LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

# "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?"

## Southern Baptist and Roman Catholic Relief Efforts During the Great Depression

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by

Alyson Fagan

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“BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?”

SOUTHERN BAPTIST AND ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIEF EFFORTS DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

by

Alyson Fagan

Liberty University

APPROVED BY:

Dr. Joseph Super

Dr. Scott Catino

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## Introduction

Throughout history, the organized Church has often been a source of hope and community, yet four years after the 1929 Stock Market Crash many down-trodden Americans continued to ask the churches, "brother, can you spare a dime?"[1] Sandwiched between the two world wars, the Great Depression illuminated a crucial change in American Christian history from the American people's dependence on the Church to the government for relief. By the 1930's the onset of the Great Depression produced a decline in church attendance, with the average drop being over fourteen percent across all major denominations.[2] As attendance dropped and benevolent giving followed suit, churches were stretched to their limit in their ability to offer tangible relief to their struggling flock. During this time as well, the church was experiencing criticism from outside their number. The Great Depression was a pivotal event that displayed the shift in the role of the Church in America, which can be directly connected to the Church's ability to provide for immediate needs before and during government intervention through the New Deal. By assessing the various forms of charity given by the two dominant groups of the time, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), groups that focused more on filling their community's urgent needs gained more access to public funds than those principally focused on revivals.

Before the Depression commenced, the Church's role in society was beginning to teeter as various criticisms surfaced in their bodies, as well as from secular America. The churches then began reassessing their interpretation of Scripture in a changing environment, as well as their

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[1] Bing Crosby, "Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?" Recorded November 8, 1932. Fantastic Voyage, 2009, Streaming Audio. https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Crecorded_cd%7C1183013.

[2] Reference Table 1 in Appendix. Data gathered from Table 13 in each Census: U.S. Census Office. *Religious Bodies: 1926*, 1. Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 1929: 82, 90. and U.S. Census Office. *Religious Bodies: 1936*, 1. Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 1941:86, 96.

application of Gospel principles. Within these principles, the idea of providing for the needs of the "least of these" and being a Good Samaritan took on different attributes depending on their denomination as well as their location in America. In providing Christian charity, churches had to determine their ability, and willingness in some cases, to provide tangible needs versus a revival. The SBC saw themselves lacking the basic ability to tangibly provide for their congregations, as their congregants were predominantly farmers. On the other hand, the RCC increased exponentially in size because of immigration, resulting in an increase in their budget. Their relationship amongst themselves, as well as their ability to win favor with the government to secure funding and support, quantitatively displayed their ability to fulfill their Gospel mission.

Initial histories explaining the complex issue of the role of church in relief, whether from a doctrinal standpoint or sanctioned by the government, started in the early 1900's. Catholics and Protestants approached charity from a different vantage point, though both centered their understanding on biblical principles. Historians during these early years fell into the Progressive school, as liberalism was on the rise and positively impacted society. True to the culture of the time, Catholic and Protestant viewpoints were presented separately. Protestants were the dominant denomination from colonization, whereas Catholics represented a smaller and less accepted group.

It was during a peak period of immigration from Catholic dominated Europe that Monsignor William J. Kerby published the initial understanding of the function of charity within the Church. Founder of the Department of Sociology at the Catholic University, Kerby declared in 1921 in *The Social Mission of Charity* that the overall expression of Catholicism is found in serving those in need. Catholics gained more respect during the 1928 presidential election, when

Catholic politician Al Smith won the nomination for the Democratic party but lost to Herbert Hoover; unfortunately, a year later America plunged into the Great Depression. By 1930, Kerby's assessment was encouraged by a man in his own department at Catholic University, Monsignor John O'Grady. *Catholic Charities in the United States, History and Problems* provided a snapshot of Catholic history, from being ostracized in America's founding to being welcomed in the public sector by providing charity for the common man. Though he made no mention of the relief efforts due to the Depression, the publication showed a change in perception of Catholicism.

The Protestant church's role in charity was full of criticism for those who did not subscribe to the Social Gospel elements during the Depression. Most of this movement was met with resistance within the Church, particularly through the Fundamentalist movement; but the harsh criticism also came from secular America. Beginning to feel their role in society was slipping through their fingers, the Federal Council of Churches commissioned their executive director of the Department of Research and Education, F. Ernest Johnson in 1930 to emphasize the call to serve their neighbors in *The Social Work of Churches*. The Southern Baptists, on the other hand, opted to not join the Federal Council of Churches and utilized their convention to provide their own relief. Southern Baptist pastor, who was the first secretary for data and statistics of the Southern Baptist Convention, E. P. Alldredge presented a critical call to action for the sake of furthering the Gospel.[3] He presented the message in a sense of urgency to spur people to give to missionary work, due to the fact that roughly seventy percent of Southern

[3] "Biographical Sketch" in *Eugene Perry Alldredge Papers* (Nashville: Southern Baptist Library and Archives, 2013): 3.

Baptist members had not given to missions that year.[4] Though he was not deliberately advocating the Social Gospel, much of his assessment is in line with the tenets of the movement.

By 1935, notable Protestant scholars began emphasizing the Social Gospel elements by asserting service to their fellow man would be the only way to truly fulfill the Gospel. One such historian was found in Wilhelm Pauck, a German American who was a notable scholar of Martin Luther and viewed Christianity as a chain of events that started with the Reformation. Published in a work with two other prominent Social Gospel advocates of the day, he declared in "The Crisis of Religion" that the only reason the church avoided dying altogether is due to those who applied some Social Gospel principles, specifically through providing relief.[5] Compounding this idea, H. Paul Douglass and Edmund de S. Brunner stated that the church was created to work as a social institution, however they made a point to note that many ministers are ill equipped for the task.[6]

When the Depression officially waned, histories began to shift into a brief Consensus period, where the recurring theme followed how specific groups fit into society and their ability to better America. These historians still separated the Protestants from the Catholics, but most saw them as part of the same message and religion. Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame, Aaron Abell focused his works on the Catholic Church's role in social justice. In 1949, "Origins of Catholic Social Reform in the United States: Ideological Aspects" concentrated on the identity of the Catholic Church on its immigrant background and how it

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[4] E. P. Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook, 1931* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1931): 49.

[5] Wilhelm Pauck, "The Crisis of Religion," in *The Church Against the World* (Chicago: Willett, Clark, & Company, 1935): 31.

[6] H. Paul Douglass, and Edmund deS. Brunner. *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935): 105-7.

caused the church to be more in tune with the needs of the "least" in America.[7] Abell's message came at the opportune moment as America began to dive deeper into the Cold War and the new feared association was with Communism, to which Pope Pius XI made it clear that Communism would not be tolerated by the Church.[8] On the other hand, the leading understanding of Protestantism came from Robert Handy, professor at Union Theological Seminary, who established in 1960 that there was a causal relationship between the Protestant decline and the Depression, as seen in the church's role in charity being taken over by the government. Remarkably, Handy published his assessment during an election year where America elected its first Catholic president to office, John F. Kennedy. Using these positive strides, prominent American Catholic historian David O'Brien explained in 1968 that the Catholic Church was able to stand firmly on its unifying messages from the Pope, which allowed them to be more accepted as a working organism.[9]

By 1969, historians entered a Neo-Consensus mindset as they viewed the role of the church in relief through the lens of their ability to work harmoniously with those outside their denomination, and the government, in their relief efforts. In true fashion, American Sociology and Economics professor at Yale University, E. Wright Bakke, presented a secular perspective of American efforts in relation to Social Work. He projected a positive stance on the Catholic Church, stating that their theology and doctrine comforted those during the Depression, which

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[7] Aaron I. Abell, "Origins of Catholic Social Reform in the United States: Ideological Aspects." *The Review of Politics* 11, no. 3 (1949): 249 and 308.

[8] Most noteworthy proclamation by Pope Pius XI against Communism in: Catholic Church. Pope (1922-1939: Pius XI). *Divini Redemptoris = Encyclical Letter on Atheistic Communism.* Libereria Editrice Vaticana, March 19, 1937.

[9] David J. O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968): 55 and 134.

allowed Americans to be more open through their work. For Protestants, he posited that their doctrine and messages were centered around people being punished for past sins which in turn colored their approach to service.[10]

As increased international tensions began to make their way to American soil during the 1970's and early 80's, historians then began re-evaluating the increase of a strong centralized government. In 1986, a more objective approach was achieved in the article titled "Clergy Reaction to the New Deal: A Comparative Study." Monroe Billington, a professor of History at New Mexico State University, and Cal Clark, associate professor of Government at the University of Wyoming, used the clergy's response to President Roosevelt's letter regarding the New Deal. In this work, they determined that the church was influential in their community but willing to stick to their convictions over the views of the public, as seen in their near unanimous support of Prohibition.[11]

Ten years later, Marvin Olasky, professor at the University of Texas and editor-in-chief of the Christian news magazine *World*, offered an overarching assessment of the role of the Church in relation to charity in *The Tragedy of American Compassion*. He emphasized the slow progression of government filling the needs of American citizens, which ultimately relieved the burden from churches.[12] Focusing more on the Southern Baptist perspective, Paul Harvey explained in his initial work *Redeeming the South* the culture of the Southern churches. Within the chapter generalizing the rural sector for Southern Baptists, Harvey emphasized how

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[10] E. Wright Bakke, "Religious Relations and Practices," in *Citizens Without Work; A Study of the Effects of Unemployment upon the Workers' Social Relations and Practices* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1969): 21.

[11] Monroe Billington and Cal Clark, "Clergy Reaction to the New Deal: A Comparative Study." *The Historian* 48, 4 (1986): 516.

[12] Marvin Olasky, *The Tragedy of American Compassion.* Washington: Regnery Publishing, 1995.

unprofessional the church was and the need to adapt to the profession to then work as an organism to affect America, suggesting this was a major element to their effectiveness during the Depression.[13]

The 21st century has now caused many historians to focus on the history of the average American as they sought to understand the individual American story told of the Depression and the Church's role in their lives. In 2004, professor of Religious Studies for the University of Utah, Colleen McDannell's work depicted the human side of the Depression through the eyes of the government sanctioned FSA photographers. In approaching ministry through the secular viewpoint, McDannell was able to show a deeper understanding of the Church's effectiveness in tangibly providing relief, but also in their presentation of the Gospel.[14] Additionally, scholars begin to analyze major Protestant groups' individual experiences, as seen in Wayne Flynt's work in 2005 on Southern Baptists. A professor at Auburn University specializing in southern history, politics, and religion, "Religion for the Blues" determined that the churches in the poor, rural south was the foundation of the community's social institutions, which proved vital to overall health and wellbeing, though they were so underfunded that they were inadequate to fill many tangible needs.[15] This led newer historians to question the initial interpretation of the church, adopting a critical analysis by exposing their shortcomings during this era.

For Catholic agencies, Assistant Professor of History at Penn State York Dianne Creagh, analyzed in 2011 how the ministry to orphans in the Foundling Asylum's foster care system

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[13] Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Radical Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997): 198.

[14] Colleen McDanell, "Christian Charity," in *Picturing Faith: Photography and the Great Depression.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

[15] Wayne Flynt, "Religion for the Blues: Evangelicalism, Poor Whites, and the Great Depression." *The Journal of Southern History* 71, no. 1 (2005): 3-38.

began to loosen their standards as the Depression wore on. While still presenting the belief of her predecessors that the Catholic Church was successful in providing relief, Creagh agreed with Protestant interpretation from the early 1930's that the Catholic Church was willing to sacrifice doctrine for the sake of service.[16] From the Protestant perspective, professor of United States Religious History who extensively studies Southern religion, Allison Collis Greene clarified that Handy's argument declared the decline of Fundamentalism and suggested that the transfer of power from the church to the state was ultimately the nail in the coffin. She then further suggested that churches who engaged in elements of the Social Gospel found more success in being included in the transfer of power.[17]

The history of Christian charity has remained within a confined space of either Catholicism, Protestantism, or from the secular perspective through the increasing sociological mindset. However, comparison must be re-evaluated between the Church's ultimate impact on society as mentioned by the first historians in the 1930's. Their understanding that the Church was battling secularism that started creeping in during the plenty of the 1920's is founded, though the assessment of being the Good Samaritan and caring for the "least of these" has left many wanting. Critically looking at how the two major bodies of Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church and Southern Baptist Convention, approached charity and how this affected their ability to work with the government will provide a deeper understanding if these bodies were able to fulfill the Gospel call. This will also provide richer understanding of the secular

[16] Dianne Creagh, "Faith in Fostering: Catholic Adoption and Boarding Out in Depression Era New York." *American Catholic Studies* 122, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 1-32.

[17] Allison Collis Greene, "The End of "the Protestant Era"?" *Church History* 80, no. 3 (09, 2011): 602, 604.

viewpoint of the church's impact in society, which will ultimately explain why certain churches experienced prosperity or deterioration.

Chapter One aims to explain the culture of America leading up to the Great Depression and the church's response to their changing society. One such point of contention is through movements that caused the church to re-evaluate their approach toward Scripture. From the Toy heresy trials to the Scopes Trial of 1925, both the SBC and RCC had redefined their position on the inerrancy of Scripture. This stance naturally determined the denomination's position on the Social Gospel Movement. This movement centered around fulfilling material needs as an expression of the Gospel that was often termed social Christianity, which was either accepted or rejected by these denominations.

To understand the similarities and differences of the SBC and RCC, separate chapters will provide further details for the specific denomination. This will begin in Chapter Two in discussion of the Southern Baptist Convention in relation to their missionary focus on providing needs. Ministries within the SBC were smaller and made up of lower-class individuals, that eventually determined their ability to give monetary relief. In addition, Southern Baptists put a high emphasis on individual salvation and caused them to use this as their ultimate cure for all the trials of the world. On the other hand, Chapter Three will discuss how the RCC was much more coordinated in their efforts to provide tangible relief for their community. It will be significant to note also that the RCC grew in number right before the Great Depression because of the mass wave of immigration from Europe.

A tangible plumb line for the success or failure of their choices is found in President Roosevelt's New Deal organizations and will be discussed in Chapter Four. These organizations provided relief for not only the people but relieved some of the burden from the churches as they

struggled to fill the ever-increasing needs. One drawback to the New Deal programs was that they created government run programs to administer aid and did not blatantly give precedence to churches distributing the relief. However, those churches and organizations who could work within the regulations of the government could gain access to these funds for purely relief purposes. This then suggests that organizations that focused primarily on providing for the immediate needs were more able to receive funding from public funds, as the federal government was able to maintain the idea of the separation of church and state. Without adequate funding, many organizations and ministries would suffer, particularly in the rural settings because they were already at a disadvantage in the funding available through their churches.

# Chapter 1

## Culture Shock Before the Crash

> States with large proportions of church members are on the average no healthier, no wealthier, and no more literate than states in which the churches are weak, and show no lower illegitimate birth rates or venereal death rates. States with large portions of Methodists and Baptists are relatively poor and illiterate. So as far as these results go, there is no indication of any effective contribution of the churches… to the social well being.
>
> - John Miner, "The Churches and Social Well Being."[18]

True to its name, the SBC dominated the Southern landscape, whereas the RCC stayed strong in the North. Due to its rural settings, the SBC was significantly smaller in every area: bodies, buildings, and, possibly the most significant, budget. Though the SBC dominated southern America with their number of churches, the RCC still had between thirty to fifty percent more members in southern areas. In the northern region, the Catholic Church had at least four times the number of members, equating to about thirteen million more members in most major cities.[19] A major contributor to the Catholic Church's numbers was the increased immigration from 1880 to 1920. Specifically in 1920 to 1930, immigrants that came into the United States were from countries with deep Catholic roots such as Germany, Italy, Russia, and Poland. These groups first settled in New York, with their second choice being either New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, or Illinois.[20] The Middle Atlantic saw the largest increase in their urban centers, with New York City comfortably holding the largest by at least 40 million

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[18] John R. Miner, "The Churches and Social Well Being." *Human Biology* 4, no. 3 (1932): 427.

[19] Reference Table 1 and 2 in Appendix. U.S. Census Bureau, *Religious Bodies: 1936*, 1. (Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 1941): 60-1, 86-97; U.S. Census Bureau, *Religious Bodies: 1926*, 1. (Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 1929): 82-90.

[20] U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1936, Fifty-Eighth Number*, by Daniel C. Roper Bureau and Alexander V. Dye. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1936): 26.

residents. As for Southern areas, the largest towns were found in the South Atlantic; however, Texas housed the highest density of Southern Baptists, and Houston sat twenty-sixth on the list with only 292,352 people.

From a pure population standpoint, comparing Texas to New York shows that by 1930 New York had seven million more people than Texas.[21] In 1936, New York state housed 1,757 Catholic Churches and just over three million members distributed throughout. In the SBC dominated Texas, the RCC had 780 churches with 604,308 members.[22] The Southern Baptist Churches located in New York were so few that they do not show up in census data or were represented at the Convention. Within Texas, there were only 360,421 members and 1,606 churches.[23] Their ratio was even more noteworthy, as an average Catholic Church in New York had 1,750 members per church where twenty-six percent of the population were immigrants, whereas only two percent of Texas' population was foreign born and the typical Southern Baptist Church only had about 224 members per church.[24]

However, both denominations approached membership differently. Members of the SBC had to make a profession of faith, either by presenting documentation of baptism or a statement of faith. The RCC asked prospective members to go through the Sacraments of Initiation - baptism, confession, and communion - that could be fulfilled through their catechism courses. The sheer number of immigrants alone caused the RCC to dominate in immigrant rich settings

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[21] Reference Table 3 in Appendix. U. S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1936*, 7.

[22] U. S. Census, *Religious Bodies: 1936*, 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 1941): 254-9.

[23] U. S. Census, *Religious Bodies: 1936*, 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 1941): 290-5.

[24] Reference Table 3 in Appendix. U. S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1936*, 18.

such as urban centers, which caused the Catholic Church to increase in size. This ultimately increased their budget, thus their ability to provide tangible relief. Conversely, the SBC was able to increase their number of members by almost thirty percent during the years of the deepest points of the Depression. This shows a significance in ministry approach by the groups, as the RCC was able to provide more monetary giving and the SBC focused more on the Gospel.

In the strongest sense, scholars submit that the causal relationship between the decline in fundamental aspects of the Church, compounded with the onset of the Depression, solidified the fact that American churches experienced a slight decrease of influence in society by the late 1920's.[25] In this assessment, it is significant to note that by the time the stock market crashed, the Protestant church had been struggling for its place in society for almost twenty years. One point of reference to the decline of Christian spirituality in America during and immediately after the Great Depression began when intellectuals started to approach Scripture in a more critical way. The early stages of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy of the late 1800's revolved around evolution, both in relation to the idea of evolving the Church's approach to Scripture and the theory by Charles Darwin. One such evolution within the church was found in questioning the inerrancy of Scripture in the famous heresy trials in the Presbyterian Church in 1892. Union Seminary professor Charles Augustus Briggs sparked tension between the Old and New School Presbyterians on their view of denomination versus congregational authority and their emphasis of either doctrine or the work of the Spirit.[26] However, Briggs was not the pioneer for

[25] Robert T. Handy, "The American Religious Depression, 1925-1935." *Church History* 29, no. 1 (1960): 3-16.

[26] Harvey Hill, "History or Heresy: Religious Authority and the Trial of Charles Augustus Briggs." *U.S. Catholic Historian* 20, no. 3 (Summer, 2002): 2.

introducing liberal theology into higher education; it was Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Old Testament professor Crawford Toy.

Within the dominant SBC, they were conservative in their theology and approach toward Scripture, and in many cases agreed with Fundamentalist positions. Being a form of a renaissance man, Toy was well versed in up-and-coming scientific discoveries. These theories shook his understanding of early passages in Genesis and caused him to grapple with combining the findings of modern geologists and biologists with the Bible. This was the catalyst to Toy reinterpreting not only Genesis but also began to question Moses' authorship and the overall construction of the Pentateuch. This then caused him to question many other sections of Scripture as he attempted to separate the human from the divine elements. Toy suggested a less literal interpretation should be approached, declaring that "I believe that the Bible is wholly divine and wholly human."[27] Within this thought, Toy wrote in his resignation letter that "[i]t seems to me that geography has nothing to do with religion. The message is not less divine to me because it is given in Hebrew and not in English, or because it is not in the framework of a primitive and incorrect geology."[28] As he taught this new approach in his classroom, Toy realized that his view of Scripture was different than Southeastern Seminary and resigned, which then led to him eventually leaving the church altogether.[29] However, this opened the door for liberal theologians to adapt Baptist theology to the changing world.

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[27] C. H. Toy to the Board of Trustees, May 1879 (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY): 2.

[28] Ibid., 4. Notable Southern Baptist historian summarized Toy's career and addressed his resignation letter: Gregory A. Wills, "Southern Seminary and Progressive Religion 1870-1940," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 66.

[29] Wills, "Southern Seminary and Progressive Religion 1870-1940," 67-8.

In the urban sectors, the Catholic churches tended to bind together under the teachings from the Vatican, which provided the immigrants with consistency between their old and new country. This continuity allowed their message and church structure to be relatively uniform throughout the country as well. To maintain communication with the entire Catholic body, the Pope would periodically send letters known as encyclicals to the bishops to then distribute to the churches, which served to unify the Catholic Church around the same doctrine, traditions, and teaching. In 1893, Pope Leo XIII reiterated that the Catholic Church believed Paul's statement to Timothy that "[a]ll Scripture is inspired by God," and that the only authority in the Christian life is found in the divinely inspired Scripture.[30] However, this did not mean that the RCC was opposed to the Bible being critically analyzed. Pope Leo XIII would not be able to incorporate this in his time, but his 1893 encyclical encouraged his successors to help make Scripture more accessible to their parishioners by building institutions and encouraged deeper study of biblical interpretation.[31]

Amid this charge, the SBC and the RCC found themselves drawn into a secular issue that would define how to incorporate theories that seemingly contradicted Scripture. When Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859, and then accepted in the 1880's by the scientific community, church officials met it with as much debate as the heresy trials. The entire umbrella of Christianity was called into question in their approach on divine authority, as well as traditions. Modernists sought to reform their traditions to fit the modern day, whereas

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[30] Catholic Church. Pope (1878-1903: Leo XIII). *Providentissimus Deus = Encyclical Letter on the Study of Holy Scripture.* (November 18, 1893): 2. Scriptural reference to 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

[31] Detailed explanation found in Stephen Hartdegen, "The Influence of the Encyclical "Providentissimus Deus" on Subsequent Scripture Study." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (1943): 141-59. See also the Catholic definition for "Biblical Criticism": George Reid, "Biblical Criticism (Higher)," in The Catholic Encyclopedia. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908. http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04491c.h

Fundamentalists guarded the fundamentals of the faith, specifically the authority and application of Scripture.

One significant event in this aspect of the controversy was the Scopes Trial in 1925, where William Jennings Bryan represented Fundamentalists in the "fight against… the new ideas [that were going] to destroy the nation's Christian heritage."[32] The trial turned from charging a teacher for teaching evolution against state law to creationism versus evolution, which was being broadcasted nationwide for all to hear. By the end of the trial, the Defense Attorney Clarence Darrow called Bryan to the stand, and unfortunately his representation of Fundamentalism seemed to perpetuate the idea that all fundamentalists were "anti-intellectual rural Protestants who use the language of revivalist evangelicalism to express status anxiety and feelings of cultural alienation."[33]

Within this argument, Southern Baptists sided primarily with the Fundamentalist mindset, although this was not unanimous in the entire Convention. The SBC supported public education and their main argument against Darwin's theory was that it negated the literal interpretation of Genesis.[34] On the more radical side of the SBC, evangelist and infamous anti-evolutionist T. T. Martin became a prominent voice as he charged that the youth must be protected from this theory as it would chip away at the foundation of God's word for the youth.[35] Moderates in the SBC

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[32] Mark Noll, "The World in the Churches, the Churches in the World, 1918-1960." In *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*. 2 edition. (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 2019): 351.

[33] D. G. Hart, "When Is a Fundamentalist a Modernist? J. Gresham Machen, Cultural Modernism, and Conservative Protestantism." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65, no. 3 (Autumn, 1997): 609.

[34] James J. Thompson, "Southern Baptists and the Antievolution Controversy of the 1920's." *The Mississippi Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1975): 66-7.

[35] T. T. Martin, "The Only Hope," in *Hell and the High Schools: Christ or Evolution Which?* Kansas City, MO: The Western Baptist Publishing Company, 1923): 156-9

agreed with this same standpoint, however they condoned the comments and legislation being admitted in some states against teaching evolution in school. They suggested this was not something that the church should be involved with, as a separation of church and state issue.[36] Despite their differences, most Southern Baptists respected William Jennings Bryan in his crusade against evolution as it culminated in the Scopes Trial. They saw him fighting in a version of the Crawford Toy heresy trial, as the trial turned into putting the Bible on the stand.

As Scripture came under intellectual criticism, the secular public began to interpret their arguments on the authority of Scripture as a distraction from the immediate needs of everyday Americans. One telling example is seen in Udo Keppler's political cartoon from 1914 titled *Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three; But the Greatest of These is Tango.* Within this political cartoon, Keppler depicted a blustery winter scene of a homeless woman standing with her child in front of a building. The main sign stated that there was a "[c]harity ball" and that "proceeds [are] for the benefit of the needy;" but it was unfortunately "called off on account of the church's stand on modern dances."[37] This powerful use of satire exposed the Church for their choice of enforcing doctrine by removing the key component emphasized by Paul in First Corinthians: love.[38]

Amidst the arguing over evolution and the infallibility of the Bible, some Christian groups decided to reassess their application and presentation of the Gospel. During the Social Gospel Movement of 1870 to 1920, major supporters were liberal protestants such as Northern

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[36] Thompson, "Southern Baptists and the Antievolution," 66-7. Thompson also refers to the noteworthy document to suggest a firm separation of church and state: Dover Association statement (Dover Baptist Association, Minutes, 1925): 31.

[37] Udo J. Keppler, *Faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is tango / Keppler*, February 7, 1914, N.Y.: Keppler & Schwarzmann, Puck Building. https://www.loc.gov/item/2011649668/

[38] 1 Cor. 13:13 (New International Version)

Baptist theologian and pastor Walter Rauschenbusch, but many within the movement understood that their role in society was showing Christ through gifts of service. Proponents of the Social Gospel Movement understood in the early 1900's that "[t]he social crisis offer[ed] a great opportunity for the infusion of new life and power into the religious thought of the church."[39] In application of the Social Gospel, the story of Jesus became a secondary aspect of many of their ministries which focused on fulfilling the immediate needs of the people rather than imposing doctrinal rules. Union Theological Seminary professor Gary Dorrien suggested that it was a resurgence of liberal Christianity, where:

> "[m]ost of it preached a gospel of cultural optimism and a Jesus of middle-class idealism. It spoke the language of triumphal missionary religion, sometimes baptized the Anglo-Saxon ideology of Manifest Destiny, and usually claimed that American imperialism was not really imperialism because it had good intentions."[40]

To this end, Rauschenbusch charged that the Kingdom of God must include every aspect of human life; whether it be regarding the family or finances, all must be surrendered to God so that it will be saved. As he presents this claim, he suggests that the goal is not to substitute Christianity with works as "[w]e do not want less religion; we want more; but it must be a religion that gets its orientation from the Kingdom of God."[41] The Social Gospel was then interconnected with Modernism in that it perpetuated the revivalist tendencies of Evangelicalism

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[39] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1907): 340. Handy references this movement as the final step to the end of the Protestant Era within this timeframe: Robert T. Handy, "The American Religious Depression, 1925-1935." *Church History* 29, no. 1 (1960): 5.

[40] Gary Dorrien, "Society as the Subject of Redemption: Washington Gladden, Walter Rauchenbusch, and the Social Gospel," in *Economy, Difference, Empire: Social Ethics for Social Justice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010): 4.

[41] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianize the Social* Order (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913): 464. Rauschenbusch's primary argument is found in "The Revival of Religion and the Conversion of the Strong" 458-76.

but stressed a strong sense of duty to Jesus' call to love the least of these.[42] In some ways, those subscribing to the Social Gospel joined Fundamentalist charges, in that modernization caused an increase in sinful behavior and thus worked to remove the temptation.[43] By the 1920's, Modernists Social Gospelers preached that Christian unity was the goal, using Pastor H. Paul Douglass's belief that "the things dividing Christians were minor in comparison to everything that held them together."[44] Modernists presented their stance free from malicious intent, but what they did not see was a fatal flaw in their foundation.

Though the Social Gospel was predominantly found in the urban settings, the truths within this movement were based on teachings that Protestant groups engaged in throughout their existence.[45] Southern Baptists engaged in relieving social burdens within society as an outpouring of their faith through social action and ministry, as commanded throughout Scripture, but they would not have ascribed to the Social Gospel movement for many reasons. Primarily, it was seen as a form of liberalism that was moving away from the call to evangelize. The application of social ministry was to fulfill this call, as it would help lead people to Christ.[46] Within this idea, Paul Harvey made the distinction that "Social Christianity overlaps with but is not synonymous with the Social Gospel. Social Christianity involves envisioning a public role for Christians in reforming and regulating human institutions, without necessarily seeing this

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[42] Noll, *A History of Christianity,* 299.

[43] Gina A. Zurlo, "The Social Gospel, Ecumenical Movement, and Christian Sociology: The Institute of Social and Religious Research." *The American Sociologist* 46, no. 2 (June 2015): 3.

[44] Jeffrey K. Hadden, "H. Paul Douglass: His Perspective and His Work," Review of Religious Research 22:1 (September 1980): 75. Also referenced in: Zurlo, "The Social Gospel," 4.

[45] Keith Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996): 1-4. Also found in Robert Handy, "Introduction," in *The Social Gospel in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966): 4.

[46] Harper, *The Quality of* Mercy, 12.

public role as primary."[47] Southern Baptists focused on ministry efforts that were specifically mentioned in Scripture, as they stood by the literal interpretation of the Bible.[48] This is what drove them to support Prohibition as well as their view on labor.

Though the Social Gospel Movement was found in its niche in more liberal Protestant circles, the Catholic Church began to shift to a Modernist perspective as well that incorporated social Christian tendencies. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII sent an encyclical titled "Capital and Labor" where he presents his argument to emphatically declare that first and foremost that socialism is against the law of nature, and that the church is the only body strong enough to bring all the classes together.[49] To solidify his claim, the Pontiff advised:

> "[T]he happy results we all long for must be chiefly brought about by the plenteous outpouring of charity; of that true Christian charity, which is the fulfilling of the whole Gospel law, which is always ready to sacrifice itself for others' sake, and is man's surest antidote against worldly pride and immoderate love of self."[50]

Within this wisdom, he charged the RCC to showcase the love of Christ in acts of service that will display the Gospel and consequently bind humanity together. Not only is this a powerful charge, but the immigrants living in America were encouraged that their church would work for their good, which they could potentially reciprocate to others. O'Brien pointed out that Pope Leo

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[47] Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Radical Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997): 198.

[48] Harper, *The Quality of Mercy*, 26-7. Samuel Hill, *Southern Churches in Crisis: Revised* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999): 171.

[49] Catholic Church. Pope (1878-1903: Leo XIII). *Rerum Novarum = Encyclical Letter on Capital and Labor.* (May 15, 1891. Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1940): 6.

[50] Pope (1878-1903: Leo XIII), *Rerum* Novarum, 20.

XIII, and eventually the politically active Monsignor John Ryan, used Scripture as proof to support their claims and the text appealed to the people as Catholics.[51]

Knowingly or unknowingly, the Catholic Church subscribed to a social Christian mindset in their approach toward ministering to their members. The Church appeared more unified in doctrine and finances purely due to their domination's organization, and this uniformity allowed the Catholic Church to stand as a unit either for or against something outside the church walls. This unity was tangibly seen through the way finances were distributed within the Catholic churches during times of struggle, as seen within the Great Depression. For instance, William Portier, notable professor within the Department of Religious studies at the University of Dayton, elaborated that the Catholic Church used a strategy of moving money from one church to the next to fulfill the need. Within this context, they were able to provide funding for the American Catholic churches within themselves, allowing them to work like a unified body as they fundraised for each other to help fulfill needs.[52] This was manifested in the idea that it was "the earthly responsibility of every Christian to strive toward a just and humane society, and… work to mobilize not only their own forces, but the opinion of a largely indifferent public."[53] Due to the RCC's efforts in providing relief through their own organization without the strict

[51] David J. O'Brien, "Social Teaching, Social Action, Social Gospel." *U.S. Catholic Historian* 5, no. 2. (1986): 215.

[52] William L. Portier, "The Great Depression: 1929-1930," in *Every Catholic an Apostle: A Life of Thomas A. Judge, CM, 1868-1933.* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 2017): 302 and 322.

[53] Robert Mark Penna, *Braided Threads a Thematic History of the American Nonprofit Sector* (New York: Routledge, 2018): 51.

attachments to spreading the Gospel allowed it to be given more responsibilities in the communities and the government.[54]

Because of the Great Depression, Christianity teetered as intellectuals began to critically analyze Scripture, as well as how to fit modern society within the Biblical principles. This came from the heresy trials, with connection to the theory of evolution accepted in society to explain human existence. From the incorporation of evolution in classrooms, Fundamentalist appeared more rigid as they began to push society back to the fundamentals of faith with also hope in end-times prophecies being fulfilled. Modernists embraced the idea of change, as seen in their influence on the Progressive movement and implementation of the Social Gospel. American's trust then began to shift from the church to the government as the infallibility of Scripture began to be questioned and the Social Gospel movement gained traction in the public. The churches then had to decide how to adapt to this change, whether to continue with the programs they already had in place or offer a different form of ministry. To this end, their choice determined their success in meeting the needs of their communities, specifically how the outside world determined their effectiveness. In this shift, churches that followed the example of the Roman Catholic Church by providing relief to fulfill material needs proved to be more fruitful in their efforts. However, their Protestant counterparts found predominantly in the Southern Baptist Convention, saw a sharp decrease in their sway in society by their choice in to present the Gospel at the expense of filling needs.

In secular society, Christian organizations like the RCC charities, witnessed the creation of professions sponsored by the government to elicit change without being bound to strict

[54] Alison Collis Greene, *No Depression in Heaven: Religion and the Great Depression in the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016, Oxford Scholarship Online 2015): 79.

dogma. From outside the church, the secular public felt that the expanding role of the government in relief in the New Deal was positive because needs would then be met by professionals rather than untrained ministers. With this distinction, the movement led to the establishment of the field of sociology.[55]

Many criticized churches that neglected to fulfill material needs, even of their members, suggesting that it showed the weakness of the church itself and thus negated any argument that God would provide, when clearly He was not.[56] This caused the public to shift their focus on dependence in the church, thus in Christ, to the federal government and encouraged the claims from the most radical Fundamentalist during President Roosevelt's terms, such as him being united with the Anti-Christ. Whether it was the debate on the inerrancy of Scripture in relation to evolution in the Scopes Trial of 1925 or the New Deal programs, Christianity started shifting from the national majority to the butt of criticism as they tried to find their place in society in a changing world. [57]

[55] Zurlo, "The Social Gospel," 7.

[56] Greene, *No Depression in Heaven,* 147

[57] These scholars all make this claim in varying degrees: Handy, "The American Religious Depression, 1925-1935," 3-16.; Billington and Clark, "Clergy Reaction to the New Deal," 509-24.; and Greene, *No Depression in Heaven,* 12-30.

## Chapter 2

### The Gospel Solution: Southern Baptist Convention

> There is much truth in the assertion that the South can save or destroy evangelical religion in the next hundred years. As it approaches the modern problems of social readjustment in the light of the worth of the human personality—the basis of all true liberalism, as it brings to industry new attitudes and practices of equity and compassion, as it seeks to salvage human values from the imminent collapse of our present political alignment and injects into international relationships more of the sanity and unselfishness of the founder of Christianity, it may bring a new type of revival into American life.
>
> - Edwin McNeill Poteat, "Religion in the South."[58]

The Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) dominance in the south can be traced back to its genesis in the mid-19th century. After its inception in 1845, sparked by a declaration by the Triennial Convention that no slaveholding person was permitted to be a missionary, the SBC resided within the southern states, better known in 1861 as the Confederate States of America.[59] These southern states were predominantly agriculturally based, with their economy and lifestyle centered on their trade. Expansion westward added more established territories for the United States; yet more land meant more fields, which required the need for labor. Reconstruction forced the south to abolish slaveholding, which created the new, yet similar, working groups of tenant farmers and sharecroppers. As time marched on, America went through a phase of Reconstruction into the Industrial Revolution and the southern landscape began to modernize. Throughout this time, the SBC's mission was to spread the Gospel to change lives, which would thus change the United States and ultimately the world.

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[58] Edwin McNeill Poteat, "Religion in the South," in *Culture in the* South. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934): 269.

[59] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Richmond: H. K. Ellyson, 1845): 17-18.

At times, evangelism took on the different forms of scheduled revivals or biblically centered literature; but at the heart of Southern Baptist evangelism was individual salvation in the form of teaching. While the world around them began to change and modernize, as well as points of contention inside and outside the church on the sovereignty of Scripture and the role of social relief in the church, Southern Baptists needed to learn to adapt to their changing landscape to serve their community. Once the Depression hit its lowest point in 1931, funding for evangelism began to dwindle and the SBC hit a crucial crossroad between the social applications of Christianity on how to love one's neighbor in teaching, as well as service.

Though American cities began to increase, SBC states still found fifty-nine percent of their population living in rural settings by 1930. Texas was the norm for the SBC concerning population, as well as the densest population of Southern Baptists, and eighty-seven percent of their rural population was located outside incorporated places called "small hamlets and open country."[60] Due to southern society being based predominantly on agriculture, Southern Baptist churches had to follow the flow of the fields. This proved to be a double-edged sword as they were more in tune with their unique setting within their community, but oftentimes caused the churches to lack a consistent organizational structure. Gatherings tended to be irregular and long, where their "[w]idely scattered parishioners used meetings to catch up on news, speculate on cotton or tobacco prices, spread local gossip, and find appropriate mates."[61] Many rural churches were "homeless" in the late 1800's well into 1914, where it was addressed throughout the

[60] U. S. Department of Commerce. *Population: Number and Distribution of Inhabitants.* Vol. 1. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931): 15-7. E. P. Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook 1932* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1932): 23.

[61] Paul Harvey, *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Radical Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997): 80. Also specific reference is made to women using the church for community by: Wayne Flynt. "Religion for the Blues: Evangelicalism, Poor Whites, and the Great Depression." *The Journal of Southern History* 71, no. 1 (2005): 10.

Convention to increase their building funds.[62] The thought was that the church should be a place of stability and reflection of the Kingdom on Earth, and the perception of homeless churches and inconsistent gatherings hindered this ministry.

Their composition dictated the church's place in their town as they served the people as a social gathering place as well as a place to worship. In the churches themselves, one in five did not have an official pastor; of those that did have one, only one in three of these ministers lived in the town that they served.[63] This caused the church to lack a professionalism that hindered their place in society. Pastor training was more focused on the pastor's being "called" or having an encounter, and training came second, if at all.[64] Many pastors and missionaries were either untrained or poorly trained for the task. In 1922, forty-eight percent of Southern Baptist ministers did not have college or seminary training. In the SBC dominant Texas, pastors tended to have more education than the average SBC minister; however, only twenty-seven percent had both college and seminary training.[65]

Due to these factors, pastors found themselves needing to convince their congregation that they were professionals before they could spur the church to work as an organism to affect the community. Pastors with training often had trouble earning a living, as the average salary in 1922 was $1,124 for all pastors in rural and urban settings, roughly earning $96.66 a month.[66]

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[62] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville: Marshall & Bruce Co., 1914): 303. Also in: Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 86-7.

[63] E. P. Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook, 1922* (Nashville: The Baptist Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1922): 317.

[64] Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 141-2.

[65] E. P. Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook, 1923* (Nashville: The Baptist Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1923): 70.

[66] Ibid., 72 and 75.

Comparably, full-time Southern Baptist pastors were paid between the threshold of skilled and unskilled labor, making roughly $13 more than unskilled laborers and between $37 to $94 less than skilled labor in an average month.[67] The money paid to the ministers was generated from their members, and by 1929 the southwest had been struggling for over 15 years. In the scope of Texas, eighty-six percent of their churches were classified as rural in 1923, which caused many ministers to only serve a single church for one-fourth of their time.[68] This caused the pastor to be more of a visiting pastor to many churches to make a living or would find themselves in the fields or factories as well. With most of their parishioners being unskilled or farm laborers, and one-third of farmer members were landless tenants, these ministers would only earn about $12 a month.[69] On the other hand, urban ministers in Texas did much better for themselves, earning double the average for a full-time Southern Baptist minister of approximately $190 a month.[70] Therefore, with the majority finding themselves in small congregations of poor farmers, it was almost impossible to raise money over their skeleton budgets.

Southern Baptists were unique in their overall construction, fulfilling the stereotype that rural Americans were uneasy of urban growth.[71] Not only was liberalism rampant in urban

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[67] U. S. Department of Commerce, Historical Statistics of the United States 1789-1945 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1949): 67. Using the rates given, multiplied the average hourly rate by the average hours a week to give a weekly rate, then the amount was multiplied by 52 for the number of weeks in a year and then divided by 12 to give a rough idea for the monthly amount. Weekly amounts: farm labor weekly $9.79 and $42.42 monthly, industry weekly $30.70 and $133.03 monthly, manufacturing weekly $29.38 and monthly $127.31, unskilled labor weekly $19.38 and $83.98 monthly.

[68] Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook 1923*,17 and 67.

[69] Ibid., 51.

[70] Ibid., 72. In rural settings, full-time pastors were paid $1,247.28, half time $454.43, and a fourth of the time $145.44.

[71] John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists.* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987): 61. Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 202.

centers, but Southern Baptists began to see the foundation of Christian America crumbling as immigration and migration began to surge in 1880. Most immigrants came into the United States through Ellis Island off the shores of New York state; once they entered the country, many remained in the North as communities were formed around the same nationality and religion. A smaller group of immigrants did find their way into the southern states, with the majority in SBC territories being Mexican. In 1910, half of Texas' foreign-born population was made up of immigrants from Mexico, with the second largest from Germany and then Austria.[72] When looking at the urban landscape, most of the people living in Dallas were natives. Dallas was established as a major city in 1910, but only 5.5% of their population was foreign; By 1940, that number dropped to only 2.5%.[73]

Initially, foreigners were viewed as the mission field being brought to America and addressed as a group without distinguishing nationalities. They approached this task cautiously and maintained some preconceived perceptions on certain nationalities; but overall, they welcomed the opportunity to share the Gospel to these newcomers. By the 1889 Convention, the Home Mission Board began to express their political positions on restricting immigration, stating that immigrants brought "ideas of socialism and anarchism that threaten alike the safety of our social and national life."[74] As time went by, this political stance then shifted when the SBC realized that immigrants are predominantly Catholic and claimed they were trying to

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[72] U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1916, Fifty-Eighth Number*, by E. E. Pratt. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1916): 58-62.

[73] Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 2000* (Washington: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006): 76-7.

[74] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Atlanta: Franklin Publishing House, 1889): 28.

"Romanize" America, to which the Home Mission Board used this base to convert Catholics to the Southern Baptist faith.[75] When populations in metropolises began to increase in size deep within SBC territory, fear of liberalism in all its forms caused the Southern Baptists to assess their form of evangelism to this newer group of individuals.

All this occurred as the Social Gospel began to make its way into the South through Northern Protestant intellectuals, having liberal tendencies in political stances as well as in application of church resources. This movement found its strength in the more urbanized North, and in some respects industrialization caused an increase in urban centers served as a catalyst to the emphasis on social Christianity by evangelicals of the day. The church then tried to find its place in society, and when they chose stances in the 1890's for societal reforms, it was based around their hope that it would bring about the Kingdom on earth.[76] Again, the SBC approached these reforms with caution due to their assessment of the Social Gospel.

One such point of contention was with Social Gospel leaders like Walter Rauschenbusch because he exhibited socialistic tendencies, which made many within the SBC wary. This caused the SBC to remain neutral on many social reforms and decided not to participate in these newer forms of ecumenism. A prime expression of this was in 1908 when the Federal Council of Churches was formed as an effort to provide services by overlooking different theology of the denominations represented. The SBC did not join because they could not overcome the overemphasis of Social Gospel ideology, as well as they cherished their denominational independence. Instead, they created the Social Service Committee in 1913 to address the

[75] SBC, *Annual 1914*, 308-9. Also referenced by Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 72-3.

[76] Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 91.

Southern Baptist response to the needs around them.[77] To this end, Rauschenbusch chastised churches in 1914 that "[t]o become fully Christian and to do their duty by society the churches must get together. The disunion of the Church wastes the funds entrusted to it, wastes the abilities of its servants, and wastes the power of religious enthusiasm or turns it into antisocial directions."[78]

Attempting to clarify their position on Christian unity during the 1914 Convention, the Social Service Committee outlined the fundamental principles of Baptist doctrine that was non-negotiable, with the most pointed position on baptism. At the end of their declaration, the Committee stated that "[w]e join hands with Christians of all names in seeking these common ends. We ask no one to compromise his convictions in joining us in such movements, and we ask only that our own be respected."[79] By their statement, they declare that they will not work with denominations that have different doctrines than their own, and evangelism would be their response to the world around them. Southern Baptists were very conservative in theology and practice, which caused them to place high emphasis on individual salvation as the cure for societal problems, which in some cases caused the Commission to appear apathetic to the needs at hand.[80] As historian John Eighmy asserted:

> "At best, the existence of the commission testified to a neglected area in convention affairs but did little to correct this failing. It lacked vision and insight as a social critic; it lacked resources and leadership as a social-action agency.

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[77] Further information found in: Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*: 71, 111, and 127. Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 209.

[78] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianize the Social Order* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913): 463.

[79] SBC, *Annual 1914*, 77.

[80] H. Paul Douglass and Edmund deS. Brunner. *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935): 186. Idea is used in: Keith Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920.* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996): 16; Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 74.

> Caught between two ideological currents – personal evangelism and social Christianity – the commission held completely to neither. Conscious of its precarious position among evangelical's intolerant of any threat to personal religion, the agency always seemed to err on the side of overcaution."[81]

Fortunately, there were prominent members of the Social Service Committee, as well as throughout the SBC in the Home Mission Board and the Woman's Missionary Union, that were not afraid to apply social Christianity. The key for Southern Baptists in implementing social Christianity was that it maintained the evangelistic goal of winning souls to Christ in individual salvation by providing a moral society. In this frame of mind, they not only set out to save the person, but also save the institutions.[82] John White, a Georgia pastor as well as a prominent member of the Social Service Committee and spokesman for social Christianity, suggested that correcting immoral behavior was essential to addressing societal problems in that "[p]eople do not improve by adding to their virtues. They improve by making an end of their vices."[83] While teaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Charles S. Gardner wrote the first full length text on addressing Southern Baptist's connection to social problems by framing his argument on the role of the Kingdom as expressed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.[84]

> "If all the interests, purposes, and ideals of a man are inspired by the will of God, then all the actions of the man which have any moral significance will be expressions of that will; and all actions which grow out of or affect relations of men one to another have moral significance. The Kingdom of God, therefore, becomes external—objectifies itself, so to speak—in all our social relations, and

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[81] Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 107.

[82] Harvey, *Redeeming the South*, 198. Keith Harper, *The Quality of Mercy: Southern Baptists and Social Christianity, 1890-1920.* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996): 16.

[83] John E. White, "The Significance of the Southern Sociological Congress," in *The South Mobilizing for Social Service: Addresses Delivered at the Southern Sociological Congress*. Edited by James E. McCulloch (Nashville: Southern Sociological Congress, 1913): 17.

[84] Matthew 6:10, NIV. Charles S. Gardner, *Ethics of Jesus and Social Progress.* New York: George H. Boran Company, Hodder & Stoughton, 1914): 63.

> is of necessity embodied in a social order exactly as far and as fast as it is realized internally in individual men."[85]

In a revolutionary, yet familiar charge by Jesus, Gardner encouraged social Christianity as an expression of how to love one's neighbor, which would then reform society because all would be viewing their work through the will of God.[86]

The Texas Convention also sought to define the Church's role in Social Service in their respective body that the only way to meet the needs of the people is by providing the Gospel.

> "Avoiding the fatal error of attempting to make a better world by mere legalism and scientific appliances—of reform without the power of the cross everywhere to and in law and science, to repeat the victories of the first centuries, our churches must cease so much emasculated gospel preaching, must return to the apostolic whole gospel…"[87]

Their charge focused on the truths found in the Gospel and cautioned against connecting it to a specific cause. This allowed the Texas Committee to formulate a response to societal reforms, but also to the debates surrounding the inerrancy of Scripture discussed in some Christian circles. Five years later, the Texas Convention declared that it rejected the Social Gospel, harkening back to the idea that preaching the Gospel will lead directly to individual salvation, and thus solve all the world's problems.

> "Social service, as popularly understood, differs from, and is secondary to, the work of the church. Social service deals with 'morale;' the church deals with more than that. Social service is temporal and material; the work of the church is eternal and spiritual. Social service seeks to improve the housing problem in the slums; the church points to mansions in the skies. Social Service deals in soap as the means of cleanliness; the church contends for cleansing through the blood of Christ. Your Committee recommends that our Baptist people engage in some clear and discriminating thinking along these lines, that they may not be lured by

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[85] Gardner, *Ethics of Jesus*, 64-5.

[86] Ibid., 84-5. Gary Dorrien, "Society as the Subject of Redemption: Washington Gladden, Walter Rauschenbusch, and the Social Gospel." In *Economy, Difference, Empire: Social Ethics for Social Justice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010): 6. Biblical references: Matthew 22: 37-40 and 25: 34-40.

[87] Texas Baptist Annual, *Annual of the General Baptist Convention of Texas* (Austin, 1915): 27.

> the insidious arguments of sentiment, but may rather hold to that which is fundamental… Not that we should cease doing social work, but that we should place it secondary to the spiritual ministry which we are also to render."[88]

The needs in society that they define are centrally based around urbanization, which overlooked other social reform being addressed during this time. With their focus on evangelism, fundamentalist ideologies began to sway the SBC away from fully embracing social Christianity as a group. By the 1925 Convention, the SBC reminded those in social service that "[a]ll means and methods used… for the amelioration of society and the establishment of righteousness among men must finally depend on the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus."[89] Groups that did not stand by the fundamentals of the faith were seen as slowly undermining the foundations of Christianity, and by 1926 the Convention declared that "[n]othing but the mighty power of the Gospel of Christ will save us from this deluge of worldly diversion and material prosperity."[90] Diagnosing the ills in society based on a heart issue that can only be fixed by the Gospel allowed the SBC to offer something that they could freely give. Yet, the stipulation was that it had to be given in its truest form for its saving power. This caused a laser focus on the eternal message and less on present-day reforms.

Beyond ministry in the form of evangelism, the SBC sponsored hospitals as well as orphanages to provide for their fellow man in tangible ways. In taking care of the "least of

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[88] Texas Baptist Annual, *Annual of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.* (El Paso, 1920): 80. Description of other states in agreement with Texas discussed in: Carol Holcomb, *Home Without Walls: Southern Baptist Women and Social Reform in the Progressive Era* (University of Alabama Press, 2020): 112.

[89] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Memphis: Marshall & Bruce Co., 1925): 74.

[90] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Houston: Marshall & Bruce Co., 1926): 267. Further addressed in: Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 125-7.

these," their desire to provide orphanages was so strong that each SBC state had a Baptist orphanage. In Texas, the Texas Baptist Convention maintained one orphanage in Dallas called Buckner Orphan Home. It was started by a Tennessee Baptist preacher named Robert Cooke Buckner, who used a rented house in 1879 to serve three children. They slowly expanded as Buckner was able to increase fundraising to move to a more permanent site of forty-four acres and a log cabin. By the 1900's, Buckner Children's Home was serving a little less than 500 children. A few years before he passed in 1919, Reverend Buckner asked the Texas Convention to take the project over to secure its operation. The Texas Baptist Convention accepted this motion by First Baptist of Dallas pastor George Washington Truett leading the charge.[91] When Reverend Buckner died in 1919, his sons took over managing the Home and spent twenty years updating the campus to include schools.[92]

Providing this ministry allowed the Texas Baptists to make a difference in the next generation by not only providing for the children's needs but presenting the Gospel in word and action. Buckner's Home had the highest property value in 1925 and no debt, serving its capacity of 688 children by spending about $306 on each child. They offered a school with eleven grades, as well as over six types of vocational training, all while providing weekly religious services.[93] In 1925, Texas recorded 35,760 baptisms, with Dallas' forty-four churches claiming a little over

[91] Texas Baptist Annual, *Annual of the Baptist General Convention of Texas* (Abilene, 1914): 124-5.

[92] Betty Ensminger Patterson, "Buckner Baptist Children's Home," in *Handbook of Texas Online.* Texas State Historical Association, 2021. Accessed July 18, 2021. https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/buckner-baptist-childrens-home.

[93] E. P. Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook 1925* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1925): 289-92.

a thousand of those baptisms.[94] From 1922 to 1924, Buckner's Home had a total of 253 baptisms, which helped solidify their Kingdom work while being able to provide relief.[95]

From 1925 to 1928, ministry groups within the SBC experienced dramatic change. Their evangelism focus caused them to be counter cultural as they seemed to divert from all the movements within Protestant churches. Luckily, there was one issue that united the majority of Christian America: Prohibition. Though the SBC continued to go into debt and groups were forced to cut back on ministry, the Convention maintained their fixation and charge of ridding the United States of immoral vices. Their battleground to address this sweeping immorality was Prohibition because they were able to link it to the downfall of American society, such as adultery, promiscuity, and physical abuse. In some respects, Prohibition allowed the SBC to practice elements of social Christianity, as well as ecumenism.[96]

For instance, one of the more prominent groups within the Home Mission Board was the Woman's Missionary Union. This group was initially created in connection to the Women's Temperance Union and founded on the vision of individual salvation, not societal salvation.[97] Most Christian bodies were for the prohibition of alcohol, and this became a major issue addressed by government officials during the election cycles. Before the Presidential Election of 1928, the Southern Baptist Convention made a unanimous standing against any "wet"

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[94] Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook 1925*, 154 and 162.; Texas Baptist Annual, *Annual of Texas 1925*, 214.

[95] Ibid., 162.

[96] Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 74 and 80.

[97] Holcomb, *Home Without Walls*, 106 and 117.

candidates, without explicitly mentioning names.[98] By the 1932 convention, yet another election year, the Social Service Commission declared that the causes for the Depression could be found in the destruction caused by World War I, hysteria of inflation, and the Providence of God. Within this, they connect the decline of society with the influence of Prohibition, and the repeal of it. They suggested that "[t]he claim that prohibition has brought about or contributed to the present depression is of a piece with all the false and malicious propaganda of liquor interests here and abroad who would gladly barter the welfare of humanity, both material and moral, to satisfy human appetite and human greed."[99]

During all of this, James Myer from the Commission on the Church and Social Service in the Federal Council of Churches begged the question:

> "Is it not the inescapable duty of religion, by persuasion for the most part, by the pressure of public opinion, when necessary, to bring the leaders of industry to desire first the protection and development of human personality in and through the industrial process?... Shall not religion lend a hand in the creation of an effective desire for a better world?"[100]

The Convention, on the other hand, began to feel the weight of the Depression in 1930, but also the increasing debt lurking since the 1925 convention. By the Home Mission Board Report, they noted that over half of their budget was earmarked to pay toward their debt. They decided the best course of action was to make cuts and stop certain funding of mission work to settle their debts, saying that they "must not, we will not go further in debt; we cannot carry on without money."[101] By balancing their budget, the Board began to reevaluate where the largest needs

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[98] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Chattanooga: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1928): 87.

[99] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (St. Petersburg, 1932): 88.

[100] James Myer, *Religion Lends a Hand* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1929): 116-7.

[101] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (New Orleans, 1930): 256.

were throughout their jurisdiction and declared that "Southern Baptist must meet in their mission work the needs of a growing civilization. Nothing should be done simply because it has been done through all the years heretofore; it should be done because it is needed in the evangelization of the homeland."[102]

Even up to this present day, a unique aspect of the structure of the SBC is the composition of various boards within the singular convention, all serving the same purpose in different capacities. The autonomy of the boards allowed them to function without much fear of interference, but the Executive Board of the SBC would occasionally negotiate depending on the circumstance. In such a case, the 1930 Convention attempted to resolve the increasing debt of the Home and Foreign Mission Boards by asking the Sunday School Board to donate some of their money made from the sale of their literature. The motion was not carried but the Executive Board added at the end of the resolution to "recommend that the Convention instruct the Sunday School Board to consider the wisdom of aiding the Mission boards out of its annual income."[103] Through troubled times, it was clear that ministry was important enough to the board to try and redistribute the wealth in their organization.

While budgets crept lower and led to the SBC to cut certain aspects of their ministry in 1930, the groups within the Convention began to issue calls to action for relief efforts by reigniting the fire of missions in their members. J. B. Lawrence of the Home Mission Board used his report to redefine the purpose of the Home Missions. In addressing seven "frontiers," in his point on economics he suggested "[s]ome of the older states are being industrialized and these industrial communities are creating new mission problems and tasks; they create a new frontier

[102]SBC, *Annual 1930*, 259.

[103]Ibid., 92.

for Home Missions, with two features – the rural and urban – that mutually shape each other's destiny."[104] Within the SBC Handbook for the same year, E. P. Alldredge posited that the disconnect in giving to missions was that one-third of Southern Baptists do not subscribe to a Baptist newsletter in a section with a convincing title: "Southern Baptist Will Never Increase Their Gifts Until They Are Made to See and Feel the Heartbreaking Needs of Work."[105] Similar messages came from the Woman's Missionary Union, as Annabel Wall indicated that:

> "[t]he lost and needy cry out to us. Few churches have in their budgets funds to meet the need; the members for the most part would help if they had time, but their social and business obligations must be cared for first. We can be glad that in many of our churches there is a band of women who make it their business to see that the lost and unfortunate are cared for."[106]

In general, Texans did not experience the onset of the Depression until a few years after the catalyst in 1929. As Americans in the East saw their financial situations plunge at the end of 1929, many cities in Texas began to increase construction in the early months of 1930, where Dallas alone planned at least $20,000,000 worth of construction for that year.[107] By this time, forty percent of Texans lived in urban settings of smaller cities having between 2,500 to 5,000 residents. Thirty-three states had an average of three major cities, and the states with the largest amount where in industrial rich Massachusetts, Ohio, and New York. Texas was above average with five, of which Dallas as their largest city.[108]

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[104] J. B. Lawrence, "The Answer of Southern Baptists," in *Home and Foreign Fields*. Southern Baptist Convention, February 1930: 23.

[105] Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook 1930*, 109.

[106] Annabell Wall, "Strengthening Southern Baptist Life Through Personal Service," in *Home and Foreign Fields*, September 1930: 23.

[107] Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the City of Dallas. *The WPA Dallas Guide and History*. Edited by Maxine Holms and Gerald D. Saxon. (Dallas: University of North Texas Press, 1992): 95.

[108] U. S. Department of Commerce, *Population*, 15-17, 28-9.

Despite the Texan's year of plenty in 1930, thirty-six percent of Texas churches gave nothing to missions or did not report. Buckner's Orphan Home gave 50% or more of their total budget to missions, mainly due to their services rendered to their clients. In assessing their peers in giving the most, 16 of the 50 churches had no pastors yet gave at least half their budget to missions.[109] The darkest days in the Depression were in 1931 through 1932, as the ripple effect of the stock market crash and bank collapse set off made its way through the country. Losses in mission contributions to Home and Foreign Missions during 1931 displayed an overall decrease of almost thirteen percent, equaling just shy of four million dollars less than in 1930. The only states that increased their giving were New Mexico and Arizona; to Arizona's credit, they increased their gifts by forty-eight percent even though they were added to the SBC a year before.[110] By 1931 oil prices began to fall and ushered East Texas into the Depression, whereby at the end of the year Dallas felt the full effects of the Depression when unemployment reached 18,500.[111]

Continued cuts in the budget were made by the Home Mission Board in 1932, as they started removing notable programs from their budget such as their Mountain Schools. Though most of their report is very solemn, Lawrence made a definitive charge in the end:

> "Surely our progress has only momentarily been rolled back upon itself. There is such a thing as a strategic retreat. Thousands of times the Kingdom of Christ has seemed to fall back. When the blood of the Scotch covenanters gave a deeper die to the heathers of the highlands; when the Vandois of France chose extermination rather than make an unchristian surrender; when on St. Bartholomew's day mounted assassins rode through the streets of Paris crying, "Kill! Death to the Huguenots!" When Lady Jane Gray's head rolled from the executioner's block; when Calvin was imprisoned in the castle; when John Bunyan lay rotting in

[109] Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook 1930*, 81-2.

[110] SBC, *Annual 1929,* 308.

[111] Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the City of Dallas. *The WPA Dallas Guide and History*. Edited by Maxine Holms and Gerald D. Saxon. (Dallas: University of North Texas Press, 1992): 96

> Bedford jail, saying, "If God be with me, I will stay here until the moss grows out on my eyebrows rather than give up my faith"; these days of retreat were the days of its victory. The Plymouth fathers fell back from the other side of the sea to Plymouth Rock, but now a strong nation is marshalling a continent for the evangelization of the world. The cause of Christ falling back from Piedmont, falling back from St. Dennis, falling back from Wurtenburg Castle, falling back from the Brussels marketplace, yet all the time triumphing. So has it ever been, falling back yet ever advance. So shall it ever be."[112]

Financial constraints began to stifle their resources, as Texas gave over fifteen percent less to Home and Foreign Mission programs in 1932.[113] Fortunately, Buckner Home did not accrue any debt and was able to house 700 children throughout 1931 to 1932. They were able to achieve this by slightly decreasing the number of children housed at their facility while also reducing the amount spent on each child.[114] By the time the Texas Convention presented their report, the trustees reminded the Convention that they were a statewide program that is founded in Baptist principles, and eighty-five percent of their budget depended on voluntary giving.[115] The emphasis remained on the urgency to present the Gospel to fix the problems they were experiencing, therefore any monetary gifts were given to Kingdom purposes.

Outside of the church, initial reviews of the function of charity from churches were negatively portrayed. Fred S. Hall, a prolific writer of marriage books and editor for the Russell Sage Foundation on the topic of Social Work, edited an encyclopedia for the understanding of different outlets for the field. Hall lumped all Protestant bodies in the same category and only provided honorable mentions to a few specific denominations in the work. In relation to engaging and fulfilling social work endeavors, he suggested that Protestants tended to be more

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[112] SBC, *Annual 1932,* 272.

[113] Ibid., 375.

[114] Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook 1932,* 188-9.

[115] Texas Baptist Annual, *Annual of the Baptist General Convention of Texas* (Abilene, 1932): 78-81.

inclined to use the field for their own gain.[116] The biggest hindrance he presented was that the Protestant bodies had too many variations of a particular denomination.[117] Relationships between the churches and secular agencies were strained as facilities had to accommodate many discordant groups, and could not "tolerate the presence of chaplains from a wide variety of denominations, all competing for time and facilities."[118] They also found that it was more trouble than it was worth, as church volunteers were seen as trying to "steal" cases and had over-zealous ulterior motives.

To make matters worse, comparisons were then made between the SBC and other bodies in the training of their pastors as an indicator of the effectiveness of ministry. Hall also referenced the fact that Protestant ministers overall were not highly educated, with the most educated ministers found in Lutheran churches. Sixty-five percent of Southern Baptist ministers still had neither college nor seminary training as opposed to only thirty percent of Northern Baptist ministers who had no schooling. An even more striking comparison was found that seventy percent of Roman Catholic clergy had both college and seminary training.[119] Nevertheless, many SBC ministers put an emphasis on evangelism over charity because they felt that there was a greater lesson God was trying to teach in all of this. This helped some to trust that God was still in control in the midst of chaos; however, this line of thinking motivated preaching over serving because the thought was that the more people they saved, then the trials

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[116] Fred S. Hall, ed. *Social Work Year Book 1933* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1933): 371.

[117] Hall, *Social Work Yearbook*, 372.

[118] Douglass and Brunner, *Protestant Church as a Social Institution*, 195-6.

[119] Ibid., 105-7, 110, and 113.

they were facing would all end. This presented a disastrous combination when churches became overwhelmed with a need that was beyond their ability to meet.

A poignant example was shared by Reverend William J. Robinson in Mississippi of the Thomas family. Robinson set the stage by describing a beautiful setting and family, with slight reference to Mr. Thomas struggling in the fields to provide for his family. After some time, Thomas caught tuberculosis and was sent to a sanitorium. This caused his wife to get a job to pay the bills, but their house was foreclosed on despite her efforts. Before continuing the story, Robinson mentioned that at this point no one at the church reached out to them. Adding to the despair, Mrs. Thomas received a telegram from the sanitorium that her husband passed away. When word spread through the neighborhood, her pastor came to pray with her once, but no deacon called. This was juxtaposed to her employer's sympathy, in that when Mrs. Thomas forgot to go to work and her job found out what happened, they sent her a check and gave her two weeks' vacation to grieve.

> "Those who claimed her friendship when she was happy and prosperous seemed to have forgotten her. She longed, she hungered, she prayed for the sound of a truly sympathetic voice and the grasp of a friendly hand, but all in vain. She grieved, she agonized, she fought despair all alone surrounded by Christian homes. But she battled on."[120]

When she had to move and then reached out to the pastor, a small amount was "reluctantly" given to her. She struggled on into the winter, but all the trials became too much when she came home one day to her kids hungry and shivering because the owner of her apartment, who was a deacon at their church, left a note for her to "pay or move." That night she felt overwhelmed to the point of mania, and after she tucked her kids in bed and waited for them to fall sleep, she drank poison. In the morning, the oldest daughter told the neighbor that she was having trouble

[120] William James Robinson, "Murdered by Society," *(Mississippi) Baptist Record*, May 19, 1932: 6.

waking up her mother, and when the deacon and pastor were notified, the church finally stepped up and took the Thomas children to an orphanage.

Initially the church appeared heartless, to which Reverend Robinson may have used to his advantage to spur the SBC into action to join in relief efforts. However, many SBC churches did not have a dime to spare beyond maintaining a skeleton church in some cases. The main solution that the SBC offered was the saving grace and unfailing peace found in Jesus without physical action, and many of their downtrodden members realized that their church was not financially equipped to fulfill their immediate needs. For their sake, and that of their family, they had to find tangible relief outside of the church doors. The SBC exhibited elements of service in what they were able to provide monetarily, as seen in Buckner Orphanage and caring for the least of these. However, what can be learned from a story like that of the Thomas family is that the SBC may have been too focused on telling people about Jesus and less on being His hands and feet. Both the Thomas family and the church members within the story were so clouded by the ever-increasing weight of their own need around them that they could not see how they could serve their neighbors in small and simple ways. When ministers were running from town to town to earn a living, it caused them to be removed from the relational aspect of the Gospel; without a shepherd to show the way, the sheep were left to fend for themselves. People within their midst may have been beyond their breaking point; and though God is the sustainer of life and that He promises to not give His people more than they can bear, He makes it very clear that they are not meant to carry the burden alone.

# Chapter 3

## A Coordinated Effort: Catholic Charity

> The charities of the Catholic Church are an expression of her understanding of the spiritual relations of men to one another an interpretation of those relations in the terms of human service… These relations are those of brotherhood. The mental and emotional attitude that develops that brotherhood is love. The expression of that love is completed in service. The motive of that service rests in the will of God. The full realization of relationship, attitude, expression and motive is found in Jesus Christ.
>
> - Monsignor Paul Hanly Furfey, "Personalistic Social Action in the "Rerum Novarum" and "Quadragesimo Anno".”[121]

Throughout much of American history, Roman Catholics have been met with a certain sense of hesitancy by Protestants. Often, these Catholic individuals felt the need to prove that they were loyal to America as well as loyal Catholics throughout United States history. At times, Catholics used wars to display their devotion to their country as well, as Catholics fought on both sides of the Civil War and were active in the Spanish American War.[122] However, they were a strong minority with their strength found in the Northern urban landscape. By the time the Civil War began in 1861, the RCC was the “largest single religious denomination in the country, though it was still outnumbered if all the distinct Protestant churches were counted together.”[123] Catholics also worked through the ranks into government offices and were avid participants in labor unions. Catholics celebrated these moments where society began seeing them as American

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[121] Paul Hanly Furfey, "Personalistic Social Action in the "Rerum Novarum" and "Quadragesimo Anno"." *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 2, no. 4 (1941): 6. Also addressed and referenced by: Jack Hansan, “Catholic Charities USA.” VCU Libraries: Social Welfare History Project, June 9, 2020.

[122] James M. O’Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," in *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2008): 142.

[123] Ibid., 100.

Christians who worship differently, from the campaign of Al Smith for president to the successful inauguration of John F. Kennedy to the White House.

Throughout these moments in history, Roman Catholics were grounded by their parish that catered to their specific needs, both physically and spiritually. At times, the church served as a meeting place for new immigrants for consistency of home and oftentimes used this knowledge to help each other in times of crisis. This became remarkably true when Catholics were struggling economically and became even more apparent in 1929. The RCC sought to affect change in their communities, both with regards to salvation of individuals but also to use the Gospel in tangible ways to reform society.

Before the Great Depression, America experienced a massive wave of immigration that caused the RCC to drastically increase in size, particularly in Northern cities. Many immigrants entering the United States came from areas that were rich in Catholic traditions, particularly Southeastern and Central Europe.[124] Life in America was not easy for immigrants, and Roman Catholics found it increasingly difficult as animosity that existed in their home country at times followed them. By 1910, "one half of the approximately 15 million Catholics in the United States lived in poverty."[125] When these newcomers entered the United States, they rarely spoke English and had traditions that were distinctive to their native land. Parishes were either created based around their physical jurisdiction or their ethnicity and could have been a combination of both.[126] Though Mass universally was delivered in Latin, a particular incentive for the churches

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[124] Aaron I. Abell, "Origins of Catholic Social Reform in the United States: Ideological Aspects." *The Review of Politics* 11, no. 3 (1949): 249.

[125] Jack Hansan, "Catholic Charities USA." VCU Libraries: Social Welfare History Project, June 9, 2020. Accessed July 29, 2021. https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/religious/catholic-charities-usa/

[126] O'Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," 102; Charles Edmund Degeneffe, "What Is Catholic about Catholic Charities?" *Social Work* 48, no. 3 (2003): 377.

were if their congregation spoke in a native language conversationally, which tended to bind the community together as they also practiced native cultures. Most native-born Protestants were strongly opposed to immigrant Catholics, with their hesitation revolving around the biblical teachings within Catholicism as well as radical European ideas. On the opposing side, immigrant Catholics regarded all Protestants as reminders of religious persecution in their homelands.[127] These views tended to create animosity among the two groups that caused Roman Catholics to fall deeper into poverty as they experience discrimination inside and outside their workplace.

Among the immigrants coming from predominantly Catholic countries abroad, the Irish were at times the most numerous and tended to be more devout. Professor at Boston College and Catholic historian, James O'Toole linked this phenomenon back to the potato famine both to explain the increase as well as the faith of the Irish. The famine caused the church in Ireland to put a stronger emphasis on training their flock to be sincere Catholics in the face of disaster. Along these same lines, Germans were also more likely to hold to their Catholic heritage due to having lived through suppression by Otto von Bismarck.[128] Additionally, these groups were not only connected by country but by the world-wide network of the church. The infrastructure in place allowed the Catholics to live up to their namesake of being the universal church.

To truly understand the intricate network of charitable opportunities the Catholic Church in America offered, it is essential to start with their organizational structure. The RCC was set up with a hierarchy that allowed them to function as an organization spread throughout the world around a unifying message. The foundation of the church was built around the laity, which was

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[127] Animosity between Catholics and Protestant groups over the course of American history discussed periodically in John O'Grady, *Catholic Charities in the United States, History and Problems.* Ransdell, 1930, New York: Arno Press, 1971; Degeneffe, "What Is Catholic about Catholic Charities," 663-72.

[128] O'Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," 99.

known as the common church member but applied to a broad range of people. This group encompassed anyone who taught or served within the church that was not ordained. There are a few roles that serve between the laity and the priests, with the most notable being Deacons and those who are consecrated religious such as Nuns or Monks. Deacons either served as their final transitional phase to becoming an ordained priest or became a permanent Deacon because they do not want to pursue further ordination. Nuns and Monks were those who made a sacred vow to be consecrated to God, therefore dedicating their life to the church by fulfilling this specific vow.

Additionally, the clergy within RCC was highly educated, ranking seventh among the top denominations with close to seventy percent of the clergy having college and seminary training and only ten percent with neither.[129] This can be directly related to their process involved in their hierarchy. To become a priest, one must be ordained; to receive holy orders, one must complete training and education. This system of ordination forced many of the Catholic clergy to pursue higher education because it was a requirement to serve. The role of the priest is to serve a specific community parish by fulfilling various duties. Bishops acted as the head of the diocese, which is a district made up of multiple parishes. For larger districts, such as cities or metropolises, an Archbishop oversaw the archdiocese. Both the Bishop and Archbishop fulfill the same tasks as governing over their collection of parishes, while also acting as a bridge from the priests to the Vatican and encouraged unity throughout the Church. Beyond the Bishops are the Cardinals, who serve directly with the Pope and their main job is to participate in electing a

[129] H. Paul Douglass and Edmund deS. Brunner. *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935): 113.

new Pope in the Papal Conclave. The last and final element in the hierarchy is the Pope, who is put in office by God through the Cardinals.[130]

This system within the Catholic Church created a connective link from a small parish to the Vatican, which allowed all Roman Catholic churches to institute universal teaching and practices. This provided a familiar experience for immigrants who were leaving their homes to travel to a foreign country. When they came to America, many found a place of worship that was connected to their church from home by the same infrastructure and the same overarching leader: the Pope. Beyond the similarities in faith, the Pope then became a unifying factor. His status of being ordained by God through the election of the Cardinals made his guidance, and at times his well-being, of vital importance to the success of the Church. At times the Church showed their devotion to the hierarchy of the RCC and the status of the Pope by putting his needs above their own. A prime example of this was seen in 1848 when Pope Pius IX was forced out of Rome and had to take refuge in Naples, to which the Church rallied to his cause both in protest and with their pocketbooks.[131] This connection to the leader caused his guidance and teaching to be implemented throughout the RCC, which provided consistency within their organization.

The Catholic Church's approach to charity was strongly influenced by the papal leaders who set the standard before and during the Depression. One of the first declarations before the turn of the century by the Papacy was through Pope Leo XIII. Leo XIII led the Catholic church from 1878 to 1903 and was known for his stances on the Church being open to the scientific process, such as Darwin's theory that was gaining acceptance in the early years of his papacy.

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[130] Melissa Keating, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Illustrated by Filippo Ploccone. Newadvent.org https://diocesanpriest.com/the-catholic-hierarchy-explained-in-one-beautiful-infographic/

[131] O'Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," 130-2.

Additionally, he presented stances supporting the working man's ability to be treated fairly and set the standard for the role of charity within the church. Within his encyclical on labor in 1891, he encouraged Catholics to pursue charitable endeavors.

> "The happy results we all long for must be chiefly brought about by the plenteous outpouring of charity; of that true Christian charity which is the fulfilling of the whole Gospel law, which is always ready to sacrifice itself for others' sake, and is man's surest antidote against worldly pride and immoderate love of self…"[132]

Overall, Leo XIII was calling for reformation of worker rights to elicit change in the labor system. From this vantage point, he advocated the principles found throughout the early church of treating your neighbors with dignity and respect; thus, offering charity to those in need out of brotherly love.

Guiding the RCC through the depths of the Depression was another pope that was influential for social Christianity. Pope Pius XI served the Catholic Church from 1922 to 1939, guiding the Church throughout the Great Depression and the early years of World War II. Pius XI stated throughout his encyclical on reconstructing the social order that sin is the root cause of the problems facing society and must be dealt with to make a difference. In comparison to the SBC, Pius XI reminded the RCC that the essential message of the Gospel is that all have fallen short of the glory of God, and all are welcome to receive this message. By connecting this complex issue of redemption to reforming society, the clergy within the local church conveyed the message presented by the Pontiff. One prominent speaker was found in Catholic sociologist Monsignor Paul Hanly Furfey, who powerfully reiterated that:

> "The Sacrifice of Calvary was the supreme expression of God's mysterious and infinite love for man. On the summit of Calvary charity reached its acme. But the Sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice as that which took place on the first Good Friday. Thus, Calvary is mysteriously multiplied, is made present to us day

[132] Catholic Church. Pope (1878-1903: Leo XIII). *Rerum Novarum = Encyclical Letter on Capital and Labor.* May 15, 1891 (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1940): 20.

> by day, and will be repeated in a strange and beneficent series unto the end of time."[133]

He went on to indicate that systems are corrupt because people are corrupt, and therefore to reform the system the individual must be reformed. Initially, this stance appeared like the SBC's focus on the Gospel to reform society, which was at the heart of the Catholic message. However, Pius XI and the clergy within the church approached this reformation from a purely moral standpoint. In reiterating the Pope's message, Furfey charges "[i]f individuals are immoral, their institutions will be immoral also. Good men are the basis of good institutions."[134]

Additionally, other Catholic fathers found the invention of the radio an available tool to not only connect with their local members but Americans as a whole. One that has become infamous for his later messages during World War II was Father Charles E. Coughlin, who took to the radio in 1926 to explain Catholic teaching after the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in front of the church he was assigned.[135] Coughlin received much of his pastoral training under the Basilian Order, which incorporated elements of social Christianity and economic justice that influenced Coughlin later in his radio ministry. During the time of the Depression, Coughlin could be heard throughout many Catholic dominated cities on a Sunday afternoon. He was initially popular due to his delivery, like the future president Franklin D. Roosevelt's use of the radio in his fireside chats. However, by the 1930 his messages became much more politically motivated, and the largest shift will come when Coughlin publicly denounces FDR shortly after the New Deal Programs are put into place in 1932.

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[133] Furfey, "Personalistic Social Action," 215. Furfey expresses this in relation to: Catholic Church. Pope (1922-1939: Pius XI). *Quadragesimo Anno = Encyclical Letter on Reconstructing the Social Order.* May 15, 1931 (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1942): 21.

[134] Furfey, "Personalistic Social Action," 204.

[135] Peter A. Soderbergh, "The Rise of Father Coughlin, 1891-1930." *Social Science* 42, no. 1 (1967): 16.

The guidance given by Pope Leo XIII and Pius XI encouraged the Catholic Churches to be theologically grounded in their role on giving and providing charity to their fellow Catholics, as well as non-Catholics. Leo XIII made it clear throughout his papacy that it is the Church's responsibility to love God and their neighbor regardless of their religious affiliation.[136] In applying this teaching, Catholic infrastructure was hard to miss in immigrant rich settings with the sheer number of churches, schools, orphanages, and hospitals. Due to their immigrant nature during this era, "some social problems hit them hardest and first" and it caused Roman Catholics to address these needs in a more tangible way.[137] Notre Dame historian Aaron I. Abell made the connection that all Catholic Charity efforts helped pull the Catholics out of the minority and ostracized category into the realm of being seen as a viable American citizen.[138] As the Social Gospel Movement worked its way through the urbanized North through the Federal Council of Churches, the RCC had to determine their position within this movement. Like the SBC, the RCC did not join the Federal Council of Churches but instead had a separate organization that encouraged the notion of social Christianity. Catholic Action was an expression of the Social Gospel within Protestant circles, centered around providing needs to their struggling communities.[139] This organization was founded on the idea that their organization could not thrive in isolation.

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[136] Furfey, "Personalistic Social Action," 207. Furfey references: Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 22.

[137] O'Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," 159. Also addressed on page 102 and in: Degeneffe, "What Is Catholic about Catholic Charities," 377. The immigrant church was also more involved in their communities, as mentioned by: Mark Noll, "The World in the Churches, the Churches in the World, 1918-1960," in *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*. 2 edition. (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 2019): 377.

[138] Abell, "Origins of Catholic Social Reform," 309.

[139] O'Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," 147.

Nevertheless, Roman Catholics were comparable to the SBC in their stand for the prohibition of alcohol, as they focused on morality rather than legislation. Overall, the Catholic Temperance Movement became predominantly an Irish issue, but also a male issue. Immigrants found that they were struggling to be accepted, and the Irish were increasingly aware of their low status in society. The Irish were connected to being heavy drinkers, therefore their number wanted to distance themselves from this Irish stereotype. Additionally, Father Mathew in Ireland was the founder of the Catholic Total Abstinence Movement. Many Irish immigrants made their way to America, they brought Father Matthew's teachings with them. Throughout the Catholic Church, women were much easier to mobilize for charitable efforts, as well as gather for enriching their faith. On the other hand, "[t]otal abstinence represented a self-help movement in which the individual, overwhelmingly male, could attain economic self-sufficiency and improve his family life by abstaining from alcohol."[140] Being predominantly a male issue, prohibition allowed the Church to create a fraternal society for Catholic men that did not exist before.

In contrast with the SBC, the Catholic Temperance Movement approached the task without adding denominational attachment. Early literature by the Catholic Prohibition League warned their audience about the evil of liquor and its connection to other crimes or offenses. There is very little mention of the Bible in terms of supporting being moral or immoral, but the group sought to "… provide the modus operandi between Catholic and non-Catholic individuals and organizations engaged in the propaganda of nation-wide prohibition without peril to the faith or morals of either side."[141] The moments where they approach their Catholic brethren, they do

[140] Dierdre M. Moloney, "Combatting "Whiskey's Work": The Catholic Temperance Movement in Late Nineteenth-Century America." *U.S. Catholic Historian* 16, no. 3 (1998): 5.

[141] Catholic Prohibition League of America. "Proceedings of the First Conference of Catholics Favoring Prohibition." (Niagara Falls, NY: Dime Bank Building, 1914): 5.

so by citing Pope Pius X's charge against alcohol, pointing back to the consistency of teaching throughout the Church. Additionally, they sought to encourage their fellow Catholics to do what is best for the country regardless of background.

> "We Catholics, as good and loyal citizens, should join forces with all other good and loyal citizens of this nation, no matter what their race or creed, may be, and eradicate in perpetuity the accursed blot on our civilization, and thus wash away the stain that has besmirched American manhood and Christian principles for more than a hundred years."[142]

Their approach toward social problems proved to be an indicator of how they would approach providing charity. The Catholic ethic "stress[ed] more emphasis on environmental cause rather than personal character to explain hardship."[143]

As charity became more defined, the leaders of the Church found within this movement were recognized by the Pope for their service to the community. By the turn of the century, various priests began to receive a title for their service to the Pope outside of the traditional hierarchy. When the diocese determined that a priest has gone beyond the typical call to their community, usually having a larger impact to the Catholic Church as a whole, their bishop would nominate them to be given the title of Monsignor (Msgr.). Essentially, this title means "my lord" in Italian, serving as an honorary title and closer connection to the Pope. At times, this seemed to create another group of devout followers of the Pope that were to do his bidding, as some would see it as "a means of creating a kind of fictional court around the pope, whose real aristocracy had been dispersed with the collapse of the Papal States."[144] However, often it allowed his

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[142] Catholic Prohibition League, "Proceedings," 44.

[143] Degeneffe, "What Is Catholic about Catholic Charities," 380.

[144] O'Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," 137.

community to be encouraged that they were being led by someone going above and beyond for them.

Interestingly, many of the strong voices for social action among the clergy held this newer distinction within the Church, had a connection to the increasing prominence of Sociology. The first Sociology Department in an American Catholic University was in Catholic University of America in 1921. Founding this department was Msgr. William J. Kerby, who was a priest-professor that approached the discipline with his faith intact.[145] Msgr. Paul Furfey studied and taught Sociology within this department as well, though he was known by many in his own field as being revolutionary or provocative. One specific priest who was a product of this school was the well-known Msgr. John Ryan, whose discipline was in economics, but he approached it from the sociological mindset of reforming economics to benefit society. Msgr. John O'Grady worked along-side Msgr. Ryan in the National Conference of Catholic Charities with disciplines in Economics and Sociology.[146] Through their efforts, the American Catholic Church established a National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC) to meet the needs of their people. All these great minds put forward extensive literature, guidance, and service that made Catholic Charities what were during the Great Depression. Regarding Mngr. Kerby, O'Grady, O'Brien, Furfey, and Ryan, it was well understood that "[i]n many respects sociology *was* social Christianity."[147]

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[145] C. Joseph Nuesse, "The Introduction of Sociology at the Catholic University of America, 1895-1915." *The Catholic Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (2001): 653.

[146] Biographical information compiled from C. Joseph Nuesse's work, as well as from the works of the men being discussed.

[147] Nuesse, "The Introduction of Sociology," 644.

In early points of the Depression, Msgr. O'Grady made distinctive efforts to articulate the message and mission of the RCC regarding charity. Displaying a comparable message from the Vatican, he pointed the Church back to the heart behind social work being biblically based:

> **"**It is a spirit of initiative, a spirit of love that arises out of man's nature, a spirit of charity based on the teaching of his religion, a spirit that revolts against social and industrial injustices, a spirit that urges man ever to have pity on and to sympathize with the sufferings of his fellow beings… Social work gets its vitality and its power from good will and conviction."[148]

Within this mindset, the Catholic church was able to do what the SBC had a hard time doing: working with groups that were not in their number. O'Grady charged that "[t]he individual organization, in order to achieve the best results, must be willing to work with the other organizations in the community."[149] In his mind, the mission of the National Conference of Catholic Charities revolved around the desire to meet community problems by joining others in the effort because they could not do it themselves.

In this same light, it was essential that the local church continue to be involved in providing for the need as part of the body of Christ and not remain complacent. Essential to the Catholic understanding of charity was not just fulfilling the monetary value of a need but engaging with the person during their trial. Once the diocese began opening agencies, relief from local churches began to wane. These agencies had access to the funds from the local community chests, as well as supported from funding received from their local churches.[150] These agencies approached their work from the perspective of a social worker, first assessing their area's need to

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[148] John O'Grady, "Co-Operation in Social Building." In *The Family* Vol. 10, No. 5. (July, 1929): 131.

[149] O'Grady, "Co-operation," 132. O'Grady expounds on this topic a year later in *Catholic Charities in the United States, History and Problems.* (Ransdell, 1930, New York: Arno Press, 1971): 433. More recent historians have stated this claim further, such as in: Degeneffe, "What Is Catholic about Catholic Charities," 377.

[150] Fred S. Hall, ed. *Social Work Year Book 1933* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1933): 57.

use their funding and providing the best resources to fit their demographic then effectively. The Russell Sage Foundation, a prominent voice within the field of Sociology, determined that the RCC tended to work harmoniously, as with the sisters in conducting a consensus on worker conditions.[151] Once larger and public agencies began to provide funds, it became easier for Catholic agencies to give money rather than time. However, O'Grady warned the church in 1930 that the local church was not released from their duty to the poor in service. [152] Echoing O'Grady's warning, Furfey encouraged the RCC that "[a]ny view that removes the larger social aspects of poverty from the immediate concern of the church would lead to the surrender of her moral and spiritual leadership at a time when the world is most in need of it."[153] From the field of social work, the work of the Catholic Church appeared professional and purposeful. Hall asserted about the Catholic Church that:

> "[s]ervices to the poor is looked upon by the Catholic Church as an organic part of Christian life. Beneath differences of culture, wealth and position lies the spiritual quality of human life, outgrowth of brotherhood in Christ… Catholic charity is social as well as individual and its interest and influence extend to social action for the elimination and prevention of social evils."[154]

Furthermore, Hall understood the significance of the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI to the church's philosophy of charity.[155]

A product of the NCCC became the Catholic Worker Movement and Catholic Action. These groups were made up of lay people, who caused an increase in the scope of their abilities

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[151] Glenn, John M., Lilan Brandt, and F. Emerson Andrews. *Russell Sage Foundation 1907-1946* (Philadelphia: Wm. F. Fell Co., 1947): 611.

[152] O'Grady, *Catholic Charities in the United States,* 445-6.

[153] Furfey, "Personalistic Social Action," 41.

[154] Hall, ed., *Social Work Year Book 1933,* 55.

[155] Ibid., 60.

within the church.[156] Though the laity was experiencing more power in living out their faith outside of the church, it was fairly understood that they were helping the hierarchy that existed within the Catholic Church.

> "They had become Catholic Action Catholics—Catholics not only when they were in church but also when they were on the picket line or in the field or even cooking the family dinner. Studying church teaching on their own, not just hearing about it in sermons, was their responsibility. Here was a more encompassing way of being a lay Catholic."[157]

Catholic Action tried to encourage fellow Catholics to take ownership of their own spiritual lives, so that they then can serve outwardly. For example, the laity experienced more ownership of their faith were through Communion and Confession, two sacraments that were at the center of a lay person's connection to their church. These sacraments have specific stipulations on how their members must engage within them, such as proper ways of receiving Communion and entering the confessional. Enforcing these practices became the responsibility of the laity, ultimately the teachers and parents, to ensure the reverence of partaking in the sacrament. These sacraments connected Catholics in that "[w]hen individuals prayed or received the sacraments, they saw themselves as joining their actions to those of other Catholics around the country and around the world. They were part of these larger communities, both real and imagined."[158]

It was due to this intricate and vast organization that the RCC was able to weather economic and spiritual storms regardless of their member's specific financial situation in America. By the Religious Bodies Census of 1936, the RCC led each financial category, particularly in the value of their property and their total expenditures. By comparison between

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[156] O'Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," 163.

[157] O'Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," 174.

[158] Ibid., 190.

the SBC, it is obvious that though the RCC had a strong immigrant membership and because they had a larger and more robust organization, they were much better off monetarily. Splitting their total equally among their churches, each church would have spent roughly $12,345, spending sixty-three percent on their property, thirty-one percent on salaries at the church, and at least six percent on benevolence. This would be opposed to the SBC, where the average church spent $560, giving only fifty-eight percent to salaries, but spent a few percentages more than the RCC on their buildings and benevolence.[159] In this instance, the SBC did have more churches in the rural sector, however they had less money in general to give to those churches. On the other hand, the RCC not only has their own local community giving, but they have the financial support from a wider organization to provide more stability.

Based on this information, however, all churches throughout America were forced to reevaluate their spending practices because their funding decreased drastically during this ten-year time frame of the Depression. In this light, it is significant that the SBC's expenditures drop almost thirty percent more, however they increase their maintenance on their properties by ten percent. As mentioned previously, they achieved this by cutting programs, however they did make a push to increase their building funds so that their churches would not be "homeless." Though their property value decreased, they cut their debt in half to increase the overall value of their church buildings. Salaries within the SBC and the RCC differed dramatically, as the clergy within the RCC received not only a salary to pay their bills but were also given housing and oftentimes allowances beyond that. This would cause the priests to make almost double the

[159] These figures utilize the church data found on Table 2 from Chapter 1 for the church totals. This would constitute that the Southern Baptist Convention had 11,972 churches in rural areas and the Roman Catholic Church had 8,274 in the urban sector. For the purposes of overall comparison, division was done between the number of churches by the amount expended in that specific sector. In dividing the total expended by these groups equally, the SBC would have spent 35% on their buildings and 8% on benevolence.

average of a SBC pastor, and they also were able to serve one single parish, as well as have a home provided for them.[160] Additionally, Catholic priests were celibate and therefore their salary was only used to provide for one person, where as an SBC minister was usually married and oftentimes had children as well.

Amidst the hierarchy and advocacy remained a large immigrant laity found in the United States. New York City was well known for its immigrant population, and it is the largest city in the United States throughout the Great Depression. New York was essentially a foreign city based off the census.[161] In 1910, over forty percent of their population was born outside of the United States, and though that percentage decreased in 1940 to twenty-nine percent, they house the densest population of immigrants in the United States.[162] In New York, there were 12,588,066 people, and over ten million of that population lived in the city.[163] They had seven cities that had 100,000 or more inhabitants, and its largest group in an urban setting was eighty-five cities that had between 2,500 to 5,000 people. Eighty-two percent of their rural population

[160] Data driven to define priest salaries would show the average priest made $3,853, if dividing the number of churches by the salary amount given in the Religious Bodies Census of 1936, and can be referenced in Table 2 and 4. Also in 1936, the Roman Catholic Church's parsonages, or church provided homes for their clergy, was valued at $104,434,368, which was 30% of the nation's total value of parsonages. This can be compared to the Southern Baptists' parsonages value of $7,986,539. See: U.S. Census Office. 1941. Religious Bodies: 1936, 1. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office: 30-1.

[161] E. P. Alldredge, *Southern Baptist Handbook 1932* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1932): 27. Reference to "the Churchman" on September 5th, 1931

[162] Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, *Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 2000* (Washington: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006): 76-7.

[163] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. *Historical Statistics of the United States 1789-1945*, by J. C. Capt. (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1949): 15.

was located outside incorporated places. New York City held the largest inhabitants with 6,930,446, of which thirty-seven percent lived in Brooklyn.[164]

As seen in the efforts of the SBC, care towards orphans became increasingly important, especially seen in the growing cities. For Roman Catholics, the work of nuns was essential to providing for the needs of children, from distributing charity to providing education. Strikingly, "[f]or the ordinary Catholic in the immigrant era, the face of the church was most often a woman's face."[165] One such organization that sought to provide for orphans was through the Sisters of Charity in New York starting the Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum in 1817. Late in 1869, the Sisters offered a Foundling Hospital, catering to newborns and babies.[166] They began using boarding homes to serve parents who would pay a fee and be able to visit. These were for children with barriers to adoption, but by 1931 seventy-four percent of foster children were in boarding homes because the parents did not want to put their children up for adoption.[167] Unfortunately, the Depression caused an increase in parents trying to find a solution to keep their children from starvation. In this light, it shows how desperate parents were to keep their children safe, especially ones that were not Catholic. In lightening its restrictions, the Sisters accepted children that were not Catholic which opened up opportunities for relief to the masses. This

[164] Ibid., 16-27. For the data on the size and number of people within various forms of cities, see 16-7 and for details for New York cities are specifically mentioned on 26-7.

[165] O'Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," 105.

[166] Michael Barga, "The Sisters of Charity of New York," in *Social Welfare History Project.* Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013. http://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/child-welfarechild-labor/the-sisters-of-charity-of-new-york/

[167] Dianne Creagh, "Faith in Fostering: Catholic Adoption and Boarding-Out in Depression-Era New York." *American Catholic Studies* 122:1 (Spring 2011): 13.

service, even with its flaws, offered these desperate parents a concrete solution to make sure their children would at least survive this suffering.

Another foundation that is connected to the hierarchy of the Church and found strength in America was the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Established in the United States in 1845 in Missouri, the Society quickly spread to major cities to offer tangible services such as hospitals and distribution centers. [168] Like Foundlings, St. Vincent's "provided aid without regard to the religion of the recipients."[169] By 1931, Msgr. O'Grady noted that St. Vincent's in America "expended $3,331,290.26," but after calculating churches that did not report, O'Grady doubled that total for 1931.[170] These figures alone are more than the SBC gave for all benevolent giving claimed in the 1936 census. However, when dividing the amount of benevolent giving of the urban RCC among the members evenly, each member gave an average of $0.38; this was only nine cents more than the average rural Southern Baptist.[171] With regard to St. Vincent's, people gave beyond this norm and in doing so the RCC saw a revival in charity. Many congregations began associating themselves closer with St. Vincent de Paul and putting the role of charity in the center as they were "coming into their own as congregations of charity."[172]

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[168] Hansan, "Catholic Charities USA."

[169] O'Toole, "The Church of Catholic Action," 153.

[170] John O'Grady "The Charities Conference Takes Stock," in *Catholic Action*. National Catholic Welfare Conference, Vol. XIV, No. 3. (March 1932): 6. "… we can add one hundred thousand dollars for conferences not reporting, making a total estimated Catholic relief expenditure last year of $6,744,811.53." Reference Table 4 for further details.

[171] Data used from Table 2 for members in each major category (Urban members for the Roman Catholic Church and Rural members for the Southern Baptist Church), and Total Benevolence from Table 4. This would be a general average to see the general difference between the two groups.

[172] O'Grady "The Charities Conference Takes Stock," 6.

Additionally, Catholic work during the Great Depression years increased as they provided programs for the community through Catholic Action, specifically The Catholic Worker Movement. In this, Noll details the earnest effort of Dorothy Day wanting to "see the gospel message address[ing] the suffering of the modern world" through ministering to the poor, homeless, and orphaned[173]. In this description, service is being presented as following Jesus's call to be His hands and feet it displayed another layer to Catholic charity. Almost directly after converting to Catholicism, Day became an outspoken supporter of the notion that Catholic charities meet the people's needs for Christ and not making a specific effort in conversion, which was more accepted throughout society.

> "Let well-merited acclamations of praise be bestowed upon you and at the same time upon all those, both clergy and laity, who We rejoice to see, are daily participating and valiantly helping in this same great work, Our beloved sons engaged in Catholic Action, who with a singular zeal are undertaking with Us the solution of the social problems in so far as by virtue of her divine institution this is proper to and devolves upon the Church."[174]

By the end of the 1932, it became clear that Catholic charities focused on the idea of serving their neighbor by providing for tangible needs of the people around them. With over fifty percent of the RCC made up of immigrants, their members were not only the minority in America but also met with certain hostility in their day to day lives. Yet, this did not detour those within the RCC to provide charity for their members, as well as those around them, that were struggling. Oftentimes, they offered opportunities for these new immigrants to join in something that was bigger than themselves, which caused many like Day to think of helping their neighbor beyond the church walls. What made Catholic charity different from the SBC was in its intricate

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[173] Mark Noll, "The World in the Churches, the Churches in the World, 1918-1960." In *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada*. 2 edition. Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 2019: 379-80.

[174] Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno,* 27.

network that worked for their unique situation and unifying message that was largely accepted through the Pope. Compared to the SBC, their infrastructure and ability to sustain themselves economically allowed the RCC to spare a dime for their fellow Americans. It is interesting to note that Catholics placed more emphasis on service as compared to the Southern Baptists, who focused more on the presentation of the Gospel. However, as the majority of America experiences the Depression by late 1932, the response and success of these two denominations are defined by the governmental intervention found in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal.

## Chapter 4

### The Plum Line: New Deal Agencies

> When religion becomes again a part of our daily lives, when we are not content only with so living that our neighbors consider us just men, and when we really strive to put into practice that which in moments of communion with ourselves we know to be the highest standard of which we are capable, then religion will mean in each life that I think it should mean.
>
> -Eleanor Roosevelt, "What Religion Means to Me"[175]

The presidential election of 1932 was conducted as the darkest days of the Depression gripped America. President Hoover had the misfortune of seeing the Depression ushered in just seven months into office. By the time he sought re-election, Hoover found himself increasingly unpopular as seen when a large group of unemployed veterans from the Great War protested in cardboard shacks in Washington D.C. Roughly two million Americans were homeless staying in versions of these "Hoovervilles" dubbed by the Bonus Army as unemployment reached twenty-three percent. During all this, Franklin D. Roosevelt elicited hope by encouraging Americans throughout his campaign that he would work to end the Depression. One of the strongest components of his campaign was his wife, Eleanor, who was outspoken about civil rights, both for women and minorities. This allowed Mrs. Roosevelt to experience an audience that was more receptive to her than any first lady had experienced, which allowed her to campaign alongside FDR to help his cause.

In a forum right after her husband secured the presidency and in the spirit of the Christmas season, Eleanor addressed the role of religion in America regarding their fellow man. She explained that "[t]he increasing number of suicides makes us realize that many people are feeling that life is too hard to cope with. That feeling would not exist if out of this depression we

[175] Eleanor Roosevelt, "What Religion Means to Me." Forum 88 (December 1932): 322-4.

could revive again any actual understanding of what it means to be responsible to one's brother."[176] Within her charge, she set out her definition of religion and its role in society:

> "To me religion has nothing to do with any specific creed or dogma. It means that belief and that faith in the heart of a man which makes him try to live his life according to the highest standard which he is able to visualize. To those of us who were brought up as Christians that standard is the life of Christ, and it matters very little whether our creed is Catholic or Protestant."[177]

The sentiments set by the First Lady gave an indication of the role of the church in society as of 1933. Citing a clear charge for ecumenism on the part of Catholics and Protestants, Eleanor showed that the way to approach ending the Depression was by setting aside differences and working together for the common man.

Once FDR was inaugurated into office in March of 1933, he quickly realized that Americans needed encouragement that all hope was not lost and that he was going to do something tangible to try to solve the Depression. Within his inaugural address, he utilized these themes by first asserting in one of his most famous quotes: "So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."[178] Roosevelt was a gifted orator that understood his audience, in that many Americans came from Christian roots and would be comforted by allusions toward Biblical references. For instance, Roosevelt took the oath of office on a 247-year-old Dutch family Bible opened to 1 Corinthians 13, and was

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[176] Eleanor Roosevelt "What Religion Means to Me." Forum 88 (December 1932): 322-4. https://erpapers.columbian.gwu.edu/what-religion-means-me

[177] Ibid.

[178] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Inaugural Address," speech, Washington DC, March 4, 1933. FDR Library, Modern Eloquence Incorporation, 1933: 4.

overwhelmingly supported in Democratic South.[179] However, he did not shy away from the harsh realities of the world for many, as mentioned by Eleanor a few months prior, but called the country to bind together:

> "We face the arduous days that lie before us in the warm courage of the national unity; with the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious moral values; with the clean satisfaction that comes from the stem performance of duty by old and young alike. We aim at the assurance of a rounded and permanent national life."[180]

In the election, Roosevelt was strongly supported by Catholics nationwide because Democrats were more sympathetic to their status.[181] For FDR, he felt that the state needed to intervene aggressively to regulate big business to protect individual citizens.[182] Due to this distinction, they saw Roosevelt's action and platform encouraging that he was willing to do something to fix it. Within this mindset, groups such as the Catholic Worker Movement and Catholic Action began transforming their ministry. Early in 1933, Dorothy Day, a prominent member within the Catholic Worker Movement, began writing a paper for the average American, with the goal to let those with the Catholic Church "know that there are men of God who are working not only for their spiritual, but for their material welfare."[183] They began seeing that

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[179] Alison Collis Greene, *Depression in Heaven: Religion and the Great Depression in the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016 and Oxford Scholarship Online 2015): 102. Matthew Avery Sutton, "Was FDR the Antichrist? The Birth of Fundamentalist Antiliberalism in a Global Age." *The Journal of American History* 98, no. 4 (2012): 1062.

[180] F. Roosevelt, "Inaugural Address," 4.

[181] Monroe Billington and Cal Clark, "Catholic Clergymen, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the New Deal." *The Catholic Historical Review* 79, 1 (1993): 65.

[182] Matthew Avery Sutton, "Christ's Deal or New Deal," in American Apocalypse : A History of Modern Evangelicalism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014): 237.

[183] Dorothy Day, "To Our Readers." *The Catholic Worker* (May 1933): 1. Day continues this charge throughout her writings in the 1930's, however another obvious presentation of her position on Catholic Charity is in: Dorothy Day, "Houses of Hospitality." *The Catholic Worker* (December 1936): 2.

they needed to focus more on the inward conversion of the individual, so as not to be blinded by the material needs they saw around them.

Additionally, the SBC took time to specifically address the upcoming Presidential election, to which they even quoted then Governor Roosevelt about voting based on conscience rather than party loyalty.[184] Ironically, the Convention would soon find that Roosevelt was more of a "wet" candidate than they realized and would cause more tension once he entered office in 1933. When members from the SBC met with Roosevelt early in the summer of 1933, they applauded his efforts to relieve unemployment burden but reiterated that repealing prohibition would only add more problems throughout society.[185] The SBC equated their stand on morality continually with prohibition, and when prohibition was repealed with the twenty-first amendment in December 1933, they began to distance themselves from FDR and his organizations. They charged that:

> "it is the mission and duty of the ministers and the people of God to transform society by the preaching of the Gospel, both that the individual may be saved and that the principles of righteousness may permeate the whole social order. The preachers and churches led the battle and bore the brunt in bringing about prohibition…"[186]

The Catholic Church, specifically Catholic Action, determined in 1933 that their approach to relief needed to change for the good of the country and their efforts.

> "Relief-giving can not go on apace. There is a limit to the generosity of individual contributors. There is a limit to the amount that can be raised by taxation. Above all, there is the danger of educating the coming generation the subsist on relief rather than by their own efforts. The burden has been gradually shifted from the private agencies to the municipal departments of public welfare, from the municipal departments to the states and from the states to the federal government.

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[184] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (St. Petersburg, 1932): 96.

[185] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention*. (Washington: Marshall & Bruce Co., 1933): 23.

[186] Ibid., 115.

> Too long have we talked of depression and relief in the terms of an emergency. A condition that exists for over three years is no longer an emergency. It is a social disorder that cannot be cured by palliatives. Its cure depends upon a reconstruction of social order, as pointed out by Pope Pius XI in his Encyclical *Quadragesima Anno*."[187]

In this idea, Catholic Action declared that they needed to reform society so that Americans will not be bound to the money being distributed by the governmental relief agencies but also that there was a deeper problem. This approach was rooted in their training in Sociology, as the RCC's Catholic Action was founded by all the Monsignors from the Sociology Department of Catholic University of America. Msgr. John Ryan explained the advantages of government sponsored public works to help society and stimulate the economy.[188]

By the 1935 convention, Roosevelt was not mentioned at all throughout the proceedings. What makes this exceptionally interesting is that this convention was when FDR began campaigning for reelection. During the convention, the SBC's executive committee made a declarative statement that government funding to churches should not occur within their number because they feel that the government will rule their churches as well.

> "No church can receive financial patronage from the government without coming under obligation to the government and becoming in some sense and to some degree subject to governmental authority and control… Whenever the government becomes the sponsor for religion, financial or other, the freedom of religion comes to an end."[189]

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[187] "Catholic Action: A National Monthly." National Catholic Welfare Conference Washington, DC. Vol. 15, No. 5 (May 1933): 12.

[188] John Ryan, "Public Works" in "Catholic Action: A National Monthly." National Catholic Welfare Conference Washington, DC. Vol. 15, No. 5 (May 1933): 15.

[189] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention*. (Memphis, 1935): 65.

By this time as well, the SBC is realizing that their efforts are being taken over by government funded agencies, and that they are not one of the groups the New Deal is willing to give relief toward.

> "We are citing the facts and prospects concerning the Catholics to emphasize that in the very nature of things, due to the claims that would be set up for Catholic institutions, and due to the desire of the Catholics for such governmental subsidies, the Catholics would receive the lion's share of such subsidies and would make the greatest possible use of this governmental financial aid for Catholic propaganda."[190]

In 1937 the SBC then passed a resolution is passed to affirm the separation of Church and State:

> "That the doctrine involves not only the inhibition of the use of public moneys, Federal, State or local, for the aid or support of the churches but also inhibits the use of such moneys, directly or indirectly, by or through, educational or benevolent institutions owned or controlled, by or through, sectarian or religious bodies… That the Churches and all their institutions and agencies should be supported by voluntary gifts of those interested and not by taxes imposed on all the people by force of law… we hereby declare that in the opinion of this convention that the distribution of the public benefits by denominational institutions even as agents for the government, tends to create unseemly rivalries between the sects and menaces the feeling of brotherhood with should exist among the churches."[191]

Two years after President Franklin D. Roosevelt instituted the New Deal, a letter was sent out to the clergy of America to gauge the effectiveness of these programs. In his letter, Roosevelt acknowledged the clergy's role in their community as a sound board for issues and explained that the reason he was seeking their council was because he felt "confident that no group can give more accurate or unbiased views."[192] He explained that he specifically wanted feedback on the Social Security Act, which was put in place just months before this letter was sent, and the

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[190] SBC, *Annual 1935*, 65.

[191] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention*. (Saint Louis, 1936): 104.

[192] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Franklin D. Roosevelt to Clergy of America," in *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* 13 vols. Ann Arbor: University of Michican Library, 2005, 4: 370.

Works Progress Administration. In closing he asked them to "[t]ell me where you feel our government can better serve our people."[193]

Initially there was skepticism on the clergy's part in answering this letter because it was two years into his presidency, and he had managed fine without them.[194] Many began to speculate the reason for the letter, specifically if it was for political gain and if the President wrote the letter or his aide Louis McHenry Howe.[195] However, Roosevelt's letter made many of the clergy feel as if they were heard by the President in their struggle, and this elicited responses that were honest yet in some cases critical. For the clergy, seventy percent found the overall evaluation was favorable for the New Deal, which showed the popularity of the programs. Though not surprising, it was found that seventy-three percent of the Catholic clergy supported FDR and the New Deal. The SBC had a lower approval rate of fifty-nine percent, however many of the clergy surveyed had similar opinions about the agencies within the New Deal.[196] The most popular program among all clergy was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) because it provided moral improvement for youth and "generating financial help for the needy."[197]

However, many churches were beginning to feel as if their ministries to their community were being taken by public agencies. To add insult to injury, ministers explained in their letter back to the President that they were paid by what the people tithed, which was not much before

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[193] FDR, "… to Clergy of America," 370.

[194] Alison Collis Greene, "The End of "the Protestant Era"?" *Church History* 80, no. 3 (09, 2011): 602.

[195] Monroe Billington and Cal Clark. "Clergy Reaction to the New Deal: A Comparative Study." *The Historian* 48, 4 (1986): 511.

[196] Monroe Billington and Cal Clark, "Baptist Preachers and the New Deal." *Journal of Church & State* 33, 2 (1986): 260.

[197] Billington and Clark, "Clergy Reaction," 518.

the Depression, and therefore did not qualify for governmental programs themselves because they were employed. Some ministers became farm laborers and elderly ministers could not receive social security because they were designated self-employed through the church. In other cases, ministers even tried to apply for relief jobs but were denied because they were employed.[198] A solution for these issues found the clergy asking Roosevelt to put the church somewhere in the New Deal administration to "simultaneously reconnect people to their churches and address the corrupt administration of relief programs."[199]

In June of 1933, Harry Hopkins, a sociologist who helped administer relief organizations of the New Deal, created a policy requiring public agencies to administer private relief.[200] Hopkins became committed to a distinct separation of church and state, secularized social work and public welfare, and the establishment of a comprehensive program of old-age, health, and economic insurances.[201] However, by shifting some of the weight borne by private agencies for relief, the balance then favored those within the state rather than the church. Emma Winslow, a national authority in social statistics who worked extensively with the Children's Bureau, found that the funding used in the private sector as well as the use of public funds generated from the New Deal had a causal relationship. Winslow noted that in 1932, forty-four percent of the funds

[198] Wayne Flynt, "Religion for the Blues: Evangelicalism, Poor Whites, and the Great Depression." *The Journal of Southern History* 71, no. 1 (2005): 31-4.

[199] Greene, *No Depression in Heaven,* 523. Greene also references the transfer of power from the church to the state: Greene, "The End of "the Protestant Era"?" 602.

[200] Ibid., 103. Greene also discusses this concept deeper within the same chapter on 120-4.

[201] Colleen McDannell, *Picturing Faith: Photography and the Great Depression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004): 123.

at Catholic agencies were public funds.[202] This supports the assertion that the RCC was more successful in earning respect from the secular audience, specifically the government, which resulted in securing the use of public funding.

This could also be attributed to their involvement in the community was seen in a positive light and that their type of charity was "worthy" to receive the public's money. Having served in the New York State Senate for thirteen years in relation to public-private cooperation, Robert Penna examined the role of philanthropy during the Depression as an indication of receiving aide. He explained the shift in relation to the Social Gospel assertion that "the earthly responsibility of every Christian to strive toward a just and humane society, and… work to mobilize not only their own forces, but the opinion of a largely indifferent public."[203] He then goes on to note that the Catholic Church was able to employ this message with their numbers, which ultimately led to their wealth.

> "Finally, in many of the more urbanized parts of the country, the Catholic hierarchy came to supplant their mainline Protestant counterparts in their advocacy on behalf of the less advantaged, their influence on policy-makers, and particularly in their ability—due to the network of Catholic charitable institutions—to attract such public dollars as were available for social purposes."[204]

Though the Catholic church had many divisions, they were much more effective at being unified, therefore more powerful.

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[202] Emma Winslow, "Annual Changes and Regional Differences in General Relief administered by Private Agencies," in *Trends of Different Types of Public and Private Relief in Urban Areas, 1929-35* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1937): 56.

[203] Robert Mark Penna, *Braided Threads a Thematic History of the American Nonprofit Sector* (New York: Routledge, 2018): 51.

[204] Ibid., 53.

Among this, the radio was an influential tool for the church as well as the government to bind people around, especially since radio was readily available. Once the Depression worsened, "the listening public was primed for any speaker who combined oratorical talent and pertinent messages with a dash of optimism and a willingness to single out those responsible for the plight of the American people."[205] This was first seen through Father Coughlin's ministry, and his original support of FDR in his early days of his presidency. Due to his background, Coughlin was driven by Pope Leo XIII's "*Rerum Novarum*" in not only the relief aspect but also the idea of redistributing the social order. Coughlin became so popular that people outside of the Catholic Church would tune into his radio program. At the height of Coughlin's ministry in 1930, he decided to address Communism and socialism in a series of talks in the first few months of the year. [206] Coughlin then also used his platform to express his support of Roosevelt for president in 1932; however, this position did change once the New Deal was put in place in 1933.

Roosevelt recognized that radio was a powerful medium for campaigning due to figures such as Coughlin, which led him to take to the airwaves very early in his presidency through fireside chats. These chats connected the President with individual Americans and allowed him to be transparent as well as set the standard for reform. Significantly, a few months before sending his letter to the clergy in September of 1935, FDR used one of his fireside chats to explain the purpose of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), another organization that the clergy approved. The President reminded America that his "Administration and the Congress are not proceeding in any haphazard fashion in this task of government."[207] He then suggested that

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[205] Peter A. Soderbergh, "The Rise of Father Coughlin, 1891-1930." *Social Science* 42, no. 1 (1967): 16.

[206] Ibid., 17.

[207] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On the Works Relief Program." (April 28, 1935): 1.

their goal was to first make provisions to prevent future unemployment and then establish practical means to help the unemployed now. One of the biggest criticisms among the clergy of the New Deal was that it encouraged laziness by allowing people to become addicted to "the dole." President Roosevelt took this moment to clarify that the role of the WPA, as well as the other New Deal agencies, was to solve the problems of the Depression. He charged that Americans should engage in the "great national crusade to destroy enforced idleness which is an enemy of the human spirit generated by this depression. Our attack upon these enemies must be without stint and without discrimination."[208]

Another New Deal agency that had experiences with Christian relief was the Farm Security Administration (FSA), which was made up of photographers that were sent throughout America to take pictures of the New Deal agencies in action starting in 1935. Many of the FSA photographers did not take many pictures of churches because the New Deal did not fund them directly, and many of these photographers saw any church using public funding as a waste of resources. Unfortunately, this is how many outside evangelical churches saw the type of work the churches were doing. For example, FSA photographer John Vachon was very critical of the City Mission in Iowa, run by the Baptist preacher William Masters. This mission, funded primarily through the community chest, offered a Gospel message, a meal prepared by Masters himself, and a place to sleep for the first 25 men. From Masters point of view, he was serving the community to the best of his abilities with the funds that he was given. On the other hand, Vachon saw and portrayed what he saw as the "humiliation of having to accept this type of charity" and stress that the Mission "transforms adult men into children by forcing them to act as

[208] F. Roosevelt, "On the Works Relief Program," 3.

if they are in an institutionalized home."[209] Due to these strong opinions, even with the best intentions the church was not going to be respected for doing work that the world felt they had no business doing.

The New Dealers did not trust religious communities to distribute federal monies or to be creative partners with the state. Evangelical social workers believed that the city would be saved when the Gospel was preached, and charity given to all who needed it. From the Catholic perspective, the RCC thought secular reformers were "protestants who wanted to place Catholic kids in protestant foster homes."[210] By the mid-nineteenth century, because of the number of destitute Catholics in New York City, the church had become the major caregiver for poor children in the growing metropolis. Catholics established orphanages, hospitals, industrial schools, institutes for the blind, residences for the ''feeble minded,'' and homes for unwed mothers. Although Catholics staffed these institutions, they were supported by public funds.

From a Gallup poll of Americans' opinions about the New Deal between 1935-1936, it shows that the clergy has begun to lose influence in society. In one particular element of contention was in the clergy's near unanimous support of prohibition. However, once prohibition was repealed in 1933, only thirty-three percent of the American public wanted to reimpose prohibition by 1936.[211]

> **"**To the radical Protestant, religion consists of direct and unique personal relations between God and the individual. The sum total of the persons who have realized these relationships constitutes the church, which is to be described as an essentially spiritual entity and only very secondarily as a social institution. In the characteristic Catholic viewpoint, on the contrary, the essence of religion is found in God's corporate relations to men effectualized through the church as an

[209] McDannell, *Picturing Faith*, 118.

[210] Ibid., 125.

[211] Billington and Clark, "Clergy Reaction," 1-44, 61.

> ordained channel of life. The church is definitely a divinely constituted social institution."[212]

Throughout much of his presidency, FDR attempted to work with many different religious organizations as a tool to unite America. On one such occasion in 1934, Roosevelt sent a telegram to Dr. M. E. Dodd, who was the president of the SBC, wished the conference well and said "[i]t is my opinion that the churches today have an unsurpassed opportunity for service to the nation."[213] However, the Convention found out later that Roosevelt was attempting to create diplomatic relations with the Vatican. The SBC was exceptionally upset about the connection the federal government was seeking with Rome.

> "Such recognition could not be accorded the Vatican without the compromise and violation of the sacred and fundamental principle of separation of Church and State embedded in the Constitution of the United States, nor without conferring upon Roman Catholicism, both in its political and religious aspects, an undue advantage and a position which no religious faith or organization is entitled to in this Republic."[214]

Not only was FDR connected with the highest authority within the Catholic Church, but he already listened to many of the notable Monsignors from Catholic University. Msgr. O'Grady was an advocate of the Social Security Act in 1935, as well as worked with Sen. Robert Wagner of NY on the Wagner Act.[215] Msgr. Ryan was a prominent advocate for social issues as a witness to the Catholic doctrine outlined in the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII and Pius XI.[216]

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[212] H. Paul Douglass and Edmund deS. Brunner. *The Protestant Church as a Social Institution* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935): 7.

[213] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention*. (Fort Worth, 1934): 18.

[214] Ibid., 112-3. The Convention makes the statement initially on 102, but goes into further detail in the aforementioned pages.

[215] Jack Hansan, "Catholic Charities USA." VCU Libraries: Social Welfare History Project, June 9, 2020. Accessed July 29, 2021. https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/religious/catholic-charities-usa/. Charles Edmund Degeneffe, "What Is Catholic about Catholic Charities?" *Social Work* 48, no. 3 (2003): 380.

[216] Catholic Church. Pope (1922-1939: Pius XI). *Quadragesimo Anno = Encyclical Letter on Reconstructing the Social Order.* May 15, 1931 (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1942):

> "The motive of charity does, indeed, differ from that of justice: in the former case, it is brotherly love; in the latter it is personal dignity, equality, and independence. Charity contemplates the human needs as those of a brother, while justice regards them as affecting an independent person endowed with rights; but the needs in both situations are or can be identical."[217]

On the other hand, Msgr. Ryan set out to declare his adamant support of Roosevelt for reelection. Before approaching FDR's reelection, Ryan takes time to respond to the criticism revolving around the Catholic church as being connected to communism.

> "Would Communists have publicly acknowledged the rulership of God over America on the morning of his inauguration as President? Would a Communist have received academic Honors from the principal Catholic institution of learning in the United States? Would the Chancellor of that institution, who is also the head of the oldest Catholic diocese in the United States, have addressed to a Communist the words that I have just quoted from the academic citation?"[218]

By the end of his document, Ryan expressed adamant support for FDR.[219]

In 1936 and 1937, the SBC began sending workers to meet needs in New Deal organizations. They applauded the efforts of mountain missionaries preaching at CCC camps in 1936 and praise the efforts of the National Youth Administration through the WPA in 1937 to help give the youth meaningful work during this trying time.[220] Though the SBC is against using governmental funds, by 1937 they began to look optimistically at the crowd-out that they have experienced as if "[a] heavy financial load, which otherwise would have fallen upon local

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88. References to Ryan utilizing papal teaching found in: David J. O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968): 123.

[217] John A. Ryan, *Social Doctrine in Action: A Personal History* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers: 1941): 86.

[218] John A. Ryan, "Roosevelt Safeguards America, October 8, 1936," *American Catholic History Classroom*, John A. Ryan Papers (New York: The Democratic National Committee: 1936): 4.

[219] Ibid., 12.

[220] CCC camp ministry mentioned in: SBC, *Annual 1936*, 243. Praise for the work done through the WPA in: Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention*. (New Orleans, 1937): 103.

churches and denominational institutions, has been lifted, freeing our churches from an obligation that rightfully we could not have refused to meet." [221]

The SBC revised their approach toward ecumenism in 1938 where they issued a "Declaration on Interdenominational Relations" to clearly explain their relationship with other Christian bodies.[222] Within this document, the only group they call by name is the RCC and their relationship with state funding of their agencies.

> "The Roman Catholic Church, because of the very nature of its dogmas and claims to final and complete authority in all the realms of life, naturally believes it has a right to the use of public funds for the benefit of its institutions… We can better excuse the Catholics in this matter than any other people because many of them do not know any better and they are bound by their religious theory."[223]

By 1939, FDR made a final successful push to bridge the gap between the government and the church by communicating with the leaders of the major religious groups of the time. Though FDR sent a similar message to Dr. George A Buttrick, President of the Federal Council of Churches, it is noteworthy that the President was more closely related to members of the clergy who were influential in the RCC.[224] Fear of Catholic's influencing the state,[225] the appointment of Myron Taylor as the representative to the Vatican, many thought the President was displaying religious preference.[226]

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[221] SBC, *Annual 1937,* 104.

[222] Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Richmond, 1938): 24.

[223] Ibid., 103.

[224] Trussell, C. P. "Roosevelt to send Personal Peace Envoy to the Vatican; Gives Post to Myron Taylor." *The Sun (1837-1995),* Dec 24, 1939, 1.

[225] John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987): 144.

[226] Ibid., 123. Reference to Southern Baptist Convention. *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Baltimore, 1940): 120.

On the other hand, as President Roosevelt instituted the New Deal within his first one hundred days, many received the relief with open arms. Southern leaders applauded most of the programs because it provided aid where they could not. Religious leaders and social reformers took credit for federal programs put in place, as they felt that the government was rewarding them for their efforts.[227] However, private agencies began to see that the government was beginning to take over. City sponsored organizations were established early in the century, with the City Welfare Department created in 1915 to coordinate public and private agencies.[228] Community Chest was formed by the Dallas Chamber of Commerce in 1923 and assumed responsibility for many organizations in Dallas.[229] However, due to their Convention's stipulations about receiving government money, SBC churches were not able to partake in these funds and continually focus on salvation. Conversely, leaders within the RCC welcoming the increasing relief money:

> "If a private agency can administer State funds, always under adequate State supervision, in such a way as to produce a greater amount of more beneficial service, that is the better arrangement. Moreover, there are special reasons for desiring that dependents, especially young dependents, should be cared for in Catholic, rather than in State institutions; namely, the necessity of giving them adequate training in the religion and religious morality."[230]

Understanding the relationship between the New Deal and private agencies, Jonathan Gruber, professor at MIT, and Daniel Hungerman, University of Notre Dame professor, detail the causal relationship they found between the New Deal spending and benevolence in the

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[227] Greene, *No Depression in Heaven,* 102 and 125.

[228] Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the City of Dallas. *The WPA Dallas Guide and History*. Edited by Maxine Holms and Gerald D. Saxon. (Dallas: University of North Texas Press, 1992): 282

[229] Ibid., 283.

[230] Ryan, *Social Doctrine in Action,* 98. Given in a speech to New York School of Social Work in 1920 "A Practical Philosophy of Social Work."

churches. They focused on six specific denominations from 1933 to 1939 to show how government spending statistically affected the church. Their sample "indicated that every dollar of government spending crowded-out 1.15 cents of church benevolence."[231] From this, there is a thirty percent decrease in benevolent spending over this specified period, which further asserts the decline in the church's ability to provide for the growing needs during the Depression from their own agencies.

[231] Jonathan Gruber and Daniel M. Hungerman. "Faith-based charity and crowd-out during the great depression." *Journal of Public Economics* 91:5-6 (June 2007): 1058.

## Conclusion

When the Great Depression began in the end of 1929, the Roman Catholic Church and Southern Baptist Convention's ultimate choice to many Americans who had lost everything was finding the balance of preaching the Gospel and living it. To compare these two bodies' response to the Great Depression depended directly on the aforementioned elements of ministry: bodies, buildings, and budgets. As displayed, the Catholic Church was statistically set up for success during the Depression years to provide more relief in their ability to be relatively unified in their message. They possessed the largest number of people, which ultimately translates to more money available to their disposal to then provide for tangible needs. The smaller and rural SBC could not compete with the immense resources of the Catholic Church. The SBC also had to contend with the fact that their flock had been in a depression and drought for roughly ten years before more Americans were affected in by the events of 1929.

By the turn of the century, America was moving into a cultural shift that directly affected the church's place within society. Initially, Scripture was being tested against biblical criticism within the church. However, this quickly opened the door to question the Bible's inerrancy as interpretations were driven by new scientific theories. Before the poplar Briggs heresy trial in the Presbyterian church, it was a Southern Baptist professor named Crawford Toy that presented a critical approach to Scripture in 1879. Toy wrestled with the idea that the rigidity of literally interpreting the Bible hindered its overall message and decided to resign from teaching at Southeastern Seminary due to conflicting ideologies. On the other hand, Pope Leo XIII led the Catholic Church to be equipped to approach Scripture critically, with a strong emphasis on Scripture being God-inspired. Then, as Darwin's theory of evolution became more widely

publicized in 1880, these views were ultimately tested as both the RCC and SBC were forced to address their interpretation of Scripture during the Scopes Trial of 1925.

Around this same time, the Social Gospel Movement worked its way throughout various parts of America and was made popular in certain Protestant bodies. The idea within this movement was to put flesh to the Gospel so that when ministry was being conducted, the Gospel could be tangibly seen. As an evangelism driven group, the SBC did not feel the need to join a formal group of Christian bodies that ascribed to this movement, but instead created their own committee to administer relief to their community within this context. The RCC was similar in this stance as well, however their main drive to not initially join in ecumenism with other bodies within relief efforts because their organization was robust enough to provide tangible relief. Southern Baptist ministries centered around obvious Gospel presentations that are meant to lead people to a profession of faith, and this drove their view on administration of relief. Conversely, Roman Catholics focused more on fulfilling the need of the person as a presentation of the Gospel.

Though the SBC dominated the southern landscape, they dominated the states that made up their original states when they split from their northern counterparts in 1845. By the Depression years, the highest condensation of Southern Baptist churches and members was in Texas, which also had a few cities but was predominantly rural territory. This type of landscape provided its own challenge for the churches to maintain a consistent congregation and minister. At times the ministers split their time between multiple churches to be able to make a living themselves, which caused ministry to be congregation driven. Members were also predominantly farmers or migrant laborer's themselves, leading to an inconsistent congregation as well as meeting. The ministers were often paid by the churches themselves, and with the inconsistency

of members and of the pastor's themselves, it became difficult for the pastors to be seen as a professional. Lacking this professional status at times determined their salary, but also affected the congregation's willingness to get behind any call to action the ministers would present.

The SBC was hesitant of immigrants coming into their midst by the 1930's. However, their approach to immigrants was the same way they approached implementing the Social Gospel: focused on the personal salvation of an individual rather than the institution. The relief they gave before and during the Great Depression was founded on a clear presentation of the Gospel, with tangible gifts being given to have people come to hear the message. This can be seen in the Texas ministry of Bucker's Orphanage in Dallas. The home served roughly 600 children during the Depression that offered housing, medical care, and schooling that was all done with the clear intention of presenting the Gospel and displaying Christ in their service. Buckner's support came through the Texas Baptist Convention by voluntary funding raised by groups such as the Home Mission Board and the Women's Missionary Union. Across the SBC there was a lack of support for ministry leading into 1929 as only fifty percent of the SBC members gave to missions. The Home Mission Board and Women's Missionary Union struggled throughout the Depression years to make enough money to maintain much of their ministry. At one point within the deepest part of the Depression, the Home Mission Board had to cut back its funding so much so that half of their budget would be used for decreasing their debt.

On the other hand, the RCC found its strength in their organizational structure to see them through difficult times. The hierarchy found within the RCC allowed for consistency throughout their bodies found throughout the world, as well as allowed their members to feel connected to this structure no matter where they were located. As a large wave of immigrants came into America from Catholic rich settings, the Catholic churches they met in America

provided consistency of their home churches. Churches often became centered around their community, and ultimately the immigrant population that lived within that area and was able to effectively address problems the community was facing. Many immigrants became condensed in the cities within the Northeast, creating ethically centered communities that allowed these new-commers to bind together around their home cultures and their religion. Due to this trend, the most densely populated city during the Depression, and still to this day, was New York City. Within NYC, it was not hard to find the Catholic organizational structure, as cathedrals and hospitals were sprinkled throughout the urban landscape.

One branch of the RCC that was instrumental in distributing aide was the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. This group built and maintained hospitals, orphanages, and schools were available for not only Catholics but also the public as service to their community. Additionally, the Pope provided another connective link to Catholics found throughout the world to have a consistent message and structure. Messages from the Holy See at times provided clarification, but more particularly spurred the churches to action. During the Depression, Pope Pius XI reiterated to the church that it is their duty to address the individual to change the institution. Directives from the Pope would be distributed through their chain of command, that would ultimately be conveyed to the members by the Bishop, Monsignor, or Priest.

The best plum line to display the shift from private orchestrated relief to public relief agencies is best seen in the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 and his institution of the New Deal in his first one hundred days in office. President Hoover experienced many hurdles in his presidency, where the Stock Market Crashed within his first few months as president and right before he lost the election the Bonus Army set up “Hoovervilles” in Washington D.C. When FDR was elected to office in 1932, and inaugurated in March on 1933, he entered the

White House determined to raise the spirits of the American people. Roosevelt took time in his inaugural address to encourage his countrymen that unifying as a nation is the only way to solve the Depression.

Many of the clergy were in favor of to the New Deal as it not only provided where they could not but also supply jobs so that people could work their way out of their situation. The program that the clergy most approved of were the agencies that gave work to the unemployed and youth. The key factor to these agencies was that it did not cause Americans to be reliant on government subsidies and encouraged work ethic. Most of America would have agreed with the clergy's assessment of the New Deal agencies in this regard. One point where the clergy differed from the public was on repealing Prohibition. By the time FDR asked for their opinion in 1935, the 21st amendment was in place and many Americans felt that prohibition of alcohol should not be reenacted. This was not the case for the clergy, as more than seventy percent said that repealing prohibition was a mistake.

Though both the SBC and RCC approached people on an individual basis to reform society, though they found a point of ecumenism in their stance on Prohibition in America. The SBC agreed that it was an issue that was addressed on an individual basis, however their emphasis was maintaining the 18th amendment to encourage abstinence. The SBC did take a much more authoritative stand for Prohibition than the RCC, however they both agreed with the same principles. As an immigrant rich group, specifically Irish Catholics, the RCC sought to address this issue by encouraging people, predominantly men, to lead a life of abstinence. The stance of the RCC on Prohibition displayed their view about relief, as they sought to meet with the people in their need as they saw it as a product of the environment not the personal character

of the individual. This approach caused the RCC to see Jesus' call to love one's neighbor was to tangibly solve that need.

From outside the church, relief agencies found the RCC easier to work with than their Protestant counterparts. This was predominantly due to the major leaders within the America Roman Catholic churches were scholars within the Sociology community, and therefore approached relief from this vantage point. Sociologists saw problems on a case-by-case basis of providing for the needs of the people within their midst, which translated to a form of social Christianity that held elements of the Social Gospel Movement. Not only was the RCC present in the Social Work community, but they also recognized that their organization could not provide for all of the concrete needs of society without working with other groups that were not Catholic. This allowed the RCC to serve outside their church structures, which indirectly proved to philanthropists and the government that their form of relief was a worthwhile investment.

During the New Deal years, the RCC was able to work closely with the New Deal agencies to help administer relief. The SBC, on the other hand, adamantly indicated to their congregations that their organizations were not to take government money as it violated the separation of church and state. This determined each group's ability to continue providing aide, as well as maintain their place in society. Culturally speaking, both experienced a decrease in their place within society as criticism crowded-out the church's role in the average American's life; however, the SBC experienced an increase in membership during the Depression years.

Numerically, the RCC was a much more robust organization and worked closer with the government to provide tangible relief. Despite these drawbacks, Southern Baptist churches were able to provide different forms of tangible relief to their neighbors and ultimately increased their number from 1926 to 1936. The impact of the Church to serve the community during the Great

Depression revolves around utilizing resources effectively. The RCC may have been more successful in "sparing a dime" for their fellow man, but mainly because they had a dime to spare.[232] Their ability to provide for physical needs helped people tangibly see hope in those dark days, and the question remains if it translated into showing the love of Christ through their efforts. The dominant Southern Baptist Convention became the underdog because the relief they were able to provide was small in comparison and centered on the clear presentation of the Gospel. Though they approached the problem from two different angles, it is encouraging to know that the motivation for both forms of ministry was to be the hands and feet of Christ, which alone is a worthy cause.

[232] Crosby, "Brother, Can You Spare A Dime?" Recorded November 8, 1932.

# Appendix: Data Tables

TABLE 1: Church and members in Highest Populated Areas, with Reference to Major cities

| | Churches in Highest Populated Areas, with reference to Major Cities, 1926-36[1] | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1926 | 1936 | Percentage Change | Major Cities | 1926 | 1936 | Percentage Change |
| South Atlantic | 47,762 | 39,142 | -22% | New York | 9,410 | 8,983 | -5% |
| Middle Atlantic | 26,442 | 25,274 | -5% | Georgia | 10,876 | 9,727 | -11% |
| | | | | North Carolina | 10,275 | 8,005 | -22% |
| | Members in Highest Populated Areas, with reference to Major Cities, 1926-36[2] | | | | | | |
| | 1926 | 1936 | Percentage Change | Major Cities | 1926 | 1936 | Percentage Change |
| South Atlantic | 5,703,320 | 6,273,481 | 10% | New York | 4,899,549 | 4,953,083 | 1% |
| Middle Atlantic | 11,483,381 | 12,041,057 | 5% | Georgia | 1,331,818 | 1,244,742 | -7% |
| | | | | North Carolina | 1,403,281 | 1,270,011 | -9% |

[1]U.S. Census Office. Religious Bodies: 1936, 1. (Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 1941): 58

[2]U.S. Census Office. Religious Bodies: 1936, 1. (Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 1941): 60-1.

TABLE 2: Churches and Members in Rural and Urban, All Denominations, Southern Baptist Convension, and Roman Catholic Church, 1926-36

Churches in Rural and Urban, All Denominations, Southern Baptist Convension, and Roman Catholic Church, 1926-36

| | URBAN | | Percentage Change | RURAL | | Percentage Change | TOTAL | | | Percentage Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1926[2] | 1936[3] | | 1926[2] | 1936[3] | | 1916 | 1926 | 1936 | |
| All Denominations | 62,299 | 71,205 | 14% | 167,864 | 128,097 | -24% | 199,634 | 232,154 | 199,302 | -14% |
| Southern Baptist Convention | 1,859 | 1,843 | -1% | 21,515 | 11,972 | -44% | 23,580 | 23,374 | 24,671 | 6% |
| Roman Catholic Church | 7,870 | 8,274 | 5% | 11,070 | 10,135 | -8% | 17,375 | 18,940 | 18,409 | -3% |

Members in Rural and Urban, All Denominations, Southern Baptist Convension, and Roman Catholic Church, 1926-36[2]

| | URBAN | | Percentage Change | RURAL | | Percentage Change | TOTAL | | | Percentage Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1926[2] | 1936[3] | | 1926[2] | 1936[3] | | 1916 | 1926 | 1936 | |
| All Denominations | 35,126,927 | 38,519,170 | 10% | 19,386,734 | 17,084,410 | -12% | 41,925,854 | 54,576,346 | 55,807,366 | 2% |
| Southern Baptist Convention | 986,059 | 1,023,971 | 4% | 2,538,319 | 1,676,184 | -34% | 2,708,870 | 3,524,378 | 4,482,315 | 27% |
| Roman Catholic Church | 15,809,295 | 16,041,764 | 1% | 3,795,708 | 3,873,173 | 2% | 15,721,815 | 18,605,003 | 19,914,937 | 7% |

[1]U.S. Census Office. Religious Bodies: 1936, 1. (Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 1941): 58

[2]U.S. Census Office. Religious Bodies: 1926, 1. (Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 1929): 82, 90.

[3]Census, Religious Bodies: 1936, 86-97

TABLE 3: Urban and Rural Foreign Population, with reference to Major States

| | URBAN | | Percentage Change | Major States | | | Percentage Change | Foreign Born Percentages by State[2] | | Percentage Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1920 | 1930 | | | 1920 | 1930 | | 1920 | 1930 | |
| Contenental United States | 54,304,603 | 68,954,823 | 27% | New York | 8,589,844 | 10,521,952 | 18% | 27.4% | 26.3% | -4% |
| Region: Middle Atlantic | 16,672,595 | 20,394,707 | 22% | Pennsylvania | 5,607,815 | 6,533,511 | 14% | 16.5% | 13.4% | -19% |
| | | | | Illinois | 4,403,153 | 5,635,727 | 22% | 19.2% | 16.8% | -13% |
| | RURAL | | Percentage Change | Major States | | | Percentage Change | Foreign Born Percentages by State[2] | | Percentage Change |
| | 1920 | 1930 | | | 1920 | 1930 | | 1920 | 1930 | |
| Contenental United States | 51,406,017 | 53,820,223 | 5% | Texas | 3,150,539 | 3,435,367 | 9% | 9.2% | 2.3% | -75% |
| Region: South Atlantic | 9,651,480 | 10,095,467 | 5% | Georgia | 2,167,973 | 2,013,014 | -7% | 1.0% | 0.8% | -20% |
| | | | | Carolina | 2,068,753 | 2,360,429 | 14% | 0.4% | 0.4% | 0% |

[1]U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. Statistical Abstract of the United States 1936, Fifty-Eighth Number, by Daniel C. Roper Bureau and Alexander V. Dye. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1936): 7.
[2]Ibid.,18

Table 4. Itemized Expenditures in 1926 and 1936 - RURAL Southern Baptist and URBAN Roman Catholic

| | 1926[1] | | | | | 1936[2] | | | | | | | | | Percentage Change | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Current Expense and Improvement | Benevolence and Missions | TOTAL | Benevolence | Internal Funds | Salaries[3] | Building expenses[4] | Local Relief and Charity | Home Missions | Foreign Missions | TOTAL Benevolence | TOTAL | Benevolence | Internal Funds | Total Expenditures | Benevolance | Church maintanance |
| United States | $667,117,361 | $150,097,167 | $817,214,528 | 18% | 82% | $200,754,997 | $216,299,059 | $16,072,548 | $9,515,396 | $9,495,047 | $35,082,991 | $452,137,047 | 8% | 92% | -45% | -11% | 11% |
| Southern Baptist Convention | $15,332,787 | $3,908,462 | $19,241,249 | 20% | 80% | $3,865,380 | $2,346,506 | $251,971 | $131,538 | $112,525 | $496,034 | $6,707,920 | 7% | 93% | -65% | -13% | 13% |
| Roman Catholic | $152,252,574 | $16,557,004 | $168,809,578 | 10% | 90% | $31,877,392 | $64,118,920 | $4,571,525 | $954,891 | $620,548 | $6,146,964 | $102,143,276 | 6% | 94% | -39% | -4% | 4% |

[1]U.S. Census Office. 1929. Religious Bodies: 1926, 1. Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 107-121. Current Expenses and Improvements is a combination of Current Expenses and Improvements and Note Classified.
[2]U.S. Census Office. 1941. Religious Bodies: 1936, 1. Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 116-144.
[3]Pastors' salaries and all other salaries combined
[4]Repairs and improvements, payment on church debt, other expenses categories

Table 5. Edifice Value and Debt in 1926 and 1936
Church RURAL Southern Baptist Convention and URBAN Roman Catholic

| | PROPERTY VALUE | | Percentage Change | DEBT | | Percentage Change | True Value | | Percentage Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1926[1] | 1936[2] | | 1926[3] | 1936[4] | | 1927 | 1936 | |
| RURAL Southern Baptist Convention | $73,221,430 | $41,059,163 | -44% | $5,068,548 | $2,054,776 | -147% | $35,990,615 | $39,004,387 | 8% |
| URBAN Roman Catholic | $669,746,780 | $637,474,311 | -5% | $111,666,915 | $166,251,710 | 33% | $558,079,865 | $471,222,601 | -18% |

[1]U.S. Census Office. 1929. Religious Bodies: 1926, 1. Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 97-106.
[2]U.S. Census Office. 1941. Religious Bodies: 1936, 1. Washington, DC: Government Printing office. 98-115.

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