ability of American food packers." Food packers, the advertisement explained, were able to innovate and expand thanks to advertising, which boosted their sales. Thus, if it weren't for their advertisements, U.S. food importers would never have been able to circulate durians to U.S. housewives.[447] Between producing these advertisements, purchasing space for them in other national magazines, and placing them in *Time* and *Life,* Time Inc.'s advertising campaign for advertising cost the corporation nearly two million dollars.[448]

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 10: The first advertisement in Time Inc.'s advertising campaign for advertising. Folder 11, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

Why would the corporation dedicate this kind of money to such an endeavor, and why is it worth mentioning here? I mention this campaign, and Time Inc.'s dependence on advertising more broadly, to demonstrate that at a moment when conspiratorial accusations against Time Inc. proliferated, Time Inc. *was* in a conspiracy, of sorts, with the advertising industry and that industry's many clients. Time Inc.'s customers had to countenance ubiquitous advertising if they

[447] "De-lish! Durian for Dessert!," Undated Poster, Folder 11, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[448] "Costs—'Campaign About Advertising,'" October 20, 1949, Folder 11, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

wanted to enjoy magazines, and magazines had to effectively turn readers into customers if they wanted to continue profiting from advertising sales. Time Inc., advertisers, and the advertisers' clients were all connected through a web of mutual dependence wherein each benefitted from the other's success. In *The Geopolitical Aesthetic,* Frederick Jameson argues, in brief, that as high-tech, globalized capitalism makes the forces shaping daily life progressively more complex, and thus more and more challenging for average individuals to map, conspiracy narratives grow increasingly popular and relatable.[449] When temperance activists and anti-Catholics suspected that Time Inc. and the Luces acted on behalf of vast, interconnected, powerful interests, they tended to misidentify what those interests were and how they were operating. But the spirit of their suspicion was not entirely wrong.

Luce concluded his lengthy exegesis on Christianity and advertising with an explicit statement about the spiritual aims of the Modern Living section. "The limited job of Modern living lies, essentially, in the secular, not the moral or spiritual field," he began. "Just as there is a close connection between manners and morals so there is a close connection between taste and spirit. If you can't be moral, at least you can have good manners; if you cannot be spiritual, at least you can have good taste – such is the minimum creed of the decent cynic." In his assertion that *Life'*s Modern Living column mediated between things transcendent (morals, spirit) and behaviors in the world (manners, taste), Luce argued that constituting his audience as consumers and constituting them as moral actors were simultaneous, complimentary processes. In guiding readers toward the correct products—the products *Life* advertised and discussed in the Modern Living section—the magazine schooled audiences in "good taste," which is imagined as

[449] Frederick Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 2-84.

proximate to a sound spirituality.[450] This process, of course, was materially beneficial to Time Inc., their advertisers, and their advertisers' clients. It was precisely this complete enfolding of moral instruction with consumerism that opponents of liquor advertising refused to accept. They saw liquor advertising as fundamentally instructive, and rejected the corporation's attempt to provide moral and religious example.

Domesticity, Dry Sentiment, and the Rejection of Corporate Moral Authority

A resurgent temperance movement rejected *Life'*s potential for moral guidance and Luce's potential for religious leadership on the basis of Time Inc.'s unscrupulous commercialism. In November of 1946, when Luce appeared in a group photo on the front page of *The Presbyterian* magazine*,* readers involved in the temperance movement were outraged. In a gesture of support, *The Presbyterian's* editor forwarded Luce their angry letters. One representative letter, from Minnie Holloway of Pasadena, California, complained that by circulating liquor advertising nationwide, Luce's publications undermined regional anti-liquor legislation. Referring to her native Kansas specifically, Holloway asked, "Why should Henry Luce, an easterner, lend his aid to deaden law that has been a blessing to Kansas since 1880? If his Christianity were genuine, and he were eligible to be classed with a group of Christian men on the cover of a religious publication such as THE PRESBYTERIAN, he would have lent his aid to Kansas in their effort to uphold the law that has been such a blessing to their state."[451] Holloway's interest in protecting dry states from the reach of liquor advertising reflects the

[450] For a discussion of another Protestant businessman's investment in the nexus of spirituality and taste, see Nicole Kirk, *Wanamaker's Temple: Religion and Business in an American Department Store.* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2018).
[451] "Editor: I am one of your life-long readers…" November 19, 1946, Folder 8, Box 411. Time Inc. Subject-Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

anxieties that undergirded the midcentury temperance movement at-large. Like many other temperance activists, Holloway worried that alluring representations of alcohol consumption, emanating from the coastal offices of corporate elites, would "deaden" local efforts to maintain particular, local conservativisms.

The postwar years saw a marked increase in what contemporaries called "dry sentiment," or opposition to the normalization of recreation drinking. Having abandoned the cause of national Prohibition, temperance activists (many of whom were also prohibitionists) wagered that they could limit the consumption of alcohol by targeting advertising, a technology that stoked alcohol's appeal. Starting in 1947, an interdenominational and regionally diverse array of Protestant organizations attempted to pass a series of bills that would make the interstate circulation of liquor advertising illegal.[452] Several months after Luce's controversial appearance in *The Presbyterian,* Time Inc. leadership conferred with the corporation's general counsel on the issue of liquor advertising. After concluding that legislation limiting the movement of liquor advertising was unlikely to pass, he ended his letter on a personal note, "My final remark, an entirely gratuitous one," he wrote, "is that Time Inc. staff could do with a bit of Christian moderation in its lunch-time drinking. The single most noticeable social change on my return from the army was the acceptance of cocktails as normal lunch procedure."[453] Looking at Holloway's letter alongside this lawyer's remarks brings the uneasy meeting of two different cultures into view. While Holloway and others worried that products of an "eastern" culture would undermine regional temperance efforts, taking a cocktail with lunch was apparently a

[452] Pennock, *Advertising Sin and Sickness,* 16-33.
[453] Memo to Messrs. Black, Heiskell, Linen and Luce, May 8, 1946. Folder 8, Box 411. Time Inc. Subject-Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

social necessity at Time Inc. The widely and constantly circulating magazine brought these two cultures, and their religious sensibilities, into uncomfortable contact.

From 1947 to 1956, Protestant temperance organizers pressured the U.S. Senate Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce to consider a series of bills, colloquially called the Langer Bills, intended to ban the interstate movement of liquor advertising. Named for North Dakota senator Bill Langer, the Langer Bills changed slightly from year to year, remaining consistent on several crucial counts. In all instances, this legislation would have made it illegal for any media either promoting or describing alcoholic products to be circulated through federal mail. Every version of the proposed legislation stipulated that alcohol manufacturers themselves could not use the mail to circulate materials promoting their product, and that other media carrying their advertising could not be shipped from state to state. Finally, all versions of the Langer Bills prevented broadcast media from carrying liquor advertising entirely.[454] This proposed legislation did not target the production of liquor advertising, but rather attempted to limit its spread in order to contain its influence. The midcentury temperance movement's strategy of diminishing a commercial industry by targeting its marketing was tailormade for

[454] The details of the Langer Bills are retained in the Congressional record. See, U.S Congress, Senate, Senate Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearing on S. 265 A Bill to Prohibit the Transportation in Interstate Commence of Advertisements of Alcoholic Beverages, And for Other Purposes,* 80th Cong., 1st sess., 1947. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearing on S. 265 A Bill to Prohibit the Transportation in Interstate Commence of Advertisements of Alcoholic Beverages, And for Other Purposes,* 80th Cong., 2nd sess., 1948. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearing on S. 1847 A Bill to Prohibit the Transportation in Interstate Commence of Advertisements of Alcoholic Beverages, And for Other Purposes,* 81st Cong., 2nd sess., 1950. U.S Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearings on S. 2444 A Bill to Prohibit the Broadcasting Over Radio and Television of Advertisements of Distilled Spirits for Beverage Purposes, And for Other Purposes,* 82nd Cong., 2nd sess., 1952. U.S Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearings on S. 3294 A Bill to Prohibit the Transportation in Interstate Commerce of Advertisements of Alcoholic Beverages, And for Other Purposes,* 83rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1954. U.S Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearings on S. 923 A Bill to Prohibit the Transportation in Interstate Commerce of Advertisements of Alcoholic Beverages, And for Other Purposes,* 84th Cong., 2nd sess., 1956.

postwar year years, when consumer markets expanded, and advertising became increasingly sophisticated and impossible to avoid.

During the same years that they struggled to pass the Langer Bills, Protestant temperance campaigners waged a boycott and letter-writing campaign against Time Inc. on the basis that Luce betrayed his well-known Christian commitments by profiting from the sale of liquor advertisements. In their letters to Time Inc., they expressed shock and indignance that a devout Protestant would willingly benefit from the promotion of alcohol. They bombarded Time Inc. with mail, sometimes amounting to approximately two thousand letters a month.[455] Some temperance activists, who contemporaries called "drys," simply tore out the offending advertisements and sent them back to corporate headquarters covered in stickers that said "LIQUOR ADS MUST GO!" Others wrote Luce heartfelt appeals, describing families ruined by "beverage alcohol," and insisting that his ubiquitous magazines stop printing advertisements for liquor, wine, and beer. Time Inc.'s opposition research speculated that this onslaught of mail was coordinated by small, local church and para-church groups nationwide. Advertising executives traced some percentage of the mail back to a particularly vocal Methodist congregation in Syracuse, New York and the Illinois Temperance Council, who had mobilized against Luce's keynote address at the 1947 annual meeting of Church Federation of Greater Chicago[456]

The temperance movement's arguments for the Langer Bills pivoted on traditional notions of the family, domesticity, and gendered separate spheres. The celebrity preacher and self-help writer Norman Vincent Peale (himself often figured as a paragon of the midcentury entanglement of commercialism, Christianity, and media) testified on behalf of regulating liquor

[455] See quarterly breakdowns of reader mail, Folders 8-12, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[456] Memorandum To Mr. Luce from Kip Finch, April 14, 1947, Folder 9, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

advertising during several hearings throughout the 1950s. His testimony at the 1952 senate hearing neatly captures the gendered ideology that motivated the movement against liquor advertising. Peale mused that, "… there is still an old-fashioned notion in this land that a man's home is his castle, that it is a place of retreat from the world and a sanctuary for man and wife and their little children. The liquor people, I believe, are on dangerous ground in this ill-considered invasion of the home with their ads."[457] Here, Peale suggests that a nefarious and ill-defined cohort of "liquor people" were treading into the pure and vaunted space of the "old-fashioned" home, where they did not belong.

Peal's formulation posited a new disruption of the desirable boundaries between commercial and domestic life, which was in some sense accurate. Prohibition-era rhetoric had posited private, domestic space and the public realm of the saloon as gendered opposites, with men positioned in morally perilous commercial spaces and women consigned to the safer space of the home.[458] After the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, many media outlets refused to carry advertisements for alcohol. In 1938 The Methodist Board of Temperance reported that 552 local and national periodicals would not accept advertising for liquor, wine and beer. By the end of World War II, nearly all those bans were dropped. Responding to these new circumstances, and the larger postwar expansion of consumer markets, alcohol industries poured resources into self-promotion. One national advertising agency reported that liquor, wine, and beer producers increased their spending on advertising 118 percent between 1948 and 1953. By 1955 alcoholic beverage advertising constituted between 10 and 13 percent of all advertising printed in

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[457] U.S Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearings on S. 2444 A Bill to Prohibit the Broadcasting Over Radio and Television of Advertisements of Distilled Spirits for Beverage Purposes, And for Other Purposes,* 82nd Cong., 2d sess., 1952, Statement of Norman Vincent Peale, Pastor, Marble Collegiate Church, New York City, 30.

[458] For a more detailed discussion of how drinking and its representations were "domesticated" after World War II, see Lori Rostkoff, *Love on the Rocks: Men, Women and Alcohol in Post-World War II America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002) 194-242.

prominent national magazines, including *Time* and *Life,* which circulated through millions of private homes. [459]

Describing the array of media and technological changes that look place during the postwar period, media historian Lynn Spigel writes that "Increasingly in the postwar period the domestic environment was filled with visual spectacles previously associated with public life, and the home itself was designed as a space for looking."[460] Here, Spigel observes that the proliferation advertising and other promotional, visual media like product packaging functionally blurred the "private" space of the home with the "public" domain of commerce. By circulating images of drinkers and drinking through domestic space, liquor advertising transgressed these assumed boundaries, potentially making even temperate Christian homes spaces where desires for alcohol percolate. Temperance activists feared that if they could not insulate domestic space form the influence of alcohol advertisers, they might not be able to sustain homes capable of reproducing Christian families.

By attempting to limit the circulation of liquor advertising, temperance activists sought to limit the influence Time Inc.'s elite, commercial culture and contest its moral authority. While the Langer bills passed before the senate, some temperance organizers latched on to Luce's very public Protestantism, insisting that him and his corporation could not be accepted as a valid representatives of Protestant interests so long as they continued to profit from the sale of liquor advertising. For temperance activists, the presence of liquor advertising in Time Inc.'s magazines undermined Luce's religious authority entirely. In response to an address Luce delivered at the Duke University Divinity School graduation, Lee Palomar, a Methodist minister from Roanoke,

[459] Pennock, *Advertising Sin and Sickness,* 32-33.
[460] Lynn Spigel *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Post-war Suburbs* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 2.

Virginia, explained that he found Luce's simultaneous promotion of Christian ideals and acceptance of liquor advertising deeply confusing. "It is a great mystery to me how you can share, even in a remote way, in the promotion of liquor drinking, and at the same time sincerely promote the ideal of all things being for the glory of God." Palomar wrote, "I am unwilling to condemn you for this apparent inconsistency without an attempt to get your explanation."[461] Palomar was one of many individuals who tacitly charged Luce with insincerity. For Palomar and others, Luce's business activities made his religious statements ring as insincere. Rather than accepting or engaging the theological ideas Luce expressed, Palomar's letter concludes that Luce's religious gestures were rendered suspect by his business choices, and wonders about his dubious motives.

For some temperance activists, rejecting Luce's religious authority also meant rejecting *Life* magazine. On February 10, 1950 Pastor Albert E. Simms of Newport News, Virginia wrote Time Inc. to decline the offer of a clerical subscription rate on the basis that *Life* included liquor advertising. Pastor Simms pinned his concerns about liquor advertising on both the intentional seductiveness of the medium, and the vulnerability of children and youth. He wrote,

> You know and I know and the distillers and brewers know that pictures represent one of the most effective ways of getting across a message. There are no pages in Life which are more colorful, more appealing, more indicative of painstaking preparation and superior technical performance, more eye-catching and more 'memory-holding' than those which advertise alcoholic beverages. … gentlemen, to my mind there is too great a chance that the distillers and brewers will put across their fallacious and hypocritical message and that my son—my namesake—my own flesh and blood, will come to think that liquor does help make the man of distinction—that it is indispensable to business success—that it will give a man wealth, comfort and friends. The danger is too great that, thinking all this, he will drink liquor, wine or beer and become their victim.[462]

[461] "Dear Mr. Luce…," February 15, 1946, Folder 8, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[462] "Gentlemen: This letter is not written for publication…," February 10, 1950, Folder 12, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

In this letter, Pastor Simms rejects the offer of a discounted *Life* subscription because he does not trust *Life'*s pages to positively influence his progeny, echoing the larger movements' investment in protecting the procreative home. What's more, he finds particular risk in the magazine's signature element, it's rich visuality. Behind the magazine's alluring images Simms correctly imagines suites of skilled technicians, savvily manipulating the unsuspecting innocents. Echoing Peale's charge that liquor advertising did not belong in the home, Simms assumes that appealing images could sufficiently confuse a young person's ability to discern the real from the represented, potentially disordering their Christian moral formation.

Pastor Simm's letter made reference to an advertising campaign temperance activists particularly detested. Lord Calvert Whiskey's "Men of Distinction" campaign was comprised of a series of portraits of a "distinguished" white men photographed in luxurious settings with a glass of whiskey. In their arguments before the senate committee, temperance activists repeatedly used these advertisements as evidence of "the liquor people's" deceptive designs. If the men in these advertisements were truly distinguished, they argued, they would not be lending their images to the promotion of intoxicating substances. Temperance campaigners further argued that by presenting whiskey drinkers as the height of sophistication, this campaign misled young men into believing that glamourous offices and expensive consumer choices represented the pinnacle of manhood. These images thereby undermined Christian parents attempting to promote the values of sobriety, modesty, and thrift.[463] Objections to this campaign recall Minnie

[463] These arguments appear repeatedly throughout the 1948 and 1950 senate hearings. See, *the Transportation in Interstate Commence of Advertisements of Alcoholic Beverages, And for Other Purposes,* 80th Cong., 2nd sess., 1948. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearing on S. 1847 A Bill to Prohibit the Transportation in Interstate Commence of Advertisements of Alcoholic Beverages, And for Other Purposes,* 81st Cong., 2nd sess., 1950.

Holloway's fear that a mass culture produced by "easterners" imperiled Kansans' ability to maintain their unique local legislation.

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 11: One example of the "Men of Distinction" campaign, published in *Life* on October 4, 1948.

Temperance campaigners' dislike of the "Men of Distinction" campaign resonates with their specific criticisms of Henry Luce. Criticisms of Luce's relationship to Time Inc.'s liquor advertising were often spoken in conspiratorial tones. In an article for the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) journal, titled "Does Luce's $12,7000,000 Intake From Liquor Render Him Immune to Decency and Conscience?" Ernest Gordon, a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, performed a close-reading of 24 recent issues of *Life.* He concluded that the magazine's frequent depiction of young people drinking alcohol (at college sporting events, at summer bar-b-ques, and at stylish cocktail parties) revealed that Luce's personal profits from the sale of alcohol advertising were so huge that he was literally invested in recruiting new drinkers through his magazine's editorial pages. Echoing other activists' determination that Luce was a disingenuous religious actor, Gordon noted that advertisements for liquor, wine, and beer more than doubled during the weeks leading up to Christmas. Appalled by this figure, Gordon wrote, "This possibly suggests Time, Life, Fortune and their editor-in-chief's conception of the

proper way to celebrate the Birth of the Savior of the World!"[464] This piece drew together temperance activists' most salient critiques of Luce and his *Life* magazine. Gordon accuses Luce of conspiring with the liquor industry to corrupt susceptible youth, charges *Life* with promoting an elite culture premised on imbibing, and concludes that Luce and Time Inc. were not trustworthy stewards of religious or family life.

Rather than lending their religious authority to corporate interests promoting a free market ideology, Protestant temperance campaigners insisted that some markets needed to be checked on behalf of the procreative family home. Temperance activists claimed that protecting the family by limiting the circulation of alcohol advertising was more important than any other current political cause. The 1954 hearings saw two particularly striking statements of this case. One came from a representative of the WCTU, who suggested that preserving the home from the influence of alcohol advertising should be prioritized over unchecked free enterprise. Mrs. Glenn G. Hayes of the Evanston, Illinois WCTU stated "I am a firm believer in free enterprise and in the freedom of the press; but I represent to you another type of business, the business on which all other business is founded—the business of homemaking and of raising future American citizens. When that business goes wrong, every other type of business suffers with it."[465] By positing the home as a "business" upon which all other businesses depend, Hayes insisted that industry, specifically the liquor, wine, and beer industries, be regulated on behalf of the family, the true source of all social goods.

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[464] "Does Luce's $12 ,7000,000 Intake From Liquor Render Him Immune to Decency and Conscience?," *The Union Signal,* December 10, 1949. Folder 12, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

[465] U.S Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearings on S. 3294 A Bill to Prohibit the Transportation in Interstate Commerce of Advertisements of Alcoholic Beverages, And for Other Purposes,* 83rd Cong., 2d sess., 1954, Statement of Mrs. Glenn G. Hays, President of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Evanston, Ill., 58.

Another statement at the same hearing contended that curtailing liquor advertising was more immediately relevant to U.S. Americans' well-being than combating the spread of communism. Glen Cunningham, an Olympic runner and father of six, began by stating how disgusted he was by beer advertisers' use of athletes to promote beer drinking. He concluded by arguing that other political causes were distracting from the importance of insulating families and youth from such dishonorable campaigns. "My belief is we are so worried about communism, and we have begun to hear a great deal about that just recently," he testified, "and I believe the advertising of alcoholic beverages and the enticing of our youth to use alcoholic beverages will undermine the morals and spiritual values of our coming generation until it is a far greater danger than communism could ever hope to pose."[466] In this statement, Cunningham seems to speak directly back to Luce and other media elites stoking anxiety about the global spread of communism. His allusion to "future generations" echoes Hayes's reference to "raising future American citizens." In their formulations, national virtues were cultivated first and foremost in the family home, not in the marketplace or geopolitical world stage.

In their advocacy for the Langer Bills and organizing against Time Inc., temperance activists insisted that one industry's ability to promote itself be subordinated to the more important cause of protecting sober, Christian domesticity. Their arguments imagined an over-powerful cohort of elite actors eager to disorder this beloved institution in pursuit of financial gain. These suspicious accounts of advertisers, "liquor people," and Time Inc.'s corporate executives registered a complaint against the consolidation of cultural influence in the hands of business. This concern emerged across denominations and geographies. Princeton Seminary

[466] U.S Congress, Senate, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, *Hearings on S. 3294 A Bill to Prohibit the Transportation in Interstate Commerce of Advertisements of Alcoholic Beverages, And for Other Purposes,* 83rd Cong., 2d sess., 1954, Statement of Glen Cunningham, Cedar Point, Kans., 44.

professors, midwestern laywomen, and Baptist pastors all found reason to worry that Luce and Time Inc.'s cultural leadership was compromised by their financial connections. It was precisely Luce's vast financial connections that made him nearly impossible to censure.

"A Full, Fair and Christian Trial:" Responses to the Temperance Movement

Luce and his corporation deferred to their longstanding sources of power and legitimation to reject temperance activists' efforts. In most instances, temperance activists who wrote to Time Inc. received a form letter from the corporation explaining the company policy on liquor advertising. A note from Andrew Heiskell, *Life'*s publisher, justified the circulation of liquor advertising with recourse to the importance of free and democratic markets, "We believe that, since the liquor business is a legally recognized one, it is entitled to a portion of our advertising space. While we appreciate that liquor advertising is against the principles of some of our readers, we feel that by allowing some advertising in our publications, we are doing our share to keep this business openly, honestly and fairly before the public's eye, and by this course we are serving our readers in the best tradition of American democracy."[467] The familiar language of "American democracy" is used to justify the corporation's advertising policy. Since World War II, Time Inc.'s representatives had explained and justified their activities by forging associations between the corporation and the ideals typically used to define American virtue, including individualism, democracy, and free markets. Once again, this form letter described corporate activities as in keeping with the universal principles of fair business and robust democracy, priorities that surely superseded the opinions of "some" readers.

[467] "To: ____ From: Andrew Heiskell, Publisher," Undated 1946, Folder 8, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

In Protestant circles, Luce justified his company's advertising policy with a cool but assertive legalism. In response to readers' unhappiness with his appearance on the cover of *The Presbyterian,* Luce wrote the magazine's editor a short note stating that his corporation's advertising policy was not a breach of church policy. "So far as I know the Presbyterian Church has not declared the publishing of liquor advertisements to be contrary to Presbyterian faith and morals," he wrote, "I would be happy to have my conscience guided by Church discipline. … My suggestions is therefore, that you take this matter up as a question of Church discipline and get it settled clearly according to the constitution of The Presbyterian Church."[468] In this note, Luce seemed to dare the editor of *The Presbyterian* to go further with his charges, almost insinuating that if the issue of liquor advertising were brought before a church council, Luce would prevail.

Presbyterian authorities never censured Luce's entanglement with liquor advertising. After ongoing and consistent complaints from the temperance movement, Luce went so far as to request a "fair, full and Christian trial" on the subject of liquor advertising. In June of 1948, Luce wrote to his two primary theological interlocutors, his pastor, Reverend Dr. George R. Buttrick of Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, and the realist theologian Henry Pitney Van Dusen of New York's Union Theological Seminary, to solicit their "strictly professional" opinions. He asked them to please alert him if his business practices violated Presbyterian doctrine. If they did find a violation, he requested the opportunity to make his case before an official ecclesial council.[469] There is no evidence to suggest that such a trial ever took place. While Luce ostensibly deferred to Buttrick and Van Dusen's institutional authority and doctrinal expertise,

[468] "Dear Mr. Morris: …" December 23, 1946. File 8, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[469] "Dear Pitt: …" June 14, 1948. File 10, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

the power dynamics here are complex and unclear. Luce was a singularly important and influential layman. His position helped guarantee Protestantism's continued prominence in mass culture. Relatedly, it was not in the Presbyterian Church's interest to negatively impact Time Inc.'s bottom line. Luce made large, regular donations to Buttrick's Madison Avenue Presbyterian, among many other church organizations and causes. In many instances, Luce's gifts came in the form of Time Inc. shares. Buttrick's church was literally invested in Time Inc.'s continued success.[470] Even if circulating liquor advertising was outside the bounds of sanctioned behavior, Luce's powerful connections made him a difficult individual to censure. It was precisely this singular position that made him an object of suspicion to begin with. Protestants from a range locations and denominational settings worried about what kinds of cultures actors like Luce were empowered to produce. During the same years, widespread concern that Luce was under the influence of liquor industry resonated with rumors brought on by Clare Boothe Luce's 1946 conversion to Catholicism.

Compromised Commitments: The Luces and Anti-Catholicism

On February 16, 1946, Clare Boothe Luce arrived at Manhattan's magnificent St. Patrick's Cathedral ready to be received into the Roman Catholic Church. In a small ceremony, where Henry Luce was conspicuously absent, Luce became a Catholic. At the time of her conversion, Clare's public profile rivaled Henry's. In addition to her ongoing career as a writer and playwright, she was one of only seven women serving in congress, as a Republican

[470] Correspondences regarding Luce contributions to Madison Avenue Presbyterian can be found throughout Buttrick's personal papers, see Box 18, General Correspondences, Papers of George Arthur Buttrick, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA. Records of Luce's contributions to other Presbyterian organizations, including *The Presbyterian* magazine and the establishment of a Presbyterian church and center in Washington, D.C, can be found in Folder 3-4, Box 43, Henry R. Luce Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

representative from Connecticut. Like Henry, Clare was captivated by abstract questions of politics, justice, and spirituality. The discreet event at St. Patrick's Cathedral marked an important and public turning point in years of religious and intellectual searching.[471]

The first half of the 1940s were shatteringly difficult for Clare. In 1944 her daughter from her first marriage, then an undergraduate at Stanford University, was killed in a car accident. Her daughter's death happened amidst occasional trips to Europe as a reporter for *Life,* where she bore witness to the incredible atrocities of the war. And, throughout the 1940s, her marriage to Henry Luce was essentially estranged, with both consumed by their busy professional lives. These trying events intensified her burgeoning interest in Catholicism. Starting in 1945, as she emerged from a "black riptide of grief," Clare began studying regularly with Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, a professor and prominent Catholic intellectual. Sheen quickly became a valued philosophical interlocutor. Rebecca L. Davis writes that Sheen helped Luce to recognize that "Catholicism offered what she believed to be God's truth of redemptive love. … Catholicism seemed the 'most reasonable' solution to her mind's puzzles about human nature and God's interest in humanity's fate."[472] This determination was not uncontroversial. With anti-Catholicism still a defining feature of U.S. public life, Clare announced that she would not seek reelection lest her newfound faith become a liability.

Clare Luce's conversion became a vector of popular anti-Catholicism. The 1950s saw a considerable pique in arguments equating Catholicism with authoritarianism. During the 1930s, U.S. observers' perception that the Vatican was complicit with Benito Mussolini compounded old cliches about Catholics' susceptibility to groupthink and domineering leadership. In this

[471] Davis, *Public Confessions,* 13, Sylvia Juke Morris, *Price of Fame: The Honorable Clare Boothe Luce* (New York, NY: Random House, 2014), 146-150.
[472] Davis, *Public Confessions,* 21.

view, which was frequently espoused in Protestant circles, Catholicism's centralized leadership and suspiciously loyal followers meant that the Catholic church was inimical to democracy.[473] Davis writes that Clare Luce's archives teem with letters reproducing these longstanding anti-Catholic tropes. Most of the letter writers self-identified as Protestants. Many of those who wrote to Clare argued that Catholics were in league with fascists and communists, the ultimate representative examples of anti-democratic collectivism. Clare's conversion, alongside her close proximity to the organs cultural and political power, made her a particularly worrying case of Catholic influence.

Beginning after Clare's conversion and continuing into the early 1950s, rumors circulated that Henry Luce had also converted to Catholicism, or that even if he had not converted, his magazines bore a pro-Catholic bias thanks to Clare Luce's influence. His longstanding friendships with well-known Catholic thinkers, including John Courtney Murray and Cardinal Francis Spellman, now emerged as evidence of a longstanding conspiracy. These rumors came from a range of Protestant sources. In November of 1950, for example, Time Inc.'s public relations department contacted James W. Fifield, the founder of the anti-communist, evangelical Spiritual Mobilization Movement, to disabuse him of the belief that Luce had converted to Catholicism. According to Time Inc.'s letter, Fifield frequently used his weekly Los Angeles radio program to tell his listeners that Luce had "embraced Catholicism" and warn them that his magazines were therefore biased and untrustworthy.[474]

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[473] John T. McGreevey, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 166-188.

[474] "Dear Dr. Fifield:…," November 17, 1950, Folder 10, Box 443, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY. Kevin M. Kruse discusses Fifield's mass media evangelicalism in *One Nation Under God*, 11-27.

Like temperance activism, anxieties about Catholic influence at Time Inc. traversed denominational spaces. Throughout the 1950s, Buttrick received numerous, nervous notes enquiring about Luce's Protestant commitments. Several came from prominent mainline leaders. In 1947, G. Bromley Oxnam, a Bishop in the Methodist Episcopal church, wrote Buttrick to cautiously enquire if it was true that Monsignor Sheen had visited Luce in the hospital after his gallbladder surgery.[475] In 1953, Reverend Eugene Carson Blake, then the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (and future general secretary of the ecumenical World Council of Churches) also worried that Luce was being compelled to convert. He wrote Buttrick to suggest that "a strong representative of the thinking of our Church should lay before the man the counter position from that of the Roman Church."[476] These notes all allude to a mainline Protestant rumor mill, wherein pastors and parishioners whispered fretfully about compromised loyalties. In all instances, Buttrick ensured his colleagues that Luce was attending Madison Avenue Presbyterian every Sunday and engaging, as always, in robust theological discussion during pastoral visits. While none of these notes bore the overt anti-Catholicism Davis saw in Clare Boothe Luce's archives, they bespeak an ongoing anxiety about Catholicism's ability to exert covert influence on important figures. Anxieties about Luce's conversion suggest how nervously mainline clerics clung to him as a source of social power.

In one instance, Luce decided that one of Buttrick's colleagues deserved a personal response. He penned a lengthy letter to Reverend Matthew C. Cavell of Evanston, Indiana's First Presbyterian Church, insisting that his publications bore a decidedly Protestant bias. "In the last four or five years," he wrote, "I doubt whether any group of secular publications has published a

[475] "My dear Dr. Buttrick:…," November 15, 1947, Box 18, General Correspondences, Papers of George Arthur Buttrick, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA.
[476] "Dear George: Rather Indirectly…," March 13, 1953, Box 18, General Correspondences, Papers of George Arthur Buttrick, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA.

larger number of really thoughtful articles on or pertaining to religion. And, implicitly if not explicitly, the approach has been more often Protestant than Catholic." Luce went on to list a number of features across his three magazines, noting that each promoted a decidedly Protestant perspective, and were "written by a devout Protestant." Luce concluded his note with reference to Clare, writing, "I realize that the concern which you and others have expressed may seem to be confirmed by the news of my wife's conversion to Catholicism. I am happy for her, that she has found a Christian faith. But as for the Editor-in-Chief of TIME INC. publications, an ample road to salvation was marked out for him in childhood and it will be obvious to you that he must take that road or none."[477] In their correspondences with Luce and Buttrick, mainline pastors worried explicitly that they would lose an important Protestant voice to the charismatic and compelling Monsignor Sheen. Here, Luce goes to lengths to argue that he is still committed to promoting Protestantism in U.S. public life. His letter explicitly asserts that articles on religious topics were written by "devout Protestant" journalists, conveying that Luce kept a tight grip on who could speak about what. Although accepting of his wife's conversion, he was not about to let Time Inc. become a clearinghouse for Catholic perspectives.

Many years later, *Life* staff writer Dora Jane Hamblin recalled that, "For years there was a rumor that Clare Boothe Luce's conversion to the Roman Catholic faith had given a pro-Rome tilt to *Life'*s coverage. This was not true. … *Life* loved the Roman church for itself, for its spectacle: all those candles, processions, uniforms, nuns, piazzas, ceremonies. They made great pictures."[478] It apparently did not occur to Luce's critics that Time Inc.'s coverage of Catholicism was not an endorsement, it was a spectacle. In an echo of the ambiguous responses

[477] "Dear Dr. Cavell: George Buttrick…," March 4, 1946, Folder 3, Box 55, Henry R. Luce Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[478] Hamblin, *That Was the Life!*, 40.

to *Life*'s coverage of U.S. fascists in 1939, some readers evidently understood *Life*'s lavish photography of Catholic people and places as a sign of Catholic commitment.

Rumors of Luce's conversion circulated during the same years that the temperance movement took aim at Time Inc. While the postwar temperance movement very rarely expressed the overt, racializing anti-Catholicism characteristic of Prohibition-era temperance campaigners, their overlap should not be ignored. Anxieties about Time Inc.'s Catholic connections circulated less than two decades after the repeal of Prohibition. Many of the white Protestants involved in the postwar temperance movement were also involved in more overtly anti-Catholic Prohibition activism several decades earlier.[479] Finally, both categories of criticism against Time Inc. shared a common sensibility. In both instances, Protestant observers worried that Time Inc.'s leadership was susceptible to the influence of an obscure web of powerful actors, be they the Catholic Church or the "liquor people." These suspicions, though different in their nature and intensity, both convey concerns about what Luce was capable of. If controlled by the "liquor people," he could disorder traditional family life. If compelled by Monsignor Sheen, Protestantism could lose its public prominence.

Conclusion: Advertising and the Pursuit of Happiness

A tacit response to the temperance movement's complaints came nestled in one of *Life*'s grandiose special features. In early 1948, *Life*'s editorial team began planning the first in a series of "*Life* Roundtables." Each of the magazine's roundtables originated with an in-person gathering of six to twelve experts on a particular topic. During these gatherings, which were

[479] For a discussion of anti-Catholicism and Prohibition, see Lisa McGirr, *The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), 139-146, 170-178.

hosted by *Life* at a hotel or country club in the Northeast, the assembled experts were presented with a series of questions for debate. In keeping with the contemporary theme of unified purpose, their aim was to arrive at as much broad consensus as possible. *Life* staff writers, who were present for the event, would ultimately summarize the roundtable conversations for publication in the magazine.[480]

The first roundtable, held on March 15, 1948 at the Westchester Country Club in Rye, New York, was on the topic of "The Pursuit of Happiness." The article that followed explained that "The Pursuit of Happiness" was the "third right" insisted upon in the Declaration of Independence. The *Life'*s roundtable would "reinterpret" this often-evasive concept in "modern terms" by asking a group of eighteen experts about the politics and pitfalls of everyday attempts to pursue happiness. The group assembled was eclectic. In an apparent effort to represent a diversity of contemporary positions and perspectives, *Life* assembled experts who might take opposite and varied political positions. The roundtable included a labor union leader, Joseph Scanlon, and Charles Luckman, president of Lever Brothers and an "eloquent advocate of the enterprise system." It also included two learned clergymen, one Protestant and Catholic. Father Edmund A. Walsh, who *Time* magazine had antagonized less than twenty years earlier, "brought the Table a profound knowledge of the misuse of power by totalitarian states." Mrs. Herbert W. Hines, the 1948 Mother-of-the-Year, offered insight into pursuits of happiness based out of the home, while Charles Brackett of Paramount pictures "defended the movies from heavy attack."[481]

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[480] Other *Life* roundtables focused on Modern Art, *Life,* October 11, 1948, 56-76, Housing, *Life,* January 31, 1949, 73-85, and Movies, *Life,* June 26, 1949, 90-111. Ultimately, the editors found that roundtables were too complex and labor intensive to become a regular feature. See Folder 18, Box 434, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

[481] "A Life Roundtable on the Pursuit of Happiness," *Life*, July 12, 1948, 94-113.

Advertising was one of the topics up for debate. The roundtable's conversation, which was moderated and synthesized by Time Inc. editor and executive Russell Davenport, touched down on several specific aspects of contemporary life in the U.S., including work, the family, and consumerism. When the conversation around consumerism meandered to the social effects of advertising, liquor advertising emerged as a salient example. Disagreement arose around whether or not advertisers were entitled to make subjective claims about the emotional satisfaction or social status their goods could provide. Some members of the roundtable contended that advertisers should be limited to completely practical descriptions of their products, while others observed that the boundaries between emotional and practical appeals would be impossible to police and maintain.

Echoing the criticisms of temperance activists, the roundtable agreed that liquor advertising represented a prime example of marketing that advanced dubious, subjective claims about the nature of its product. The table agreed that "the clear effect of most liquor advertising, for example, well-documented with silver trays, orchids, top hats, tails, white kid gloves, sportsmen, etc., is to equate drinking with the luxurious life; the cultural inference being that 'success' is to be measured in material terms—and that drinking helps." While the experts unanimously deplored this message, they ultimately concluded that the advertisers themselves were not responsible for the possible social outcomes.

The consensus the roundtable eventually arrived at affirmed Time Inc.'s continued acceptance of liquor advertising. After some debate, the roundtable agreed that cultural and moral leaders, whose primary occupation was "the enlightenment of the people," were responsible for cultivating a populace capable of scrutinizing, and perhaps rejecting, the claims of advertisers. The group determined that if "editors, educators, and clergy" could effectively

teach individuals that true happiness could not be attained through the purchase of commodities, deceptive advertising would be rendered harmless.[482] Here, the editor is placed on equal footing with the clergy person, and both are endowed with the responsibility to "enlighten" the populace.

Time Inc.'s small cadre of Managing Editors and publishing executives controlled one of the most massive media platforms of their time and were deeply entangled with other commercial industries shaping everyday life. Temperance and anti-Catholicism were two ways in which a diverse variety of midcentury Protestants expressed their anxieties about this intense consolidation of power and cultural influence. As Protestant organizations actively argued that liquor advertising compromised Luce and Time Inc.'s ability to provide moral leadership, and some Protestants worried that Luce was susceptible to Catholic influence, *Life'*s roundtable conversation asserted that both editors and clergy held equal responsibility for the moral and intellectual cultivation of readers. It was precisely this reality that many found so concerning.

[482] "A Life Roundtable on the Pursuit of Happiness," *Life*, July 12, 1948, 113.

PART IV: TIME INC. IN THE 1960'S

On May 25, 1964, Henry R. Luce stood before a vast ballroom of tuxedoed executives. They were gathered to celebrate his long career and mark his retirement. Luce took the opportunity to offer an elaborate reflection on his corporation, the United States, and the United States' role in the world. He began by describing Time Inc.'s status twenty-five years earlier, in 1939, and then looked twenty-five years into the future, to 1989. Explaining this periodization, Luce stated that 1939 marked the moment when Time Inc.'s journalism "began to exert a conscious, and, we hope, a coherent influence on the course of events." At the heart of those exertions, Luce recalled, was the ambition to produce "a consensus of opinion and conviction in the nation." Looking ahead to 1989 (which Luce took care to note was the 200th anniversary of the United States' Constitution), he ceased speaking of Time Inc., and pivoted to predicting decades of greatness for the nation it sought to influence. "Vast empires there have been before," he declared, "but never anything remotely resembling this intangible empire of human interest and concern displayed by the American people for the world."[483] These statements worked well to capture the tenor of Luce's career at Time Inc. Starting at the beginning of World War II, he had steered the corporation toward producing media that described the United States as the pinnacle of human civilization, thanks to its Christian religion, its capitalist productivity, and its aspiration to altruistic global leadership. It was his hope, and perhaps his belief, that this American exceptionalist vision was a source of broad-based cultural consensus.

With that, he went on to introduce his successor. Leadership of Time Inc., "a task of wonderous amplitude," was passed on to longtime *Fortune* editor Hedley Donovan. Donovan,

[483] "The Luce-Donovan Dinner May 25, 1964," Souvenir program booklet, Folder 16, Box 458, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

who one contemporary characterized as a "big, powerful, Minnesotan," offered remarks of very a different nature.[484] He did away with Luce' abstract ruminations on Time Inc.'s relationship to U.S. empire and the Constitution. Instead, he spoke specifically about the media corporation's successes and areas for improvement. He wanted to perfect "the internal architecture" of each magazine and "get around the United States more," emphasizing lively domestic coverage. In his appraisal of Time Inc.'s media output, Donovan offered an aside that spoke volumes about the corporation's status in the 1960s, "… it is often suggested that Time Inc. *is* the Establishment," Donovan chided.[485] With this remark, Donovan located Time Inc. as a bastion of conservativism in a culture riven by massive change.

The early 1960s saw the norms that empowered actors like Luce and Donovan begin to erode. This was especially true when it came to religion. In his massive, synthetic history of religion in the U.S., historian Sidney E. Ahlstrom described the 1960s as a time when "old foundations of national confidence, patriotic idealism, moral traditionalism, and even of historic Judeo-Christian theism, were awash. Presuppositions that had held firm for centuries—even millenia—were being widely questioned."[486] This washing away of existing religious assumptions took a dizzying array of forms. In 1962, the Second Vatican Council made a call for *aggiornamento*, or revising ancient doctrine to meet the demands of modernity. A new interest in Hinduism and Buddhism was taking root on college campuses. Black Americans were mounting religious critiques of the United States' enduring, systemic racism. Conversative evangelicals were experiencing a boom thanks to media savvy and ample capital, and the white Protestant

[484] Loudon Wainwright, *The Great American Magazine: An Inside History of LIFE* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 334.
[485] "The Luce-Donovan Dinner May 25, 1964," Souvenir program booklet, Folder 16, Box 458, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[486] Sidney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 1080.

organizations that had long enjoyed cultural prominence and proximity to power were grappling with radical new theologies, and in the latter half of the decade, declining institutional participation.

This section concludes the dissertation by examining how *Time* and *Life* mediated this massive and varied cultural change. On the eve of Luce's retirement, each magazine was on a very different trajectory. *Time'*s circulation and profits trended steadily upward, while *Life* stumbled. In January of 1960, a memo between executives mused about the different purposes of *Time* and *Life*. "…there exists a 'moral imperative' to read Time; a clear duty exists for a well-informed person to stay well informed," the memo stated. *Life,* on the other hand, was described as, "is in no sense a must. It is a delightful additive to a vital kind of living."[487] In the 1960s the vagueness of *Life*'s formula was reemerging as a problem. The magazine's pattern of celebrating the proverbial field of wheat—the "the fruitful and normal" aspects of U.S. life—was no longer yielding profits. In Chapter 7, "'Far Right Revivalists' and the Politics of Purpose: *Life* Magazine on the Eve of the 1960s," I demonstrate that a sizable, vocal portion of *Life'*s readers demanded the magazine embrace a brand of evangelical conservativism which was antithetical to the religious sensibilities that pervaded the executive suit. *Life'*s pious, Christian patriotism, honed during World War II, was quickly changing hands. Luce and his colleagues, however, remained reluctant to reflect the ascendant forms of Christian politics their readers increasingly embraced.

Time, on the other hand, had coined an approach to news that continued to sell magazines. Its formula had changed very little since its inception in the 1920s. A full time staff of New York based writers still fashioned its journalism from a bricolage of existing sources, and the magazine still "took stands" on everything from music to monarchies. In my final chapter,

[487] Memo from Dick Coffey to Mr. Heiskell, January 6, 1960. Folder 8, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

"The Success of *Time* and the Death of God," I argue that *Time* instrumentalized the religious changes of the 1960s to produce dramatic copy. At the same time, magazine's eagerness to record contemporary culture in evocative and dramatic tones continued to place Luce at an oblique angle with the Protestant theologians he admired. This final chapter examines the tensions that endured between Luce and established theological authorities at the end of his career.

In charting the simultaneous success of *Time* and decline of *Life*, I hope to demonstrate the relative persistence of the religious sensibilities and ways of seeing that each magazine advanced. Historian of photography Sally Stein writes that, "Throughout the 1960s, *Life* tried to report on a nation growing increasingly divided while striving to emphasize the healing weight of tradition and shared values."[488] With the growing popularity of evangelicalism, the magazine's celebration of traditional values became the province of a style of conservativism that Time Inc. refused to embrace. *Life'*s optimistic, consensus driven outlook was no longer finding a large, enthusiastic audience. Meanwhile, *Time'*s commitment generating intrigue and stoking scandal found ample material in the 1960s, and continued to sustain a dedicated public.

[488] Sally Stein, "Mainstream Differences: The Distinctive Looks of *Life* and *Look,*" in LIFE *Magazine and the Power of Photography* ed. Katherine Bussard (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020), 107.

Chapter 7: 'Far Right Revivalists' and the Politics of Purpose: *Life* Magazine on the Eve of the 1960s

Time Inc.'s internal history uses a stark metaphor to capture *Life*'s status in the early 1960s. "The giant picture weekly was like a beached whale," the author wrote, "the effort to get it afloat again was to command more attention, over a longer period of time, than any problem in the company's history."[489] After a short period of incredible popularity and profits in the 1940s and early 1950s, the magazine's balance sheets were not working out. Internal accounts and existing histories attribute *Life'*s flagging appeal to the rise of television.[490] Here, I turn to Time Inc.'s encounters with representatives of conservative evangelicalism to suggest that *Life* magazine's particular religious and political outlook might have had a hand its decline. The two encounters that constitute the body of this chapter demonstrate that Time Inc.'s investment in a U.S. Christianity expressed through benevolent global hegemony was increasingly in tension with an ever-more popular version of "Christian America" invested in matters of U.S. American morality at home.

Scholars of U.S. Protestantism have narrated the expanding prominence of evangelicalism in the second half of the twentieth century in terms of alternative institution building. From the launch of evangelist Billy Graham's *Christianity Today* magazine to the establishment of Pepperdine University, historians of U.S. Protestantism have demonstrated that conservative evangelicalism gained momentum by creating conservative counter-publics imagined as oppositional to the mainstream.[491] Viewing this history from the vantage of Time

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[489] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc.*, 37.
[490] See James Baughman, *Henry R. Luce and the Rise of the American News Media* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 195-196, Allan Brinkley, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and his American Century* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 454-455, Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc.* 276-311, Katherine Bussard and Kristen A. Gersh, "Introduction," in LIFE *Magazine and the Power of Photography,* ed. Bussard, 14-27.
[491] Examples include, Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) Timothy Gloege, *Guaranteed Pure:*

Inc. deepens these accounts by showing how conservative organizing shaped an institution that was financially and ideologically committed to serving as many people as possible. What's more, evangelicals' vocal and persistent criticisms of *Life* demonstrate that the magazine had found a substantial base of readers who did not share the editors' mainline affiliations. The criticisms they mounted in the early 1960s, like activism against liquor advertising in the late 1940s, registered an uneasy meeting of divergent religious cultures.

In this chapter, I show how the changing religious sensibilities of *Life'*s predominantly white and suburban audience destabilized the magazine's claim to represent "America" writ-large.[492] First, I examine *Life'*s inclusion of Billy Graham in one of the magazine's high-budget, multi-issue special features. Although Luce and his colleagues considered Graham a "gimmick," his message was embraced by the magazine's readers. Second, I analyze the considerable backlash provoked by *Life'*s dismissive coverage of the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade (CACC), a far-right evangelical organization dedicated to rooting out domestic communism. I use these examples to argue that starting in the early 1960s, *Life* magazine's particular religious politics, which emphasized U.S. influence the world and embraced clerical expertise, was increasingly in tension with the religious outlook of those who the audience claimed to at once represent and "instruct." *Life*'s encounters with evangelicals showed that the magazine was not

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The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), Darren Grem, *Blessings of Business: Corporate America and the Rise of Conservative Evangelicalism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016). Heather Hendershot, *Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelicalism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), Daniel Vaca, *Evangelicals Incorporated: Books and the Business of Religion in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

[492] A small body of literature has shown that conservative evangelicalism flourished in white, postwar suburbs, precisely the geographies where *Life* magazine found the most success. For examinations of evangelicals and suburbia see, Eileen Luhr, *Witnessing Suburbia: Conservatives and Christian Youth Culture,* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) and Justin, Wilford,. *Sacred Subdivisions: The Postsuburban Transformation of American Evangelicalism* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2012).

adequately representative, and that many readers were poised to lash out against its instructive gestures. This feedback came at a moment when Time Inc. needed to retain every *Life* reader that it possibly could.

Nostalgia Amidst Decline

At the end of the 1950s, *Life* was confronting a number of overlapping problems. Television, some executives claimed, was stealing *Life's* unique claim to spectacular visuality, and consuming more and more of readers' leisure time. While *Life's* relationship to television was always a source of debate, the new medium's impact on the magazine's ever-important advertising revenue was somewhat easier to chart. Research from the advertising division indicated that advertising agencies were more willing and excited to spend excessively on a television commercial than a pricey, full-color page in *Life.*[493] In 1958, Time Inc. ran another series of advertisements for advertising, this time with a subtle emphasis on print.[494] In efforts to impress advertisers with massive audiences, Time Inc. worked mightily to increase *Life's* circulation. Corporate leadership reduced the newsstand price and launched multiple ploys to win new subscribers, including reduced subscription rates and a new, unpopular practice of

[493] Time Inc. began researching television's impact on magazine advertising in 1951, with the "Report on Advertising Sales" study, Folder 12, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY. In 1963, it conducted an even larger body of surveys, the "Role of Mass Magazines Study," Box 469, Folder 21, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York. Both studies found that advertisers believed television advertising to be more effective, but neither study decisively concluded that *Life's* advertising was imperiled. Anxieties about television's impact on advertising revenue pervade *Life's* internal paperwork throughout the intervening decade.

[494] "Re: Campaign on Advertising," May 26, 1958, Folder 14, Box 411, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

selling subscriptions over the phone.[495] Circulation increased to seven million, but profits did not swell.[496]

This tremendous circulation itself became a problem. The editor's early 1960s memoranda convey the distinct feeling that they did not know who they were talking to or what those people wanted from the magazine. Memos circulated about whether or not the *Life* reader was getting their news from *Time* or from television, and if *Life* should include news at all.[497] One editor suggested a method of getting college students to read the magazine, then wondered if they already were.[498] Reflecting on *Life*'s decline, longtime *Life* staff writer Loudon Wainwright wrote, "somehow the strong link that had formerly bound the magazine to its audience was gone, the sense no longer existed that *Life* was capable of reflecting things in America as they really were. For all its techniques, skills and good intentions, the magazine seemed somehow out of touch with the tumultuous times, showing its middle age."[499] These circumstances would ultimately prove impossible to resolve.

There was some concern within Time Inc. that *Life'*s style of content, rather than the inexorable rise of television, was to blame for the magazine's unsteady economics. *Look, Life's* closest competitor, was finding success with their coverage of the entertainment industry. Celebrity interest stories brought substantial profits thanks to steady advertiser interest and low production costs. In 1958, Time Inc. staffers apprehended an internal memo from the *Look* offices that disparaged *Life'*s editorial approach. "Standing above and apart from man, *Life*—in

[495] "During the past months I have received various complaints…," Jan 15, 1960, Folder 8, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[496] Memoranda To: ALL LIFE Salesmen From: Clay Buckhout, March 19, 1960, Folder 8, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[497] Memoranda to: Mr. Furth, From: Bob Elson, May 27, 1960, Folder 8, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[498] "LIFE's promotion campaign in top college…," April 4, 1960, Folder 8, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[499] Wainwright, *The Great American Magazine*, 339.

spite of all efforts at informality—remains the lofty pundit, superior, condescending, jesting, ponderous with moral instruction for the lesser masses," *Look'*s marketing team claimed, "*Life* likes theories, causes, paradoxes, heroes and vast movements in time and space; *Look* likes people."[500] When Luce was confronted with *Look*'s negative evaluation of *Life*, he began writing a series of memos goading his colleagues to help him re-imagine the magazine. His initial response, however, was cut short by a severe heart attack. Concerns about Henry's health prompted the Luces to relocate to their Phoenix, Arizona vacation home full time starting in 1959.[501]

At the end of 1960, he took up the effort again. Addressing *Look'*s accusations of dullness and elitism ("the very fact that it can be said must be taken account of," he wrote) Luce issued a series of ambitious directives to his staff. "So, what would be the purpose of LIFE in the Sixties? My answer: LIFE is and shall be the designed to be the magazine of national purpose," He went on to define "national purpose" (a term *Life* had just recently used to frame a multi-issue special series) as the collective U.S. mission "to create a greater civilization than any yet seen." He concluded by enumerating the themes that should organize a publication dedicated this grand civilizational aspiration,

> So what I am saying is that LIFE, dedicated to helping bring about a great human civilization, shall be:
>
> A great Magazine of Art
> A great Magazine of Science
> A great Magazine of Religion
> A great Magazine of Politics (grand scale)

[500] Robert Elson, *The World of Time Inc.: The Intimate History of a Changing Enterprise, Volume II, 1941-1960* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1973), 426. For an essay on the parallel histories of *Life* and *Look,* see Stein, "Mainstream Differences," in LIFE *Magazine and the Power of Photography,* ed. Bussard, 98-109.
[501] Elson, *The World of Time Inc., Vol. II*, 430.

> A great Magazine of Economics (dull word!) –Yes, a FORTUNE for 40,000,000 people, who now recognize themselves as engaged in, as participants in, The Age of (difficult) Abundance.[502]

Luce's reflexive return to the tropes of U.S. exceptionalism and civilizational "greatness," which had already motivated his publishing career for three decades, registers the magazines' intransience to change. Since the late 1930s, *Life* had explicitly attempted to lead by example. If the average mid-century suburbanite espoused a superficial faith, *Life* delivered demanding historical and theological essays. Where readers were drawn to tacky commodities, the magazine directed them towards more "tasteful" new designs. This approached assumed that readers were imitative and aspirational, eager to be both amazed and "instructed." The topics listed above reflect Luce's enduring investment in this same approach. Thirteen years earlier, the Western Culture series had emphasized the politics, art, and religion of Western Europe, and *Life* had done well with science specials throughout the early 1950s. Two and a half decades after Luce penned *Life'*s prospectus, it appeared that the magazine's signature approach did not have the intended appeal.

The final line, suggesting "a FORTUNE for 40,000,000" bespeaks Luce's true failure, and perhaps even inability, to internalize *Look'*s charge of elitism and derive meaningful insight from audience feedback like the backlash against liquor advertising. *Fortune* was Time Inc.'s lowest circulation magazine, edited explicitly for the highest income bracket of U.S. readers. Luce's imagined "FORTUNE for 40,000,000" would instruct readers in navigating the world of post-war abundance. It was precisely this overt guiding of consumer desire that opponents of liquor advertising found intrusive. Extending *Fortune'*s content to *Life'*s audience was an

[502] "Life in the Sixties," November 16, 1960, Folder 4, Box 58, Henry R. Luce Papers, Folder 8, Box 435, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

unlikely formula for success, especially in light of contemporary concerns that the magazine did not reflect the interests and experience of readers.

Life's struggle to revise its editorial formula resonated with the trajectory of Luce's favored religious organizations. David L. Hollinger writes that one of the defining aspects of religious change in the 1960s was "an expanding gap between leadership and churchgoing laity." According to Hollinger, this gap was constituted by an educated leaderships' growing investment in the politics of diversity, global human rights, and "rigorous self-interrogation." At the same time, churchgoers were more staunchly invested in "home issues," like individual salvation and maintaining traditional gender roles.[503] Sociologists William McKinney and Wade Clark Roof frame Hollinger's "classic local-cosmopolitan tension between the pulpit and the pew" slightly differently, explaining that the varied religious movements that gained momentum in the early 1960s were defined by "a more basic shift in the locus of moral and religious authority, away from external sources to more internal, personal considerations."[504] Taken together, these scholars describe the contours of a religious culture less likely to appreciate the proscriptions of editorializing media elites. While *Life* magazines circulated through ever more suburban living rooms, the editors continued to favor insights from the educated, ecumenical authorities who were slowly losing ground to individuals' more intimate considerations.

In one especially telling exchange, one of the magazine's publishers warned his colleagues that "… all of us are getting older. In the constant tug of war between the past and the future, more and more of us are opting for the past."[505] This tendency was evident in *Life's* 1962

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[503] David L. Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2013), 29-30.
[504] Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, *American Mainline Religion: It's Changing Shape and Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 62.
[505] "Seven months ago I wrote a memorandum…," October 17, 1960, Folder 8, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

special issue on "The Takeover Generation," or, those born after 1945. *Life'*s coverage congratulated the younger generation for breaking ground in diverse fields without abandoning traditional institutions. Text that accompanied a fold-out spread of young innovators read, "Since this new breed was thrust into a world of vast, spinning changes, many have made their mark by thinking as far out as the farthest planet. But they have not forgotten the enduring values. There is a Greek scholar on the list and a pioneering woman surgeon who gets up early enough to prepare breakfast for her family."[506] The special issue went on to celebrate a group of missionaries who incorporated linguistic research into their evangelizing, and an accomplished surgeon who also tended his family's farm.[507] In these articles and throughout the issue, *Life* insisted that the norms and assumptions of institutionalized, white Protestantism would surely persist, shaken but ultimately unchallenged by the whirlwind technological innovation and cultural change of the 1960s. It was this persistent assertion of the same norms and values that increasingly alienated readers.

The Politics of Purpose

While plans to address *Life'*s flagging popularity abounded, Luce rallied his staff around one of the most high-profile projects in the magazine's history. At the end of 1959, Time Inc.'s Managing sat down to identify their political priorities, and from there determine which candidate to endorse in the upcoming 1960 presidential election. Over the course of several meetings, they drafted a comprehensive document, titled "The Issues," that laid out a series of political positions meant to guide Time Inc.'s coverage of the coming election year. Luce and his colleagues determined that they were in favor of substantial tax reform, increased defense

[506] "Introducing the Generation: A Red-Hot Hundred," *Life,* September 14, 1962, 2.
[507] "Bring the Word," 75-80, and "Doctor, Lawyer, Welder of Ideas," 96, *Life,* September 14, 1962.

spending, urban renewal projects, and "equality of civil rights for all persons." They would stand firmly against farm subsidies, labor unions, and government spending broadly speaking.[508] The editors slate of issues represented the magazines' center-right stance. While they were staunchly committed to small state, pro-business economic policies, they also supported civil rights and government spending intended to protect the U.S. from corrosive influences at home and abroad.

For Luce, however, a list of specifically defined policy points was as a lacking political treatise. In order to endorse a worthy national leader, he believed, Time Inc. and its readers needed to better understand and appreciate the more abstract principles undergirding national politics. As the end of his term neared, President Dwight Eisenhower was increasingly accused of ideological fuzziness. The approaching presidential election provoked a range of observers to ask if new leadership could infuse national politics with renewed meaning and substance. Despite being an avid Eisenhower supporter, Luce was gripped by this general line of questioning and felt certain that *Life* should enter the fray.[509]

Luce proposed that *Life* empower readers to define the United States' "national purpose" through a high-profile essay contest with a cash prize. Luce went ahead and drafted a call for submissions. The call assumed that *Life*'s proposed competition would satisfy a broad, popular demand for a renewed sense of national identity. "A group of citizens may begin by talking about the price of eggs or the merits of education," he wrote, "but they end by asking each other: What are we trying to do overall? Where are we trying to get? What is the National Purpose of

[508] Memo from Mr. Luce to Messrs. Alexander, Thompson, Norton-Taylor, cc: Messrs. Donovan, Furth, Ways, Jessup, Banks, Griffith, Shepley, November 6, 1959. Folder 22, Box 423, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

[509] For a discussion of *Life'*s "National Purpose" project of 1960 and similar journalistic and literary discussions of "national purpose" that year, see John W. Jeffries, "The 'Quest for National Purpose' of 1960," *American Quarterly* 30.4 (Autumn, 1978), 451-470.

the U.S.A?"[510] Luce rallied his colleagues around the idea, suggesting that an essay contest would continue *Life's* tradition of tackling big questions of meaning and morality in an innovative new style. Readers, Luce and his colleagues thought, would bring fresh insight and a change in tone. One Managing Editor suggested that reader's writing would differ from *Life's* tendency toward historical features. He hoped that the winning essay would be "along the lines of Uncle Tom's Cabin or 1984—stirring up the populace with satire and sentiment rather than flat footed historical explanation."[511] These conversations pivoted on a decidedly romantic imagining of *Life's* readers, who the editors were consistently struggling to understand.

Time Inc. employees beyond the executive suite did not share Luce and his colleagues' positive image of *Life's* readers. The corporate employees responsible for assembling the magazine from week to week were appalled by the prospect of sifting through thousands of readers' essays, which they assumed would be overwhelmingly derivative and dull. In an effort to dissuade corporate leadership from going ahead with the project, Edward Kern, an editor in the Education department, penned a long memo enumerating potential pitfalls. Kern predicted that "we will be getting reams of unwanted advice on foreign and domestic policy issues," and went on to offer a taxonomy of the various kinds of readers who would write in, and the predictable policy proscriptions they would offer as statements of "national purpose." Finally, Kern speculated that Time Inc. was unlikely to find and amplify that rare, innovative essay. The corporation's "orthodox-minded" staff, Kern speculated, would likely screen out truly original writers as "cranks," ultimately selecting wining essays based on style alone. He predicted that the winning "national purpose" essay would likely be "a list of platitudes made fresh sounding by

[510] "An Invitation to Declare National Purpose," December 3, 1959, Folder 10, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[511] Memo from Phil Wooton to Edward K. Thompson, November 19, 1959, Folder 10, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

well-tuned phrases."[512] Nested in Kern's critique of the proposed project was the suggestion that the editors were unaware of readers' religious interests. Among Kern's catalogue of *Life's* readers was "a large amount of Moral Rearmers." Here, Kern refers to Frank Buchman's Moral Rearmament movement, a network of evangelicals focused on bringing about world peace through individual conversion. *Time* and *Life* had both consistently mocked Buchman since the 1930s. Adequately provoked by Kern's incisive predictions, Luce solicited opinions on the "national purpose" essay contest from across the corporation.

Cables poured in from Time Inc. bureaus across the country and around the world. They were almost unanimously opposed to the proposed contest. The Boston bureau responded as a whole, stating, "We are shocked at the thought of LIFE holding a contest with the hope of finding such a purpose—as much as we believe our forebearers would be shocked at the thought of a prize for the best draft of the Declaration of Independence." Others found the concept pretentious. An executive at the Atlanta bureau warned that "…we are mistaken when we strike these messianic poses," and a journalist in Beirut scoffed at the idea that an essay contest could influence national politics writ-large, exclaiming, "If our leaders must depend on ideas from an essay contest, then God help us!"[513] This response from Time Inc.'s staffers evokes yet another dimension of Luce and his colleague's elitism. In addition to their abstract and uncertain perspective on *Life's* readers, the Managing Editors were out of touch with the rest of the corporation. Kern's intricate taxonomy of likely essay submission suggests that writers, reporters, researchers, and junior editors throughout the corporation likely understood Time Inc.'s audiences much more intimately than the Managing Editors in corner offices.

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[512] "Re: The National Purpose Project," December 11, 1959, Folder 10, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[513] "NATIONAL PURPOSE CONTEST: Opinions from bureaus, U.S. and foreign," January 20, 1960. Folder 10, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Luce's interest in receiving input from Time Inc. employees was short-lived. Dissatisfied with the response of his staff, Luce convened a meeting of expert interlocutors he admired. He invited eight men to the Time & Life Building for dinner and a collegial discussion of *Life'* s potential role in articulating the nation's guiding purposes. The guests included former Harvard University president and atomic weapons researcher James Conant, future Nixon Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, future Kennedy Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Charles S. Rhyne, the president of the American Bar Association, and John Courtney Murray. After some meandering discussion, Luce and his guests, many of them members of the federal foreign policy establishment, came to the conclusion that the most salient concerns confronting the United States in 1960 pertained to the nation's presence in the world. Rusk struck a chord when he insisted that intellectual energy must be dedicated to continuing the United States' legacy of exerting global power based on "noble ideals instead of imperialism." The men went on to agree that the United States was most lacking clear purposefulness when it came to the exercise of global influence through military might. They considered this a crucial line of inquiry, and agreed that *Life* should weigh in. Regarding the practicalities of the project, the group concluded unanimously that an essay contest would not work. It was agreed that expert voices could better guide readers toward an understanding of their role on in the world.[514] *Life* would maintain its enduring preference for elite voices and global ambitions.

As the details of the "national purpose" project solidified, the input of Luce's dinner guests mingled with the goals and protocols of *Life'*s editors. In the weeks to come, *Life'*s staffers produced a list of prominent white men *Life* might invite to write original meditations on the "national purpose." A long list of possible contributors, who were selected largely based on

[514] "NATIONAL PURPOSE CONTEST: Notes on a conference held in the Time & Life Building Jan. 21 1960," Folder 10, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

name recognition, was circulated to Luce's dinner guests for input. There was consensus around including the two-time Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson, for a liberal point-of-view. Luce's interlocutors were also inclined to hearing from Archibald MacLeish, a Pulitzer-winning poet and former Librarian of Congress, the cultural critic Walter Lippman, and John Gardner, a lesser-known philanthropist who had recently assumed leadership of the Carnegie Corporation.

The most unanimously unpopular potential contributor was the Protestant evangelist Billy Graham. Devereaux Josephs, chairman of the New York Life Insurance Company, wrote that Graham once "… begged in public not to be asked questions about economics and national policy," and maintained that "just because he has a large following does not make him an authority on national purpose." Murray's evaluation of Graham was more brusque, stating, "Graham, I am sure, doesn't have the slightest idea about politics." Former Brown University president and foreign policy advisor Henry Wriston criticized Graham based on the quality of his evangelism. "Include him if you want to, for a good circulation gimmick," he wrote, "But you know damn well he hasn't a single thing to say except 'come to Jesus,' and even when they come they don't stay." Wriston went on to agree that a "religious leader" was necessary and appropriate. Disclosing a centrist, ecumenical tendency, he suggested *Life* include Reinhold Niebuhr alongside "a good Catholic thinker, I don't know who."[515]

It was clear from these responses that Graham's theological leanings and rhetorical style made him an oddity among the political and cultural elites who populated the list of potential contributors. Luce's hand-picked jury favored credentialed, liberal and centrist voices. Graham was understood to be superficial, poorly educated, and emotive. In other words, an entirely

[515] "Re: List of Wise Men," January 27, 1960. Folder 10, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

inappropriate commenter on such serious issues as the "national purpose." The editors and executives who produced *Life*, however, were steadfastly invested in improving the magazine's newsstand sales and appealing to readers with well-known names. *Life* covered Graham regularly, and his name recognition far outstripped figures like John Gardner. Excluding him on the basis of outside suggestions was never seriously considered. Graham agreed to contribute an essay to the "national purpose" project in early February.[516]

The National Purpose series ran over the course of five consecutive issues, with an introductory article and photospread in the May 23, 1960, issue and a series of seven essays from invited contributors appearing over the next four weeks. The introductory National Purpose article, written by John K. Jessup, *Life's* chief editorial writer, spun a triumphalist narrative linking a series of historic documents to the United States' potential for global leadership. It began with the Declaration of Independence and concluded with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech. In his appraisal of the United States' representative documents, Jessup argued that the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence were inherently universal, and thus destined to be exported through various projects of U.S. intervention.[517] Perhaps unintentionally, this opening salvo of the "national purpose" series brought the reader directly back to World War II, *Life's* moment of peak cultural prestige.

The invited National Purpose essays appeared in the magazine over the course of the next four issues. They all revolved around similar ideas. Many contributors warned against what Gardner's essay called "the cult of easiness," or the tendency to become lethargic, distracted, and disinterested in world affairs thanks to the United States' bountiful material comforts.[518] On this

[516] "Dear Jack,…" February 11, 1960, Folder 10, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[517] "*LIFE* PRESENTS A CRUCIAL NEW SERIES: THE NATIONAL PURPOSE, *Life,* May 23, 1960, 23-41.
[518] John W. Gardner, "Can We Count on More Dedicated People?," *Life,* June 16, 1960, 98.

theme, poet Archibald MacLeish conveyed a tacit prejudice against U.S. urban spaces, writing, "It is true that there are streaks of American fat, some of it very ugly fat, and that it shows most unbecomingly at certain points in New York and Miami and along the California coast. But the whole country is not lost in a sluggish, sun-oiled sleep beneath a beach umbrella dreaming of More and More. … America is not made of such things as these."[519] Some of the contributors, including Adlai Stevenson and historian Clinton Rossiter, suggested that the nation could better fulfill its abstract purposes by ensuring that the nation's wealth and resources were more equitably distributed.[520] With the exception of these critical asides, the National Purpose offered hearty, affirmative projections of the United States.

Many authors, including MacLeish and Brigadier General David Sarnoff, questioned whether new "purposes" were even necessary, and called on readers to revisit the words of the nation's founders.[521] A theme that united all seven essays, without fail, was the need for the United States to "win the Cold War." Echoing the dinner conversation that guided Luce's production of the series, every author asserted that the United States' systems of economy and governance were only safe from threat if they covered all corners of the globe. "A sense of national purpose is at bottom a sense of *international* purpose," Rossiter concluded, "In the absence of any desire to influence the world… the quest for a national purpose becomes an exercise in futility." Sarnoff warned that isolationism risked rendering the United States "an island of humanism in a sea of dehumanized totalitarianism." MacLeish concluded that the true national purpose was to expand the United States domain of influence, ultimately "liberating all

[519] Archibald MacLeish, "We have purpose… we all know it," *Life,* May 30, 1960, 93.
[520] Adlai Stevenson, "Extend our vision… to all Mankind, *Life,* May 30, 1960, 90-91 and Clinton Rossiter, "We Must Show the Way to Enduring Peace," *Life,* June 13, 1960, 99-100.
[521] Archibald MacLeish, "We have purpose … We all know it," *Life,* May 30, 1960, 87-89, and David Sarnoff, "Turn the Cold War Tide in America's Favor," *Life*, June 6, 1960, 110.

of mankind."[522] These statements of the United States' charge to shape the world in its' image were familiar ones for *Life.* Almost exactly twenty years after the publication of Luce's "American Century" essay, the authors he hosted reproduced strikingly similar ideas.

Graham's article touched on the same themes, but did so in a remarkably different register. While his essay also decried laziness and emphasized the need for U.S. influence aboard, he yoked both themes to individuals' moral culpability, and thus, the need for every U.S. American to undergo a transformative, religious conversion. His essay began with a jarring metaphor,

> A few months ago I played golf with a man who looked and acted as though he enjoyed perfect health. Today he is dead. In spite of outward appearance he had a virulent form of cancer which within a short time took his life. I am convinced that regardless of the outward appearance of prosperity within the corporate life of America today there is a present a form of moral and spiritual cancer which can ultimately lead to the country's destruction unless the disease is treated promptly and the trend reversed. … I am convinced that unless we heed the warning, unless we bring Americans back to the awareness of God's moral laws, unless a moral fiber is put back into the structure of our nation, we are headed for national disaster.[523]

Unlike the rest of the National Purpose essays, Graham's essay dwelt in the negative. He painted a dark image of U.S. culture and warned that unless individuals altered their way of life things would get worse. Also unlike the other essays, Graham emphasized "Americans" rather than "America." He rebuked readers' habits of bodily care, exclaiming, "We overeat, overdrink, oversex and overplay, but few of us are ever overexercised." Graham's call for increased presence overseas was also linked to individual habits and behaviors. Rather than calling for the enlargement of democracy and liberty abroad, he challenged readers to embrace the vigor and bravery of conflict when another war inevitably became necessary. Finally, Graham made a call for mass conversion. "It is absolutely impossible to change society and reverse the moral trend,"

[522] Archibald MacLeish, "We have purpose… we all know it,' *Life,* May 30, 1960, 93.
[523] Billy Graham, "Men Must be Changed Before a Nation Can," *Life,* June 6, 1960, 109.

he wrote, "unless we ourselves are changed from the inside out." Like the temperance activists who boycotted Time Inc. in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Graham located the "national purpose" in the domestic realm. This tension between a "Christian America" defined through global expansion and a "Christian America" created at home would also characterize *Life'*s encounter with Fred Schwarz's Christian Anti-Communist Crusade less than a year later.

Time Inc.'s careful accounting of readers' responses to the National Purpose series demonstrate that Graham's message was quite popular, and that many readers craved more conservative voices throughout. The most unpopular essays brought in the most mail, with Stevenson and MacLeish's pieces getting the most critical mail and the most mail overall. According to the letters report, many readers complained that those authors advanced an unrelatable, elitist point-of-view. One letter quoted in *Life'*s report took aim at MacLeish and Stevenson together, stating "they live in a world where people never touch the ground. The aims they express would damage our country both materially and spiritually."[524] In contrast, the relatively few letters Graham's essay solicited were overwhelmingly complimentary.[525]

Many of the readers who wrote in were dissatisfied with the array of essayists. John P. Greenagle of Minnesota wrote, "…don't you think you might have made some slight gesture to the millions of American conservatives who do not follow the Stevenson-MacLeish-Galbraith philosophy of Americanism?" Princess Kathleen Obolensky, a descendent of the Russian Imperial family residing in New York City, also complained that the essayists were not adequately conservative. After the first three essays appeared, she wrote, "How unfortunate it is, you did not see fit to balance these three men with three men of comparable eminence and

[524] "Supplement to: The National Purpose: Part II: May 30, 1960 (Mail received from June 6 to June 13)," Folder 7, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society. New York, NY.
[525] "Summary of Reader Response to The National Purpose: Part III (as of June 16, 1960)," Folder 7, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

calling who stand for constitutional government rather than a glorified socialistic welfare state."[526] Here, Obolensky follows the contemporary trend of slandering liberals as "socialists" to undermine their policy prescriptions. A significant number of readers asked why *Life* had not solicited essays from William Buckley Jr. or Barry Goldwater, two figures who were never even mentioned during Luce's dinner conversation or suggested by the magazine's New York staff. In a final count, *Life* magazine's staff concluded that "God and Christianity" and "Individualism" were among the most important topics to the readers who wrote in.[527] These themes stood at a major variance with the content of the published essays, which critiqued consumerism and called for U.S. leadership in global affairs. *Life* had spent two decades of championing the United States' Christian purpose on the world stage. In 1960, it appeared that readers had come to identify the nation's religious purpose in different terms.

*Life'*s leadership did not, apparently, take this response to the National Purpose series to suggest that the U.S. global leadership and mainline Protestantism the magazine advanced was losing ground with the readers they tended to reach. In August of 1962, a major public relations journal gave *Life* an award for the National Purpose series. Conservatives' negative response to the National Purpose series was substantial enough to merit attention, "*Life* was not ignored by the more militantly conservative voices," the journal noted, "These, too took up the battle cry, if in a negative fashion. They saw little need for a National Purpose other than that articulated in the Preamble to the Constitution."[528] *Life'*s editors and their colleagues in the public relations field determined that all publicity was good publicity. No one seemed to observe that the

[526] "Summary of Reader Response to The National Purpose: Part III (as of June 16, 1960)," Folder 7, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[527] "CONFIDENTIAL: Summary of Reader Response to National Purpose, Part I" Folder 7, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[528] "Public Relations Journal," August 1962, Clipping, Folder 11, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

magazine's pattern of producing ambitious specials predicated on universalizing gestures, like asserting the possibility of a unified "national purpose," led them to produce media that left an increasingly powerful religious and cultural demographic feeling dismissed and dissatisfied. In the final analysis, the National Purpose series did not positively impact the magazine's struggling advertising revenue. *Life* ended 1960 with 200 fewer pages of advertising than they had in 1959. With each page of advertising fetching a substantial sum, this loss was considered very significant.[529]

The Fred Schwarz Affair

Within a year of Luce and his colleagues' diminishing appraisals of Graham, dismissing another "fundamentalist" proved much more costly. On April 4, 1959, Luce receive a polite invitation from Kenneth J. Redmond of the United Fruit Company. Redmond invited Luce to join him for a dinner with a Dr. Frederick C. Schwarz and several other "leaders of industry," where the assembled businessmen would learn from Dr. Schwarz about the dangers of communist organizing.[530] Luce's secretary, Emmie Nolan, attached a memo explaining that Dr. Schwarz ran a "one-man operation" called the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade. She had also found that, "… his source of funds is said to be mainly Fundamentalist Christian groups and it seems obvious his Crusade is not a Big Thing."[531] Nolan determined that because of Schwarz's dubious religious connections, the meeting was not worth Luce's time. Luce agreed, and wrote

[529] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc.,* 46.
[530] "Dear Mr. Luce: …," April 24, 1959, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject File, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[531] Memo To: Mr. Luce From: Emmie Nolan, April 27, 1959, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject File, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Redmond to plead a prior engagement. Luce and Nolan both failed to anticipate the power of Schwarz's "industry" connections.

Two years later, when a range of academics, entertainment industry professionals, and mainline Protestants drew Luce's attention to Schwarz, the Managing Editors took notice. In early 1961, a year after *Life* ran the National Purpose series, Luce began receiving letters from colleagues asking him to cover a newly invigorated brand of right-wing politics located predominantly in Southern California. The entertainer Steve Allen, then best known for hosting NCB's *The Tonight Show*, wrote Luce twice, worrying that a new brand of "McCarthyism" was on the rise. In an echo of *Life*'s coverage of domestic fascism in the 1930s, Allen recommended that this "ugly problem" should be "dragged out in the open," and included pamphlets from a recent rally lead by Dr. Schwarz.[532] Another note came from Frank Kelly, the Vice President of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at the University of California, Santa Barbara. In his letter, Kelly referred to a recent statement from Bishop James Pike of the California Episcopal Diocese, who gave more detail to the phenomena the men were all witnessing. According to Kelly's letter, Pike connected the contemporary pique in anti-communism to the growing popularity of the racist and antisemitic John Birch Society. Pike decried this "new McCarthyism" as a corrupt brand of Christianity and was working avidly to counteract its influence.[533] Like Allen, Kelly suggested that Time Inc.'s publications could "do a great service to the country" by covering the far-right. Historians have since identified Southern California as a hotbed of conservative evangelical organizing in the early 1960s. The notes Luce

[532] "Dear Mr. Luce," February 3, 1961, "Thank you for your letter of …," February 23, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject File, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[533] Dear Harry: …" February 14, 1961 Time Inc. Subject File, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

received in early 1961 register the concern and anxiety this organizing provoked in liberal observers.[534]

After conducting some research, *Life'*s editors determined that Schwarz and his allies merited journalistic attention. In August of 1961 one of *Life'*s California-based correspondents was dispatched to report on a week-long event hosted by Schwarz's Christian Anti-Communist Crusade (CACC). The event, called "Anti-Communism Week in Southern California," was staged in a Los Angeles sports arena capable of seating 16,000. *Life*'s Bob Piser chronicled his experience in a series of long, detailed cables to Time Inc.'s New York Offices. His account was deeply critical. Piser took issue with how Schwarz identified the threat of communism, how he made religious arguments, and ultimately concluded that the two were interconnected. "From 8:30 in the morning until ten at night, the sober-faced, well dressed crowd will be transfixed by a series of spellbinders and self-styled experts on communism," Piser wrote, "According to the speakers, threats to the American way come from such varied sources as Frank Sinatra, Linus Pauling, Robert Hutchins, psychiatrists, liberals, teachers, newspapermen, and clergymen."[535] Piser's ironic tone intimates that Schwarz's version of communism was fundamentally misguided. While Time Inc.'s publications had railed against communism starting as early as 1945, they did so with reference to its sources beyond the United States, including the Soviet Union, China, South Korea and most recently, Cuba. Schwarz's attention to U.S.-based professors and entertainers, Piser suggested, missed the plot.

[534] Studies of U.S. conservativism focused on Southern California include McGirr, *Suburban Warriors* and Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt.* Dochuk discusses Bishop Pike's particular responses to Southern California's far-right evangelicals, which included a public debate with Pepperdine University president William S. Banowsky, 319-325.
[535] Correspondence From Piser (BWC) To Parker NYK for LIFE WORLD FRONTS (Requested), August 24, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject File, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

In his next cable, Piser concluded that Schwarz's misguided anti-communism was constituted by his unsophisticated Christianity. Piser wrote that Schwarz would, "… plead that we must all be 'good Christians' and say that 'communism is a faith and can only be defeated by those willing to die for a greater faith.' But he does not quote the Bible, uses no examples from the Bible."[536] In a cable dated August 31, the last day of "Anti-Communism Week," Piser connected Schwarz's imprecise Christianity to his confused politics, "Does a man's theology have any effect on his character as an anticommunist? Yes. The weakness of schwarz as an anti-communist stems from his fundamentalist Protestant tradition," Piser asserted. He went on to argue that both Schwarz's Christianity and his politics suffered from a "supernaturalism" that obliterated all useful specificities. "Time and time again, he has categorically denied that a just temporal order has anything to do with the rise and fall of communism," Piser observed, "Extending the same spirit to the political order, Schwarz (and many of his followers) lack the flexibility necessary to make concrete practical applications to concrete problems."[537] Here, Piser completely dismisses Schwarz and his followers' ability to produce political analysis, and attributes their lacking insight to their "fundamentalism." According to *Life'*s on-the-ground correspondent, Schwarz and his followers' brand of Christianity was so "supernatural" that it prevented them from producing any useful "temporal" political observations. This encounter between a representative of Time Inc. and an invigorated evangelical movement demonstrates how deeply their two perspectives were at odds. Several years after *Life'*s closest competitor accused the magazine of "standing above" its readers, like Piser's negative evaluations of evangelical religion and politics were bound to do Time Inc. a disservice.

[536] Correspondence From Piser (NPR Collect) To Robert TIME INC. (Requested) AM 11:30, August 31, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject File, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[537] Correspondence From: Piser (RJ) To: Parker New York For NATION (REQUESTED), August 31, 1961, PM 10:58, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject File, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Before Piser's last, summative cable (dated September 6) reached New York, *Life* published a short item discussing the CACC. In the September 1, 1961 issue, the fifth page of *Life'*s weekly "LIFE on the Newsfronts of the World" section (which appeared on the thirty-eighth page of the magazine) included an item titled "Far-right Revivalists." The piece was less than 200 words and was not accompanied by an image. In it, *Life* mocked an upcoming event Schwarz had scheduled at Los Angeles's Hollywood Bowl. "A new kind of 'revival meeting' serving the nonreligious ends of an outfit called the 'Christian Anti-Communist Crusade' is being held with full hullabaloo and political portent in Los Angeles this week," *Life* wrote. The news brief went on to emphasize the "non-religious" angle, calling Schwarz an "evangelist gone secular."[538] *Life'*s short remarks suggested that Schwarz and his followers used Christian language opportunistically, in attempts to ennoble flawed, paranoid political arguments.[539] Where Piser's first-hand account of Anti-Communism Week identified a lacking, superficial Christianity, the editors in New York dismissed the religious content of Schwarz's brand of Christian anti-communist activism entirely.

Although the comments were nested deep in the magazine, the blowback was extreme. *Life* received a barrage of angry letters and phone calls unlike anything the magazine had ever seen before. Two weeks after "Far-right Revivalists" appeared, the letters department reported that the piece provoked "the biggest single response" to any article for at least the past six years. According to Time Inc.'s accounting, twenty-four percent of this mail accused *Life* of communist sympathies, charging that only a communist publication would condescend to Dr. Schwarz. Only .003 percent of the letters were categorized as praise. As of October 6, the magazine had seen the highest rate of subscription cancellations and non-renewals explicitly connected to a single,

[538] "Far Right Revival," *Life*, September 1, 1961, 39.
[539] Kevin Kruse discusses Dr. Fred Schwarz's campaigns in *One Nation Under God*, 148-161.

discrete story in entire history of the magazine.[540] Most concerning, however, were the two percent of letters that promised consumer boycotts of all products advertised in *Life.*[541]

It quickly became clear that Schwarz's entanglement with the corporate sector could impact *Life'*s crucial, delicate stream of advertising revenue. Schwarz and his followers organized to take aim at *Life'*s core vulnerabilities, it's advertising revenue and newsstand sales. One internal memo remarked that, "… it's not only the nuts who are angry. Our critics include businessmen and professors." This note went on to worry about one businessman in particular. Patrick J. Frawley of Schick Safety Razor, a major Time Inc. advertising client, was also a financial backer of Schwarz's CACC. The firm that managed CACC's donations called Time Inc. to demand an apology, strongly implying that Time Inc. and Schwarz were underwritten by many of the same parties.[542] Days after the article appeared, Time Inc. received a cable from Douglas E. Anderson, president of the Anderson-MacDonald Advertising Agency, Inc. Anderson warned that he and many of his clients were appalled by *Life'*s dismissive attitude towards the CACC and were awaiting an apology as they considered how to respond.[543] Two weeks later, Time Inc. received a curt note from an advertising executive who represented The Pepsi-Cola Company, a regular *Life* advertiser. He reported that thanks to the magazine's dismissive portrayal of the CACC, Pepsi's offices were being bombarded with angry mail, and demanded that Time Inc. resolve the situation immediately.[544] Another letter came from the owner of

[540] Memo to Mr. Jackson from Mabel Foust, October 6, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[541] Memo to Mr. Furth from Roger Keith, September 22, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[542] Memo from Dick Stolley to Tom Carmichael, Copy to Jim Pitt, Corporate Publicity, September 7, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[543] "I am a supporter of the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade…" September 3, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[544] "Dear Mr. Jackson…" September 21, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

several Los Angeles newsstands, who decided to stop carrying *Life* after seeing the news brief on Schwarz.[545] In the early 1960s, the magazine could hardly withstand these threats.

Time Inc. needed to respond, despite whatever antipathy corporate representatives harbored against Schwarz's brand of Christian anti-communism. In early October, C.D. Jackson, Time Inc.'s former public relations' manager who had recently replaced Andrew Heiskell as the magazine's publisher, determined that a grand gesture was in order. He decided to appear at the CACC's next rally to apologize on behalf of Time Inc. A series of briefs he received about the CACC in advance of his trip indicate that Time Inc.'s editors and journalists still found Schwarz's politics foolish, and even reprehensible. One memo stated baldly, "In sum: On the record, Schwarz, his followers and his movement are not the kind of group that the likes of us endorse."[546] Other correspondences went on to outline the same critique Piser had levied a month earlier. In addition to espousing a kind of "revivalistic" Protestantism Time Inc. generally disparaged, Schwarz was dead wrong about the nature of communism. In one brief Jackson was warned that, "Instead of looking to Berlin, or Latin America, or underdeveloped countries or soft-headed neutralists, Schwarz's followers aim their fire at everything from the public school system of California to Harvard professors, foreign aid, eggheads in general and Arthur Schlesinger in particular, TV's creeping socialism and a whole catalogue of onions which are politically arguable but have nothing to do with Russian, expansionist communism."[547] This memo, which echoes Piser's cables, typifies one of the core differences between Time Inc.'s leadership and Schwarz's constituency. Both parties agreed that communism was a threat, but on

[545] "I wish to inform you…," September 7, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[546] Memo to C.D. Jackson & Jim Shepley, undated, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[547] Memo to C.D. Jackson & Jim Shepley, October 11, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

very different terms. Luce, Jackson, and their associates believed that communism threatened U.S. influence in the world. Schwarz and others worried that communism was shaping the U.S. cultural institutions (public schools, Harvard, TV) that might impinge on their own daily lives. While Time Inc.'s sights were set firmly abroad, Schwarz advocated for an anti-communism that called the cultural authority of domestic elites into question.

On October 17, 1961, C.D. Jackson appeared onstage at the Hollywood Bowl CACC rally *Life* had lambasted weeks earlier. In a very short address, he emphasized the varied threats posed by the Soviet Union. He touched specifically on propagandists operating from Cuba, and left-wing agitation in decolonizing nations in Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America. He concluded by apologizing on behalf of *Life,* and reading a representative passage from Dr. Schwarz's book.[548] On November 6, Time Inc.'s letters department reported that 601 notes applauded Jackson's gesture, and only 52 were critical. Several correspondences came from advertisers, who assured Time Inc. that they would not pull their accounts.[549]

Jackson's public apology ultimately provoked its own backlash. The gesture caused concern among Luce's mainline contacts. The Episcopal Bishop James Pike, who had been decrying conservative Christian organizing in Southern California for several years, wrote Luce to discern where he stood on figures like Schwarz. In response, Luce insisted that Time Inc. was a steadfast opponent of the kind of Christianity Schwarz represented. He claimed that the apology was an example of Jackson's "libertarianism," and that the publication's editorial positions were not shaped by the beliefs or activities of the profit-motivated executives in the

[548] "HOLLYWOOD'S ANSWER TO COMMUNISM, HOLLYWOOD BOWL, C.D. Jackson, October 16, 1961, Los Angeles California, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[549] "SUMMARY OF MAIL RECEIVED ABOUT C.D. JACKSON'S SPEECH, Hollywood Bowl, October 16, 1961 From: Mabel S. Foust, LIFE Letters, November 6, 1961." Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

publishing offices. Luce concluded his note to Pike by insisting that he found Schwarz and his ilk reprehensible. He wrote, "I regard all manifestations of McCarthyism, Bircherism or historic American 'know-nothingism' with repugnance—and, at least on Sundays, a modicum of sympathy."[550] Luce's aloof position allowed him to affirm Pike's contention that Schwarz and his followers were associated with racist organizations like the John Birch Society. In a press conference shortly thereafter, Luce further distanced himself from Jackson's apology, pleading ignorance about the activities of the CACC and repeating the line that such public relations gestures were unconnected to the corporation's journalistic output.[551]

While Luce could claim a removed position, Jackson began receiving criticisms of a different kind. News of Schwarz's threats to Time Inc.'s advertising revenue had spread quickly, and some observers perceived Jackson's apology as a failure of journalistic integrity. A series of letters from Jackson's colleagues, and later news reports in *The Nation* and several local Southern California newspapers, speculated that Time Inc.'s political positions were subject to the whims of advertisers.[552] "I need not tell you," wrote one correspondent, "how contradictory I think this situation is to pious talk about freedom of the press in America."[553] In response to these letters, Jackson always reminded critics that Time Inc., like Schwarz, was a staunch opponent of communism. The corporation was therefore not betraying its journalistic principles, but apologizing for a misguided piece that had affected a needlessly snide tone. What this response elides, of course, is the distinct differences between Time Inc.'s brand of religious anticommunism, focused on U.S. influence in the world, and many *Life* readers' and Schwarz

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[550] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc.,* 47.
[551] "Partial Transcript of Henry R. Luce Press Conference, October 30, 1961," Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[552] See clippings retained in Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[553] "Dear Mr. Jackson:…," November 3, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

followers' version, which emphasized morality and home and located communism among domestic elites.

Jackson's response to one critical note draws attention to *Life*'s unsteady editorial footing. Jackson told his skeptical colleague that the Hollywood Bowl apology was intended to create a more magnanimous relationship between *Life* and its readers. "… our kind of journalism-in-depth occasionally conveys an impression of brittle omniscience," he wrote, "stated more simply, the magazine needs a face, a human face… It occurred to me that this occasion, with its huge and very interested audience who were also highly charged emotionally, might be a splendid opportunity to give the magazine such a face."[554] Here, Jackson discloses a rare acknowledgement of *Life*'s problems. The magazine's ambitious journalism affected a lofty tone, featured elite voices, and conveyed a religious and political vision that did not appeal to Schwarz's audience of conservative evangelicals. Jackson perceived that Schwarz's demographic was one *Life* also needed to capture and retain. Their massive outrage about *Life*'s small column suggests that they were paying close attention to the magazine's content.

Conclusion: The Magazine and the Model T

Life magazine's financial situation continued to decline throughout the 1960s. One dour assessment of the situation compared *Life* magazine to the Model T Ford. "I think something began to happen to the American market more than 30 years ago when Henry Ford said, 'You can have any color you want so long as it's black,' and overnight this became a joke. It became a joke because right then and there people realized the trend of the American market was exactly

[554] "Dear Mr. Christansen: …" October 31, 1961, Folder 12, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

opposite – that what people wanted was an enormous choice in what we buy."[555] While *Life,* like the Model T, was a commodity, the two objects differ considerably. *Life* magazine was selling much more than a useful physical object. It sold a vision of what "America" was, and how that nation and its residents should act in relation to a vast and complicated world. *Life* was selling a religious and political sensibility, a way of seeing the world. The response to the National Purpose series and the Fred Schwarz affair both suggested that *Life'*s vision was losing its appeal among the white, conservative, suburban readers it tended to reach. If *Life'*s Managing Editors wanted to avoid the mistake made by Henry Ford, they would need to do much more than vary the magazine's pigment. They would have to edit the magazine to reflect the changing social perspectives of the people its pages claimed to represent. While *Life* was unlike the Model T, this editor correctly identified the two commodities' similar problems. *Life'*s editors, like Henry Ford, imagined that their standard commodity was good for every consumer. *Life'*s early 1960s readers did not agree.

[555] Memo from Phil Wootton to Mr. Luce, Mr. Thompson cc: Mr. Jackson, Mr. Donovan, October 7, 1960, Folder 8, Box 437, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

Chapter 8: The Success of *Time* and the Death of God

Where *Life*'s 1962 special on "The Takeover Generation" applauded young people's enduring appreciation of traditional values and institutions, *Time*'s account of generational change took a very different tack. Less than three years after *Life*'s special, *Time* published a cover story on "The Teenagers." Rather than profiling accomplished young adults, *Time*'s story skewed younger, creating greater potential for anxiety and concern. The article was a dense barrage of interlocking plot-points, each alluding to potential sites of conflict. First, it noted that parents were less inclined to discipline teens, warning of "a whole culture that believes less in authority." Then, it worried that parents were dangerously unaware of teenagers' habits and behaviors. They completely misunderstood the younger generation's music and fashions. They worriedly overestimated and naively underestimated young peoples' indulgence in premarital sex and recreational drugs.[556] Where *Life*'s formula emphasized positive programs, like defining the "National Purpose," *Time*'s brief, staccato journalism tended to vaguely evoke established values, then enumerate the forces that might compromise them. This combination of sensationalism and alarm was the product of *Time*'s singular production style, which had changed very little since the 1920s.

In this chapter, I analyze how *Time*'s journalistic style shaped the magazines' responses to the varied religious change in the 1960s. Here, I look at a representative sample *Time*'s religion cover stories to draw out the magazines' general narrative approach. Examining these stories, which included coverage of mainline Protestantism, civil rights, and the burgeoning war in Vietnam, shows that *Time*'s journalism narrated religious change as a drama of consensus and

[556] "On the Fringe of a Golden Era," *Time,* January 29, 1965, 56-59.

disunity. My argument in this chapter tracks with Sean McCloud's analysis in *Making the Religious Fringe Exotics, Subversives and Journalists, 1955-1993*. McCloud also looks at magazine journalism, arguing that in their reporting on "fringe" religious groups, "journalists acted as 'heresiographers,' identifying false or inauthentic religion and thus symbolically establishing boundaries between a mainstream religious center and a suspect periphery.[557] Here, I show that a similar dynamic was taking place in *Time* in the 1960s, however the journalistic focus was on an overtly Christian mainstream and it's potential detractors, rather than the suspect "fringe." Scattered hints of fracture, disunity, and dissent (rather than voyeuristic accounts of outsiders) inscribed ecumenical Christianity as the norm and provided the magazine's signature excited tone. For example, a giddily positive cover article on the World Council of Churches' 1961 summit in New Delhi (where Luce was an invited observer) made repeated, ominous allusions to cultural unrest beyond. "The once proud and self-sufficient churches," *Time* warned, "are being driven together by cold and whistling winds in a turbulent world."[558]

While's *Life* affirmations of universal positions stumbled, *Time'*s punchy accounts of potential threats to an ecumenical Christian consensus found steady success. It was this formula that produced *Time'*s now famous 1966 cover story that asked baldly, "Is God Dead?," which I analyze at the close of this chapter. This piece, I argue, was a prime example of how *Time*'s emphasis on threats to unmarked religious norms served the corporate bottom line. *Time'*s prioritization of narrative drama also shaped Luce's tense dynamic with the Protestant theological thinkers he admired. I capture this through an account of *Time*'s enormous 40th anniversary celebration in 1963. In *Time'*s religion reporting and in its extravagant anniversary

[557] Sean McCloud, *Making the Religious Fringe Exotics, Subversives and Journalists, 1955-1993* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4.
[558] "The Ecumenical Century," *Time*, December 8, 1961, 76-80.

event, Time Inc. pulled religiously diverse actors into its orbit. The results for the religious figures themselves were contentious and ambiguous. For *Time,* success was steady.

"I have never once heard him referred to as 'The Dragon:'" Producing *Time* Magazine in the Early 1960s

On the eve of its 40th anniversary, *Time* was in exceptional shape. A commemorative booklet circulated to Time Inc.'s staff in advance of the landmark anniversary was riddled with upward trending graphs. In 1962, the magazine reported 2,800,000 paying readers, up five percent from 1961. Quite unlike *Life'*s uneasy relationship with *Look, Time'*s profits were more than ten times that of *Newsweek*, its closest competitor.[559] Advertising sales, the second key indicator of a magazine's success, were equally promising. In 1962 the magazine's revenue from advertising sales was up seven percent from the previous year, and was consistently more than that of both their two closest competitors, *Newsweek* and *U.S News*, combined.[560] *Time's* covers were an index of this strength. The magazine's weekly covers were almost always portraits, which were usually expensive original commissions. For French Prime Minister Charles de Gaulle's 1958 Man of the Year cover, *Time* commission the buzzy French painter Bernard Buffett. Several years later, for its cover on 1960s U.S. youth culture, *Time* commissioned Andy Warhol.[561] These boutique cover portraits, like *Life'*s expensive specials in the 1950s, were expressions of the magazine's continued success. They also contributed to establishing the *Time* cover as a meaningful institution. By the early 1960s, an appearance on *Time'*s cover was unequivocal indicator of cultural import. *Time'*s editors planned the magazine's covers far in

[559] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc.,* 103.
[560] "Time: 40 Years of Growth," Spring 1963, Folder 12, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[561] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc.,* 109.

advance, making calculated political and economic decisions about which figures they would anoint with prominence and why.

The symbolic value of the *Time* cover outstripped the magazine's actual readership. *Time*'s public was much smaller than *Life*'s, but it was more dependable. *Time'*s readers, like *Life'*s, were overwhelmingly white, suburban, and middle or upper-middle class. *Time* was one of the first magazines to effectively distribute to deployed U.S. troops during the Second World War, and veterans represented a stable subscriber base. Many of these readers were benefitting from the G.I. Bill. They owned houses in the suburbs, had college degrees, and were gainfully employed. Many were in favor of continued U.S. intervention abroad, which *Time* always championed.[562] The magazine typically endorsed Republican politicians, celebrated scientists, and condescended to artists and other non-conformists. After leaving *Time* to write fiction, former Managing Editor T.S. Matthews confessed to the *New York Post* that the magazine had grown more partisan as the 1950s wore on. "*Time* is more biased," he told a *Post* journalist, "but so are its readers. It's nothing but a Republican magazine."[563] Historian of journalism James Baughman confirms Matthews' assessment, speculating that *Time* likely "confirmed, rather than inculcated" readers' existing political and cultural predispositions.[564]

Where *Life'*s editors were constantly toying with the magazine's scope, *Time'*s leadership felt little need to alter its assembly line style journalism. The columns that organized the magazine in the 1920s persisted into the 1960s. *Time* always opened with National Affairs and continued on to Foreign News. The "back of the book" sections still included Business, Science, Religion, Education and Books. Each section included multiple smaller columns nested within.

[562] Baughman, *Henry R. Luce,* 170-171.
[563] Alvin Davis, "The Loss of *Time,*" *The New York Post,* January 6, 1957, 4-5.
[564] Baughman, *Henry R. Luce,* 171.

In the case of Foreign News, short weekly columns were organized by nation, with France, Great Britain, China, and many others each receiving their own block of text. In 1961, *Time* added its second new section, Modern Living, which aimed to address "homes, travel, play, food, fads and fashions."[565] Luce felt Modern Living was a crucial element of *Life* but grumbled that it did not belong among *Time'*s pressing news. [566] While the magazine's sections changed very little, their content expanded. Starting after World War II, *Time'*s articles grew longer and included more images. When a section hosted the issue's cover article, the coverage could grow as long as eight typed pages.

Despite abandoning Timestyle in the late 1930s, many of the early magazine's quirks endured into the 1960s. In an essay from the late 1950s, *Time* writer Paul O'Neil lamented *Time'*s enduring practice of piecing together journalism from a combination of existing published writing and first-hand accounts from remote "stringers." According to O'Neil, the *Time* writer was "a kind of word mechanic who must yank odd shaped chunks of raw fact off the overhead belt, trim it to size (often with his teeth), assemble this jig saw of conflicting information into something with a beginning, a middle and an end, bolt the whole together with adjectives, and send it through the hopper, glittering, polished."[567] As O'Neil's essay intimated, *Time*'s journalism was still assembled through a collaborative bureaucratic process that ultimately prioritized narrative continuity and readability over accuracy. *Time'*s stories were always presented without bylines, as they had been since the 1920s. This had the effect of

[565] The first new column *Time* added to its original array of columns from 1923 was Radio, in 1938. Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc.,* 109-110. "Modern Living," April 5, 1961, Folder 6, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[566] "Re: Modern Living," April 6, 1961, Folder 6, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files. New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[567] Prendergast, *World of Time Inc.,* 105-106.

indicating that everything *Time* printed reflected the uniform views of an impersonal, authoritative institution.

Time's weekly Religion section evades easy generalization. Most weeks, *Time* offered updates on the activities of large Christian organizations. The Religion column was very often set in the Vatican, in the classroom of a provocative seminary professor, or at the annual meeting of an ecumenical council. The magazine's chronical of institutional activity was shot through with a potpourri of colorful outliers. Columns in the early 1960s included coverage of a Kansas-based Catholic newsletter "edited by a layman who takes orders from no one," commentary on a "hawk-eyed man who has a fair claim to the title of the world's most orthodox Orthodox Jew," and a cheerful discussion of the Open Air Campaigners, a Sydney, Australia based Protestant group who led Sunday school on the beach.[568] Between 1962 and 1966, Religion received more letters on average than any other "back of the book" column.[569] Because it generated such interest, *Time* dedicated many covers to religious subject matter in the first half of the 1960s.[570]

Writers and readers alike complained about *Time's* tendency to mislead and misconstrue. In August of 1959, a member of Time Inc.'s executive suite sent Luce a confidential memo about tensions brewing between *Time's* National Affairs editors in New York and the magazine's remote correspondents based in Washington D.C. The remote correspondents were constantly frustrated that the news printed in *Time* deviated considerably from what they reported. "We are not objecting to whatever viewpoint TIME may adopt;" a cable from Washington D.C to New

[568] "Cheeky Reporter," *Time,* November 19, 1965, 118, "The Most Orthodox Orthodox," *Time,* August 9, 1963, "On the Beach," *Time,* February 17, 1961, 42.
[569] "AVERAGE NUMBER OF LETTERS PER WEEK BY SECTION," January 20, 1967, Folder 23, Box 486,Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[570] Most *Time* covers were dedicated to material from the National Affairs or Foreign News columns. "Back of the book" columns, like Religion, Science, Education or Theatre, only received one or two covers a year. In the early 1960s, the Religion column received between three and five covers a year, exponentially more than any other back-of-the-book section.

York read, "we just want to be able to defend TIME's direct statements as being factual."[571] This plea was far from isolated. That same year a close colleague of Luce's worried in a private letter that "TIME commits an unconscionable amount of errors of fact."[572] Complaints from beyond the corporation ranged from gravely serious to superficial. In 1960 the royal family of Jordan worried that inaccurate characterizations of the crowned prince would undermine the legitimacy of the monarchy in global affairs.[573] That same year, a Columbia University Geology professor complained that a profile of his colleague in the Science section was almost entirely untrue. "I have never once heard him referred to as 'The Dragon,'" he blustered.[574] Errors of fact or judgement in the Religion column, however, often received blowback from the editor-in-chief. In one instance, Luce contacted the magazines' Managing Editors to ask, "Are you sure there is an 'altar' in that Protestant Chapel?"[575]

Time's loose regard for factual accuracy served the magazine's enduring investment in spinning a good yarn. In keeping with Hadden's original demand for liveliness, the magazine always made a point of including small, personal details that made newsmakers appear human. For example, *Time* made sure to remark that the marine conservationist Jacques Cousteau favored "crimson sweaters and Russian astrakhan hats," and that Chicago's mayor Richard Daly was five feet and six inches tall and kept an exquisitely organized desk.[576] Such small details were always nested in larger, overarching arguments about a figure or event's broader

[571] Memo From Bill Furth to Mr. Luce, August 31, 1959, Folder 5, Box 423, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[572] "Dear Harry, …" December 31, 1959, Folder 13, Box 451, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[573] Correspondence From: Amman FT GOVT To: Henry R. Luce TIME INC. NEW YORK, February 15, 1960 Folder 11, Box 451, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[574] "Dear Miss Trapnell, …" April 1, 1960, Folder 11, Box 451, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[575] Memo to MR. ALEXANDER cc: Mr. Fuerbringer, January 6, 1960. Folder 13, Box 451, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[576] "Poet of the Depths," *Time,* March 28, 1960, 71, "Clouter with Conscience," *Time,* March 16, 1963, 24.

contemporary relevance. In the words of *Harpers* contributor Otto Friedrich, *Time'*s detailed points of fact, when included, "provide the appearance of documentation for what are essentially essays."[577] Although widely disliked by such contemporaries, *Time'*s presentation of the news in the form of opinion essay was a frankly and openly stated editorial policy. In keeping with the early magazine's 1939 decision to "take sides," *Time* never aspired to objective narration. At *Time'*s massive 40th anniversary celebration, Luce declared that "*Time* makes judgments—in nearly every paragraph—sometimes with quite a sting."[578] When it came to these longform, essayistic accounts of religion in the 1960s, *Time'*s "stings" were reserved for groups, individuals and movements that appeared to undermine an ecumenical Christian consensus.

"Disunity in the name of Christ is a Scandal and a Shame:" Consensus and its Disrupters in *Time* Magazine's Early '60s Religion Coverage

*Time'*s early 1960s religion cover stories were reliably staged as plots of disunity and consensus. While *Life* sought to articulate and model points of consensus, *Time'*s dramatic, bricolage-style journalism created intrigue around spaces of consensus that might be in decline. A 1961 *Time* cover story on Reverend Eugene Carson Blake's efforts to unify four Protestant denominations under one organizational umbrella opened with a theological declaration: "Disunity in the name of Christ is a scandal and a shame."[579] This fundamental argument shaped many Religion cover stories to come. Articles often took an openly confessional view, speaking decisively of Christ and the Gospel, and concluding that whatever was best for the churches was best for the nation at-large. *Time* thus mediated the sweeping religious changes of the early 1960s by theatrically litigating which religious figures and developments threated an ecumenical

[577] Otto Friedrich, "The are 00 Trees in Russia," *Harpers,* October 1964, 59-65.
[578] Henry R. Luce, "A Definition of *Time*," in *The Ideas of Henry Luce* ed. John Jessup (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1969), 81.
[579] "To End a Scandal," *Time,* May 26, 1961, 62.

Christian consensus. While *Time* no longer remarked on Jews' noses or derided Catholic credulity, as it had three decades earlier, the magazine of the 1960s still used dramatically inclined religion writing to inscribe cultural norms and margins.

For example, after John F. Kennedy's election in 1960 *Time* published a cover story, titled "Catholics and the U.S. State," which profiled John Courtney Murray. Murray, *Time* argued, represented a Catholicism capable of upholding, and even deepening, the United States' defining commitment to "limited government, guided by law and ultimately relying on God." According to *Time'*s gloss, Murray advocated a theology that emphasized points of consensus between U.S. Catholics and their majority Protestant society. In *Time*'s telling, Murray "thinks in terms of Catholic theology and the American tradition at the same time," always concluding that "God is best honored by free men." Murray's version of consensus, of course, was under threat. *Time* ended its complimentary portrait with a note of warning. The threat to an "American tradition" did not come from Catholics, but from those who espoused "the relativist idea that morality is determined by little more than regional or historical fashion." After the election of the first Catholic president, *Time* chose a topic and tone that assimilated Catholics into the magazines' enduring vision, without sacrificing the exciting note of foreboding. Because Catholics eschewed the dangerous tide of relativism, they could be embraced. Any readers invested in ideas of cultural relativism, however, were going astray.[580]

Time gave a similar treatment to Martin Luther King Jr. In January of 1964, *Time* made King Man of the Year for 1963. The magazine's profile emphasized his Christianity and commitment to non-violence, claiming that his particular approach enabled much-needed consensus among Black activists and sympathetic white onlookers. For every story *Time*

[580] "Catholics and the U.S. State," *Time,* December 12, 1960, 64-70.

published about Black struggles for justice, it published several more about white politicians lobbying nobly to pass civil rights legislation, or shamefully defending outdated prejudices.[581] The magazine took its profile of King as an opportunity celebrate "an unprecedented coalition of conscience." *Time* remarked that thanks to King's "inner strength, tenaciously rooted in Christian concepts," white clergy finally "cast off their lethargy, as ministers, priests and rabbis tucked the Scriptures under their arms and marched." The story's necessary drama was provided by Alabama police chief Eugene "Bull" Conor, the Birmingham, Alabama police chief whose actions "reflected the seething hatreds of a city where acts of violence were as common as chitlins and ham hocks." According to *Time'*s treatment, King represented a great tradition of religiously motivated action in the public sphere, and his opponents were a stubborn, anomalous anachronism.[582]

Almost exactly a year after *Time*'s profile of King, the magazine dedicated a cover story to a topic it called "Christian renewal." This category drew together varied examples of Christian upheaval and activity, identifying sites of promise and peril. The sweeping article touched down on the Second Vatican Council, experimental liturgies ("If worship may perhaps be better expressed by folk singing, modern dance or drama, churches are ready to give it a try"), new trends in theological thought, and the growth of anti-poverty missions in U.S. cities. *Time* celebrated what it saw as a shared, Christian ambition to meet the moment. It decried participants

[581] Representative examples of *Time'*s civil rights coverage include, "The Filibuster," March 14, 1960, "'It's the Right Thing,'" *Time,* June 15, 1962, 16, "State of the Union," *Time,* January 17, 1964, 11-12, and "When is a Majority a Majority?," *Time,* March 20, 1964, 22-28. These stories, on national political debates over civil rights, typically appeared at the front of the magazine, in the National Affairs section. Pieces that focused on Black activists and cultural figures, rather than white litigators, include, "Desegregating the Airlines," March 21, 1960, 92-93, "Big 5 in Civil Rights," *Time,* June 28, 1963, 16, a cover profile of James Baldwin on May 17, 1963, and "Spreading the Boycott," February 14, 1964, 40. With the exception of cover stories, like the one on James Baldwin, stories that focused on Black life often appeared in back-of-the-book sections. For example, "Desegregating the Airlines," which focused on the work of a Black flight attendant, appeared in "Aviation," a sub-column of "Business."
[582] "Man of the Year: Never Again Where He Was," *Time,* January 3, 1964, 13-16, 25-27.

who might destabilize such collective efforts by sanctioning a culture of secularization. Varied efforts by "the servant church to rearrange it's cargo of dogma for hard sailing ahead" were laudable, but the ruminations of theologians like Harvey Cox, who were innovating theologies that did not center the divinity of Jesus Christ, presented cause for concern.[583] Like its reporting on John Courtney Murray's theology and Martin Luther King's activism, *Time* celebrated efforts to assert and maintain shared Christian purpose, and rendered those efforts compellingly embattled through mention of potential detractors.

Whenever religious action was mobilized against colonialism, *Time* cast it as a troubling disruption of established orders. A hint of how *Time* would cover religious movements against colonialism came in a 1960 cover article on a putative "Population Explosion" occurring in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. *Time*'s coverage was based around the analysis of an Italian economist who worried that "Europe will soon be between black and yellow pincers, and that will be the end of it."[584] Similar anxieties about a mounting threat to white global hegemony were in full force in a cover story on missionaries, titled "More than Conquerors," that appeared the same year. The long article, which was timed to coincide with Easter, traced the history of contemporary missions back to the legacy of Saint Paul. The article applauded contemporary missionaries' emphasis on medical training, literacy, and anti-poverty work. It cast these benevolent actors against those on the missions' receiving end, who wanted independence from U.S. and European governance. *Time* began the piece by lamenting that "In too many parts of the world, newly in the grip of nationalism, Christianity is known as the religion of the white man." It concluded by declaring, "And yet the Good News of man's salvation trough Christ remains the most truly revolutionary force in the world. Again and again it has proved immeasurably greater

[583] "Christian Renewal," *Time,* December 25, 1964, 45-49.
[584] "The Numbers Game," *Time,* January 11, 1960, 20.

than what history describes as revolutions, be they of the mind, the sword or the machine. … The man in Christ is the truly free man."[585] Here, *Time* posits, in the guise of news, that contemporary political revolutions, then underway in seventeen African nations, were meaningless when compared to the transformative power of missionary Christianity. In this rendering, decolonial demands for sovereignty were misguided attacks on the delicate Christian consensus lauded throughout multiple, weekly issues of *Time* magazine.

In December of 1964, four months after the Tonkin Gulf agreement allowed President Lydon Johnson to send U.S. troops to Vietnam, *Time* released a cover article titled "Buddhism on the Barricades." The magazine predicted ominously that Buddhism was becoming a threat to peace and prosperity in Southeast Asia. It told of religious leaders who were betraying their own basic theologies in favor political unrest in the present and, *Time* suspected, communism in the future. The magazine reported that "Saigon has just passed through a week of riots in which the believers in the reverence for life tossed hand grenades from the sanctuary of Buddhist headquarters, teen-agers supposedly raised in 'the Middle Way' ganged up on policemen, and disciples of the gentle Buddha pushed old people and children as human shields ahead of demonstrators." The rest of the article provided a thumbnail description of Buddhist theology, concluding that religious leadership in Southeast Asia was too world-denying, cloistered and mystical to appreciate the ramifications of their political alliances. These agitators, *Time* speculated, were better off accepting guidance from well-meaning U.S. and European officials.[586]

Like the 1960 cover article on missionaries, *Time* used religion reporting as a vehicle for determining that non-white people were ill-prepared or misguided in their fights for political

[585] "More Than Conquerors," *Time,* April 18, 1960, 64-76.
[586] "Buddha at the Barricades," *Time,* December 11, 1964, 38-45.

independence. Echoing the magazine's "population explosion" article, it made this case by identifying and decrying threats to a well-established, white world order. While *Time*'s Religion writing could sanction more varied and diverse religious leadership at home, threats to U.S. and European empire were harder to assimilate. In keeping with journalism across Time Inc.'s products, the necessity of U.S. global hegemony was often the horizon of *Time*'s reporting. When it came to encounters with domestic Christianity, the outcomes were often tense and ambiguous.

Interlude: *Time*'s 40th Anniversary Ball

Time's lavish 40th anniversary celebration was a statement of the magazine's proximity to religious and political power. In September of 1962, during one of the executives' regular lunch meetings, it was suggested that Time Inc. celebrate the magazine's anniversary by inviting everyone who had ever appeared on the magazine's cover to giant gala.[587] By 1962, over 1,900 unique individuals had appeared on *Time* magazine's cover, so the staff had to curate a more selective list. Some people who had appeared on *Time*'s covers, including Fidel Castro and various labor leaders, were categorized as "unfriendlies" and did not receive an invitation. Once the unfriendlies and the deceased were eliminated, the magazine's staff narrowed the list even further, to 630 figures most likely to attend. Each received a personal invitation from Luce.[588] Ultimately, only 238 accepted the invitation, and they were in the minority among the gala's 1,668 guests. The actors, politicians, Olympians, and groundbreaking scientists who had appeared on *Time*'s cover were vastly outnumbered by Time Inc.'s leadership and business

[587] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc.,* 109.
[588] "Planning the Celebration," *Time*, May 17, 1963, 68.

associates.[589] While only a tiny fraction of the many people who had appeared on *Time*'s cover attended the event, the concept worked well to express Time Inc.'s grandiose self-image. Looking back on Time Inc.'s first, illustrious forty years, Luce and his colleagues saw themselves as powerful kingmakers and arbiters of culture. The magazine's anniversary party showcased this largess by aspiring to bringing the most famous people in the world together in one room.

Guests were treated to an extravagant fair. A full-time staff of over forty Time Inc. employees worked exclusively on event planning for nearly eight months. As the gala neared, Time Inc. booked hotel rooms, salon visits, dry cleaning services, and a fleet of 150 limousines to accommodate hundreds of out-of-town guests. In a particularly outrageous move, a unique breed of trout was hatched to best fit the china used at New York's Waldorf-Astoria hotel.[590] In a six-page account of the event printed in *Time* a week later, Luce was quoted as saying, "The point of this party is the people who are here, that they should enjoy meeting each other face to face, as we hope they have enjoyed meeting each other in the pages of TIME."[591] Inadvertently, Luce acknowledged that Time Inc.'s activities often served to consolidate connections between elites. The select list of people *Time* chose to invite would all benefit from their face-to-face encounters, similarly to how they benefitted by receiving sanction from *Time.*

The evening's long program of toasts and performances reflected the particular concoction of themes and figures found in a given issue of *Time*. The Archbishop of New York, Luce's longtime friend Cardinal Francis Spellman, opened the evening, situating the anniversary ball as a sacred event. "Come into the midst of us, Holy spirit of Truth, as on this joyous

[589] "Seating," May 6, 1963, Folder 12, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[590] "Planning the Celebration," *Time*, May 17, 1963, 68.
[591] "TIME'S 40TH ANNIVERSAY PRATY," *Time,* May 17, 1963, 59.

occasion we celebrate the 40th anniversary of *Time* magazine," Cardinal Spellman intoned. "… for those whose days and nights are busy in the creation of this distinguished weekly, we ask Thy special blessing, continued vision, strength and wisdom to fulfill their great responsibility as informers and formers of the public mind."[592] The Archbishop's opening words gestured towards Luce's highest vision for himself, his corporation, and his magazine. Throughout his career Luce was emboldened by the charge to "form the public mind," and frequently imagined this work in sacred terms.

Image redacted due to copyright concerns

Figure 12: An image of *Time*'s 40th anniversary ball, published in the magazine on May 17, 1963, 54-56.

These opening words were followed by a long, celebratory introduction of all 238 cover figures in attendance. C.D. Jackson, actress Helen Hayes, and television news host Bob Hope took turns announcing their names and achievements as each crossed the stage beneath a massive projection of their *Time* cover. Once introductions were complete, the acclaimed soprano Leontyne Price, another guest featured on a *Time* cover, performed a rousing aria.

As the night wore on the tenor of the speaker's remarks took on a more critical edge. The second half of the program was comprised of speeches from prominent men who had appeared

[592] "TIME'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY," *Time*, May 17, 1963, 59.

on the cover of *Time*; Vice President Lyndon Johnson, then governor of New York Nelson A. Rockefeller, Reverend Paul Tillich, and Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Secretary Rusk's comments reflected *Time'*s more disagreeable tendencies. After congratulating Luce and describing the singular relevance of *Time* magazine, Rusk joked that *Time* often "irritated and angered" readers, and further noted that the magazine "holds the record for having been banned from more countries than any other publication of general circulation." Before the program closed, Secretary Rusk read a cable from President John F. Kennedy, a cover figure who declined to attend. After sending his compliments to Luce, President Kennedy's remarks cautiously registered *Time'*s history of upsetting and polarizing readers. "TIME, in its effort to embrace the totality of human experience, has instructed, entertained, confused and infuriated its readers for nearly half a century. I do not always agree with TIME, but I nearly always read it. And, though I am bound to think that TIME sometimes seems to do its best to contract the political horizons of its audience, I am especially glad that it has worked so steadfastly to enlarge their intellectual and cultural horizons."[593] The suggestion that *Time* was culturally and intellectually enriching hardly offset the President's frank observation that the magazine was prone to confuse, infuriate and contract reader's "political horizons."

Neither Kennedy or Rusk could resist noting *Time'*s more objectionable inclinations— its willingness to offend, its poor diplomacy, and its proclivity toward political hard-lines. Luce, aglow with the excitement of the evening, took the remarks as evidence of *Time'*s willingness to tackle tough matters and provoke lively debate. Secretary Rusk and President Kennedy's words were both printed in full in the magazine a week later, alongside a brief response from Luce. "TIME's No. 1 subscriber will always be the President of the U.S," he gushed, "About one of the

[593] "TIME'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY," *Time*, May 17, 1963, 59-61.

greatest personal privileges of the editor in chief of TIME is to have at least some degree of dialogue with the President. Tonight I thank him for his affable telegram, and I assure him, as far as I am concerned, the dialogue will continue to be as interesting as possible for us both."[594] Luce's response is unsurprising. Although neither Rusk or Kennedy recognized *Time* as a substantive or meaningful source of journalism, both confirmed its ability to exert influence. Their very willingness to comment affirmed Luce and his corporation's close proximity to the highest echelons of political power.

Luce was more unnerved by tacit criticism from another of the evening's speakers, Reverend Paul Tillich. During event planning Luce was determined to host Tillich as a keynote speaker. He went so far as to personally contact the University of Chicago Divinity School, where Tillich had a conflicting engagement, to re-order the University's schedule so Tillich would be available for the *Time* gala.[595] Once his attendance was confirmed, Luce prompted Tillich to speak on "*Time* magazine and the human condition." He provided no time limit, insisting that Tillich speak for as long as was necessary to address the abstract, urgent theme.[596]

The result was a thoughtful, seven-page address, titled "The Ambiguity of Perfection." Tillich began by asserting that the "the human condition" was characterized by constant "ambiguity," which he defined as "the inseparable mixture of good and evil, of true and false, of creative and destructive forces." Addressing himself specifically to his elite audience, Tillich insisted that it was incumbent upon those who held significant cultural influence to always dwell in such ambiguity, lest they commit the dangerous hubris of imagining that their achievements made them completely good. He went on argue that the "one dimensional" quality of

[594] "TIME'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY," *Time*, May 17, 1963, 59-61.
[595] See correspondences in Folder 5, Box 288, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[596] "Dear Professor Tillich…," April 16, 1963, Folder 5, Box 288, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

contemporary culture made the crucial reality of ambiguity difficult to perceive, "… be it the push into outer space, be it the production of ever new and improved tools, be it the increase in means and materials of communication, be it the growing number of human beings to whom 'goods' are available – all this is one-dimensional horizontal expansion." Tillich went on to argue that individuals could escape one-dimensionality, thereby appreciating the ambiguity of the human condition, by focusing on the "vertical dimension," where connections are made between individuals and among great concepts. To conclude, Tillich stated that *Time* magazine, and "all of those who speak for our time," were at their very best when they emphasized "the vertical line" rather than "the horizontal expansion," thus allowing the ambiguity of the human condition to show through.[597]

Tillich and Luce's interactions later in the evening provide some insight into how the theologians critique of "one-dimensional culture" and it's horizontal striving were received. In a 'Thank you' note sent after the party, *Time* writer Murray J. Gart recommended that Luce reach out to Tillich. He reported that the theologian was "quite upset and somewhat depressed" after the party, thanks to a tense run-in with Luce. It's easy to imagine why Tillich's remarks might have offended the media mogul. The theologian's characterization of "one-dimensional culture" ("the push into outer space… the production of ever new and improved tools, … the increase in means and materials of communication, …") seemed to reflect precisely what *Time* and Time Inc. were most consumed with. At the time of this address, *Life* was deeply embroiled in obtaining exclusive rights to the recollections of several astronauts, *Time* was celebrating the proliferation of high-tech commodities in its relatively new Modern Living section, and Time Inc. itself was an engine of new communications technologies.

[597] "The Ambiguity of Perfection," Address delivered Monday May 6, 1963, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, NY, Folder 5, Box 288, Time Inc. Bio Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

What's more, *Time's* consistent divisiveness, on religion and other topics, produced quite the opposite of the horizontal connectivity Tillich recommended. Gart's note went on to assure Luce that the speech, "while on a different elevation," had not dampened the evening. "Your own view may indeed be different, but for my part—and using Tillich's own words—his critique was not unambiguously creative. Quite possibly his words, like some of your own and Dean Rusks', represented part of the ambiguity which was the central richness of the evening." What Gart's words of comfort elide is that unlike criticisms from Kennedy and Rusk, Tillich's remarks gave lie to the idea that Time Inc. was a positive, moral, Christian force in contemporary culture, a concept Luce had attempted to affirm and advance since the beginning of World War II. While *Time's* pugnacious formula won consistent readers, it did not endear Luce to contemporary theologians.

"Is God Dead?"

On October 22, 1965, the second item in *Time's* weekly Religion section caused a considerable stir. A column titled "Christian Atheism" profiled four young, white theologians forging a new strain of Christian thinking. *Time* labeled it "The Death of God" movement. In its typical style, *Time* began by noting something new then posing it as a problem or threat to the Christian consensus. The article opened with an italicized epigraph, *"We must recognize that the death of God is a historical event: God has died in our time, in history, in our existence."* The article then began, "The words would seem shocking from someone like Jean-Paul Sartre. As it happens, they were written not by a moody French existentialist but by Thomas J.J. Altizer, 38, associate professor of religion at Atlanta's Emory University, a Methodist school." The rest of the article briefly elaborated the "death of God" theology offered by Altizer and his colleagues,

who included Paul Van Buren of Temple University, William Hamilton of Colgate Rochester Divinity School and Gabriel Vahanian of Syracuse University. *Time* provided thumbnail sketches of each theologian's conceptualization of "a Christianity without a Creator," ultimately determining that, thankfully, their line of thinking had little social influence or conceptual heft. "The Godless Christian thinkers admit that they are a long way from working out a coherent theology," *Time* concluded, "Understandably, they feel a certain anguish because the direction of their thought leads them to feel greater sympathy for Camus than for clergymen of their own churches."[598] In *Time's* typical style, this column described potential disrupters and assessed their seriousness. *Time* began and ended its group profile with reference to two incontrovertibly unsympathetic French philosophers, intimating that the atheistic theologians were foreign, oppositional, and strange. Christian atheism, *Time* determined, was not to be taken seriously.

Time's feature drew almost immediate attention to atheistic theological thought. The relatively new evangelical magazine, *Christianity Today*, covered the atheistic theologians two times shortly after *Time's* article appeared. It's November issue cried, "No one would deny these men the right to be atheists; but…for God's sake let them be atheists outside of institutions supposedly training men to spread the gospel that God is alive."[599] In December, *Christianity Today* dedicated an entire issue to the so-called "The God-is-Dead-Stir." On November 5, 1965, less than two weeks after *Time*'s group profile appeared, *The New York Times* printed two stories about "the Death of God theologians," noting in one that Altizer's "beliefs" had provoked a "flood" of angry letters and telephone calls at Emory.[600] Perhaps thanks to *Time's* distanced stance, this coverage was entirely directed at the theologians themselves and not the magazine

[598] "Christian Atheism: The God is Dead Movement," *Time,* October 22, 1966, 61-62.
[599] "The Living God and the Atheist Theologians," *Christianity Today,* November 5, 1965, 35.
[600] Fiske, "Theology Without God," Walter Rugaber, "'God is Dead' View Arouses College," *New York Times, November* 5, 1965.

that chose to spotlight them. *Time* successfully instigated religious controversy, which brought the magazine publicity, without becoming its target.

In January of 1966, *Time'*s leadership had decided to run a cover story that would harness the excitement generated by their coverage of Christian atheism.[601] Always attentive to which features attracted interest, the flurry of media coverage that followed *Time'*s "The Death of God" news brief suggested that the movement warranted more extended coverage.[602] The editors began to discuss how the story might create the maximum possible media buzz. After his retirement in May 1964, Luce maintained the vague title of "editorial chairman," which permitted him to weigh-in on Time Inc.'s journalism from Phoenix when he deemed fit. Unsurprisingly, he was interested in how *Time* would continue the discussion of Christian atheism.

The cover itself was of particular interest to Luce. On January 29, 1966, he wrote to the Time & Life building to weigh in. He began his note by quibbling with a recent *Time* book review. The book was a biography of the famous documentary filmmaker, Robert Flaherty. *Time'*s reviewer had mused that Flaherty's films captured "the original unity of God, nature, man." Luce disagreed, calling the review "a heresy." No human hand, he wrote, could capture "the Creator and creation in their unity." In true Luce style, the memo went on to wind through some relevant points made in Claude Tresmontant's *Christian Metaphysics,* which he had just finished reading. Finally, Luce offered a suggestion about how *Time* should handle the upcoming "God cover." "The only artist who could paint a portrait of God is God –and if He did we couldn't see it, not having eyes of infinite perception," Luce wrote, "'To see heaven is to see a

[601] "1966 Cover Articles," January 14, 1966, Folder 23, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[602] Memo from Brian Brown to Dick Coffey RE: God Cover Story, March 21, 1966, Folder 23, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

wildflower,' said the poet. So, you could put a wildflower on TIME's cover, or a portrait of the Good Samaritan. But, after all, His revelation is done, He remains dene abacoadus."[603] *Time* was in the habit of spending generously on their cover images, but it seemed that themes of atheistic theology and popular belief in God warranted a different kind of approach. Luce's memo inspired the Managing Editors to break completely with convention. With a bold plan in mind, one editor concluded presciently that, "this story will generate more publicity than any single cover we have done to date."[604] Before releasing the cover, *Time*'s publicity team sent warnings to a list of "leading churchmen," alerting them to the possibility that a forthcoming cover might rouse frustration and disagreement.[605] For the first time in the magazine's forty-three-year history, *Time* would release a cover without an image. When it appeared on April 15, 1966, the cover bore only bright red letters, set boldly against a black background. It asked provocatively, "Is God Dead?"

The article within, which consumed five and a half pages and featured five images, was less provocative. Unlike the preceding piece, which spotlighted a cohort of challenging theological thinkers, *Time'*s cover story, titled "Toward a Hidden God," traced a long historical arch, describing a variety of instances when the notion of an omniscient creator God was called into question. Atheistic theology was only a minor plot point. In fact, the theologians at the center of the first article received only a footnote in the longer piece. "Toward a Hidden God" began with the question that appeared on the cover. The first lines read, "Is God dead? It is a question that tantalizes both believers, who perhaps secretly fear that he is, and atheists, who

[603] "Dear Otto: About that cover…," January 23, 1966, Folder 23, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[604] Memo from Brian Brown to Dick Coffey RE: God Cover Story, March 21, 1966, Folder 23, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[605] Memorandum from Brian Brown to Dick Coffey cc: Jim Pitt, Lisa Fillman and Bob Sweeney, March 21, 1966, Folder 23, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.

possibly suspect that the answer is no." With this opening line, *Time* pitched the article broadly, rendering all potential readers, "believers" and "atheists" alike, equally uncertain.

In keeping with the magazine's bricolage style, "Towards a Hidden God" touched down on a range of interlocking points. The piece gestured towards the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche and Soren Kierkegaard, and then the horrors of World War II. It recognized that while some Christian denominations were indeed growing, their conceptions of God were still unstable. "To those who do formulate a God, he seems to be everything from a celestial gas to a kind of honorary president," *Time* joked. The article went on to posit many possible reasons for this and other kinds of uncertainty around God, including the empirical worldview advanced by contemporary science and crowded daily lives that afforded little time for theological reflection.

At no point did *Time* presume that these circumstances represented a crisis for the Christian consensus imagined across the magazine's religion reporting. In fact, the article continually reasserted that theological doubt was a historical constant which never succeeded in completely unseating Christian authority. *Time* even concluded that, "worry about God could be a necessary and healthy antidote to many centuries in which faith was too confident and too sure," suggesting that a new and better religious consensus might emerge.[606] Similar to the magazine's original reporting on the atheistic theologians, *Time* provoked some worry about threats to an unmarked religious norm, but did not ultimately predict that that norm would crumble.

The moderate tone *Time* struck within the magazine did not dampen strong responses to the stark cover. Coverage in secular news venues mocked or criticized *Time's* pairing of sensational cover art with decidedly inconclusive journalism. On April 7, New York's WMCA

[606] "Toward a Hidden God," *Time,* April 8, 1966, 81-87.

radio station hosted an inter-denominational array of guests who all took issue with *Time*'s story. "The article is an affront to Jews who are celebrating Passover and Christians who are preparing for Easter," the host explained, "Moreover, the article says nothing new. We don't argue with Time's right to discuss anything it wants to, but we do argue with its sense of timing, its gross lack of taste and its empty treatment of the most profound subject of human knowledge."[607] Harry Reasoner of New York's WCBS radio station also noted the article's vagueness and indecision, "… so far as I can tell the article doesn't really answer the question on the cover;" he mused, "it's not supposed to, I imagine. That's kind of disappointing for old aficionados of Time Magazine's firm answers to most questions."[608] The conservative *National Review* printed a satirical piece, titled "Is *Time* Dead?" that mocked the article's sweeping intellectual history with lines like, "That most revolutionary fellow, Euripides, wrote: 'Time is a babbler and speaks even when not asked.'"[609]

A range of religious communities across the country were galvanized by *Time*'s striking cover. *The Washington Post* reported that churches around the country were enflamed by the editorial. Clergy nationwide were inspired to offer rousing Easter sermons "contradicting the modern heresy that God is Dead."[610] Liberal seminaries hosted roundtables, while Catholic leaders issued denunciations of Protestantism's most recent excesses. A month later, as the controversy raged on, Billy Graham told the *Boston Globe* that, "I know God is alive. I talked to him this morning."[611] In *We Gather Together: The Religious Right and the Problem of Interfaith*

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[607] Transcript of Editorial Program, WMCA, April 7th 1966, Folder 23, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[608] "COMMENTATOR IS IMPRESSED WITH PROBLEMS OF TIME'S RELIGION DEPARTMENT," WCBS Press Release, April 7, 1966, Folder 23, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[609] William Buckley, "Is Time Dead?" *National Review,* May 17, 1966, 456.
[610] Kenneth Dole, "Worshippers Rejoice: God Lives!," *Washington Post* April 11, 1966, B1.
[611] Will Oursler, "The 'God-Is-Dead' Controversy," *Boston Globe,* May 8, 1966.

Politics, Neil J. Young maps these varied responses, concluding that the piece ultimately sowed division among the parties it offended. Young writes that "the 'God is dead' moment elicited not an occasion for conservative ecumenism to defend the Judeo-Christian God, but rather a call to arms for their own truths."[612] While Young found evidence of disagreement and retrenchment among conservatives, Leigh E. Schmidt shows that the magazine cover and the debate it sparked heartened and drew together a range of "seekers." Looking to the responses of Unitarians, atheists, and groups interested in non-theistic humanism, Schmidt sees *Time*'s April, 18 1966 cover as turning point in the rise of "spirituality" without "religion." Schmidt writes that the cover "foreshadowed the nation's proliferating questors for the sacred apart from the church and its departed deity."[613] Both scholars recognize that *Time'*s cover occasioned new religious searching and disputes, notwithstanding the article's moderate analysis.

All things considered, the flurry of attention meant a windfall for *Time*. The "Is God Dead?" cover solicited nearly 3,500 letters, the most ever received in the history of the magazine by a wide margin. The ongoing, repeated discussion of the *Time* cover across denominational and secular media kept mail flowing in for weeks after the cover appeared.[614] The cover and its blowback placed *Time* at the center of a national conversation. *Life'*s National Purpose had attempted to instigate such a broad-based, galvanizing discussion, to a lesser effect. *Time'*s strategy of dwelling on threats to the consensus in foreboding tones proved a much more

[612] Neil J. Young, *We Gather Together: The Religious Right and the Problem of Interfaith Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 86.
[613] Leigh E. Schmidt, "The death-of-God theology and the birth of the SNBR sensibility," in *Being Spiritual but Not Religious: Past, Present, Future(s)* ed. William B. Parsons (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group), 45-56.
[614] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc.,* 112.

successful route to attracting public attention. 1966 concluded as the most profitable year on record.[615]

Conclusion: "For This, We Wish his Magazine, 'Happy Birthday''

On the eve of *Time'*s 40th anniversary, *The Christian Century* published a brief column wishing the magazine a happy birthday. The piece lamented that *Time'*s regular religion coverage, which unlike *The Century* itself reached "the otherwise oblivious millions," was written in the magazine's signature style. *The Century* complained that *Time* always included "irrelevant concrete details" about theologians' lives, while ignoring or misrepresenting the "relevant abstract generalities" of their thought. The piece concluded with interlocking criticisms of the magazine's polarizing stye.

> Henry Luce, whose parents were missionaries in China, has his detractors in the religious world. One week Protestants are convinced that his Catholic wife has blurred his vision of evangelical virtues; the next week Catholics are convinced that he is ramming Presbyterianism down their throats. The eggheads of both communities, as Luce is well aware, often deride his attempts to popularize theology. … but he knowns that the eggheads who give him the backs of their hands would never think of turning the backs of their heads to his photographers and seldom turn the backs of their bodies to his interviewers.[616]

In their terse birthday greeting, *The Century* recognized the multiple ways in which *Time* was affecting contemporary Christian leadership. The magazine's content was ambiguous and shifting enough to upset different communities at different times, leaving everyone dissatisfied. At the same time, even Luce's critics could not resist his magazine's attention. The situation meant all "eggheads," Catholics and Protestants alike, were subject to the disappointment of negative coverage, and the hypocrisy of courting *Time'*s cameras nonetheless.

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[615] "All of us at TIME would like to express our thanks…" December 8, 1966, Folder 25, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[616] "The Time of Henry Luce's Life," *The Christian Century,* May 13 1963, 695.

The only winner in this situation was Time Inc. Starting at the dawn of the Second World War, Luce sought to situate himself as a religious leader of his own kind. The journalism that resulted drew together varied ideas and stakeholders, ultimately creating unlikely and uncomfortable bedfellows. Three years after *The Century* issued this note, *Time'*s "Is God Dead?" cover stoked religious controversies that brought millions of eyes to the magazine. While *The Century* and others raged against many of his gestures, Luce's corporate platform only benefitted from their attention.

Conclusion

In the years following Luce's retirement, *Time* and *Life* continued on the same trajectories they were on in the early 1960s. In 1972, *Life* ceased publication as a weekly.[617] Internal market research conducted throughout the first half of the 1960s indicated that *Life*'s fate mirrored those of other "general interest" magazines.[618] *Colliers* had folded in 1956, *The Saturday Evening Post* had transitioned to a less costly bi-weekly run in 1963, and ceased publication in 1969. *Look* concluded publication in 1971.[619] All these periodicals, which were pitched to "mass" audiences, were experiencing sharp competition from magazines catering to particular interests and demographics. The second half of the 1960s saw the successful launches of *Southern Living, Rolling Stone,* and *The Advocate,* a magazine for LGBTQ audiences.[620] In 1966, much to *Life* editors' dismay, the inaugural National Magazine Award went to John H. Johnson for *Ebony*, which had enjoyed steady success since its launch in 1945 and was experiencing a boom in the 1960s.[621] These events marked a sea-change in publishing, wherein magazines were increasingly tailored to address the specific interests of specialized groups.[622] This trend did not bode well for *Life,* a periodical broadly conceived as a vehicle for the "amazement" and "instruction" of anyone who would look.

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[617] Time Inc. experimented with a monthly version of the magazine, which ran from October of 1978 until 2000. Meredith Corporation, the company that purchased Time Inc.'s properties in 2018, still releases occasional issues of *Life* on special topics.
[618] "Role of Mass Magazines Study," Box 469, Folder 21, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York.
[619] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc. Vol. III ,* 278-279.
[620] David Sumner, *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing), 139-152.
[621] "Re: Magazines Award," March 15, 1966, Box 469, Folder 21, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York.
[622] David E. Sumner, *The Magazine Century*, 174.

Life attempted to meet this moment with little success. In 1962, Time Inc. began offering *Life* subscribers the option to receive smaller sized, topics-based supplements alongside their usual weekly *Life*. The specific topics theses supplements covered, "Science," "Travel," and "Show World" (contemporary music and theatre) registered *Life'*s tacit decision to serve its existing base of overwhelmingly white middle and upper-middle class readers.[623] The supplements were unsuccessful and short-lived. On the eve of *Life's* final weekly issue, *Chicago-Sun Times* columnist Gary Wills wrote that *Life* failed because its tone no longer resonated with its target audience. "Middle America is bitter, not cozy;" he observed, "not satisfied with the myths, just angry at those who took away the Luce certitudes and Norman Rockwell granddaddies."[624]

By the early 1960s, *Life'*s particular brand of conservativism, built on assertive global engagement and mainline Protestant theology, did not reflect the politics of the magazine's white, suburban reader base. In 1971, *Life'*s last full year of weekly publication, the magazine's editors received an enraged letter from the 20-year-old Rush Limbaugh, who was canceling his subscription to rebuke *Life* for its moderate coverage of teenage pregnancy.[625] Months later, the editors were lambasted by employees of the right-wing South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond, who called *Life'*s political coverage "anti-Southern."[626] These correspondences provide insight into who expected *Life* to reflect their interests. At a moment when U.S. cultural norms were undergoing massive revision, *Life* re-asserted the "national purposes" that had aminated Luce

[623] For versions of the supplements, and deliberations about why to produce them what they should include, see Folder 2, Box 469, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[624] Garry Wills, "Death of Life, Luce-idity," *Chicago Sun Times* December 17, 1972, Folder 25, Box 472, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[625] "Dear Mr. Graves: …" April 19, 1971, Folder 5, Box 472, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.
[626] Memo To: Ralph Graves From: Dick Stolley, July 16, 1971, Folder 5, Box 472, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York NY.

and his colleagues since the 1940s. As the magazine's readers became increasingly attracted to an ascendent form of conservative Christianity, the editors remained aloof. Ironically, *Life* was delt a devastating blow in 1971, when federal divestment from the Post Office resulted in skyrocketing mailing rates for publishers.[627] Between readers' changing politics and the success of such small state economic policies, the conservative politics Time Inc. had championed for decades did not spell success for *Life.*

*Time'*s success was steady. The magazine maintained and amplified its identity as "a Republican magazine." In 1965, *Time* introduced its weekly essay. By including one "essay" each week, *Time'*s editors more clearly presented their content as *opinion.* Essays were explicitly intended to offer analysis and "pass judgements," without recourse to the news columns' typical focus on the details of personalities and events that provided a veneer of factuality.[628] The first year of essays asserted conservative stances on global and domestic politics. Titles included: "Vietnam: The Right War at the Right Time," "Youth: On Not Losing One's Cool About the Young," and "The New Pornography," which decried the permissive sexual mores depicted in contemporary literature and cinema.[629] In 1968, a new Managing Editor, Henry Grunwald, insisted on introducing occasional bylines. Grunwald, the son of Viennese Jews who fled Europe in the early 1940s, disrupted *Time'*s longstanding tradition of mainline Protestant leadership. An avowed conservative, he believed that *Time'*s omniscient voice undermined the validity of the

[627] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc. Vol. III,* 294-295. Time Inc. attempted to rally readers against the de-funding of the Post Office, which transferred millions of dollars in mailing costs to publishers. On August 20, 1971, the Managing Editors published an editorial titled "A Serious Threat to Magazines," to bring attention to the issue, see *Life,* August 20, 1971, 4.
[628] "Prospectus: Time Essay," March 1965, Folder 21, Box 468, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY. On April 2, 1965, *Time* introduced this new feature to readers in, "A letter from the publisher," *Time,* April 2, 1965, 1.
[629] See, "The New Pornography," *Time,* March 16, 1965, 28-29, "Vietnam: The Right War at the Right Time," *Time,* May 14, 1965, 30-31, "Youth: On Not Losing One's Cool About the Young," *Time,* December 24, 1965, 16-18.

magazine's perspectives.[630] The addition of the essay and occasional bylines mitigated the longstanding accusation that *Time* presented opinion as fact, while continuing to deliver the conservative opinions readers had come to expect. Decades after *Time* had aligned itself authoritarian regimes, a son of exiles helped persevere magazine's reputation.

After Luce's death in February of 1967, *Time*'s editors re-assessed the Religion department. At a major annual editorial meeting in 1967, the Managing Editor who oversaw the Religion department observed that the magazine's religion coverage was too focused on prominent clerics and established intuitions. This slant, which Luce had consistently pushed with memoranda drawing editors' attention to new voices in theological thought and developments in denominational politics, was not allowing the magazine to keep pace with the religious currents of the moment. "The fact is religion is being declericized," he insisted. "The real events in the religious world as far as many of the religious people are concerned have not anything to do with what is taking place in the World Council of Churches or what is taking place on Sunday."[631]At the time of this meeting, *Time'*s Religion column was already veering away from its traditional prominence. [632]

With the move away from leaders and institutions, *Time'*s religion reporting began to emphasize a tendency the editors had tried to repress in earlier decades. In 1942, when *Time'*s readers were consumed with the stresses of war, the magazine's editors insisted that "TIME cannot properly report the news of a civilization based on Christianity without keeping our readers well informed on the key developments in this essential element of life." At that time,

[630] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc. Vol. III ,* 278-279.
[631] "Sea Spray Meeting, September 17-18, 1967," Folder 26, Box 486, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[632] In the years between1967 and 1969, the Religion column only received one cover a year, comparable to other back-of-the-book sections. Without Luce drawing the Managing Editors' attention to religious topics, they consumed much less internal conversation.

this meant that Religion column should not waste space on "screwy sects" or "queer quacks."[633] Rather, in a sharp move away from the sensationalism and condescension of its interwar religion reporting, *Time'*s World War II-era Religion column assertively organized the world into Christian allies and "heathen" foes.

Twenty-five years later, the decision to move away from institutions re-introduced a focus on people, groups, and events presented as interesting outliers. For example, the March 5, 1968 Religion section included two columns. The first covered a curious new "campus trend," an increase in Jewish Studies courses at non-Jewish universities. The second column scrutinized the songs and vows performed at folk singer Joan Baez's wedding. A *Time* reader turning to the Religion section in the late 1960s might find a sensational update on the "Doctrine of the Dropouts," or a skeptical report on a St. Louis parish priest who used a cutting-edge IBM System 360 computer to process surveys on his congregants' preferred liturgies.[634] Under Luce's editorial direction, the Religion column was a site where corporate leadership had celebrated evidence of the United States' role in bringing about a global Christian consensus. After his death, it sardonically documented strange new times.

Henry R. Luce died of coronary failure on February 28, 1967, in Phoenix, Arizona. Despite his doctors' objections, the final years of his life were not especially restful. Henry and Clare Luce experimented occasionally with LSD before it became illegal in 1965. Henry reported finding that the experience was "interesting," but "not entirely enjoyable."[635] After he retired, Luce traveled frequently, read voraciously, and began writing a book. During these years

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[633] "Religion in Time," May 8, 1942, Folder 7, Box 448, Time Inc. Subject Files, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY.
[634] "Doctrine of the Dropouts," *Time,* January 5, 1968, 62, "Programming the Flock," *Time,* Mach 29, 1968, 92.
[635] For a discussion of the Luces' experiments with LSD, in the context of Time Inc.'s coverage of psychedelics, see Stephen Siff, "Henry Luce's Strange Trip: Coverage of LSD in *Time* and *Life,* 1954-68," *Journalism History* 34 no. 3 (Fall 2008): 126-133. See also, Brinkley, *The Publisher,* 433-434 and Swanberg, *Luce and his Empire,* 463.

his interest in Catholicism grew particularly pronounced. He became an enthusiastic promoter of the Jesuit theologian, philosopher, and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and insisted on reviewing his recent works for *Life.*[636] In March of 1965, he visited Rome to observe the Vatican Council. During this visit he had an audience with the newly ordained Pope Paul VI, wherein they discussed his recent treatment in *Time*. After that trip, he traveled to Britain, Germany, and the Middle East.[637] Unburdened from the responsibility of guiding the national morality, Luce indulged his many curiosities.

One of Luce's last trips was to the small farming community of Oskaloosa, Iowa. Decades earlier, Luce had mused that his missionary upbringing made him feel like an outsider. Rather than explaining his Chinese roots, he yearned to tell new acquaintances that he was from Oskaloosa, Iowa. When a *Reader's Digest* profile mentioned this quip, the mayor of Oskaloosa reached out to Luce, offering him honorary citizenship of the town. Luce was thrilled to accept.[638] This incident provides a useful bookend to a discussion of Luce's career. Luce's unique upbringing, many thousands of miles away from the United States, formed him as one of the United States most ardent and consequential patriots. Throughout his tenure as chairman of Time Inc., his entwined Christianity and American exceptionalism shaped reems of print news media that moved through countless millions of homes and businesses. At the end of his life, he was symbolically adopted into the quintessential Americanism he had championed in his magazines for decades.

[636] Henry R. Luce, "A Great Thinker's Joyful Vision: The Spiritual Perfection of Mankind," *Life,* October 16, 1963, 12.
[637] Prendergast, *The World of Time Inc. Vol. III,* 198.
[638] "Oskaloosa Adopts Luce," *Des Moines Register,* January 31, 1965, 14.

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