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April 6, 2017

How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land?

A Comparative Analysis of Clarence Macartney and Harry Emerson Fosdick and the changing  
role of the early twentieth century American Protestant pastorate

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## Abstract

### How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land?

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By Paul Austin Hunt

The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in the Presbyterian Church began with two dueling sermons in the summer of 1922. After liberal preacher Harry Emerson Fosdick delivered the sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?", a fundamentalist preacher named Clarence Macartney responded with his own rebuttal in the form of a sermon entitled "Shall Unbelief Win?". Because of their theological antagonism, as represented in this episode, the similarities between these two preachers have been overshadowed in the prevailing historical narrative. Both men not only agreed on a whole host of issues outside of theology, but their shared experiences in the 1920s also speak to the changing role of the American Protestant pastorate in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Confronted by social and technological change, Macartney and Fosdick represent a class of pulpit innovators who were able to find success because of their willingness and ability to connect with middle class Americans. This thesis will focus primarily on their experiences during the 1920s, the years surrounding the doctrinal debates, and it will reach the conclusion that their savvy use of media and new technologies created a situation in which the theological differences that divided them actually fostered a mutual desire to embrace innovative platforms as new avenues to promulgate their respective messages. These findings complicate the dualistic nature of the term "Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy", and in this regard, they corroborate recent scholarship seeking to expand our understanding of these early 20<sup>th</sup> century religious debates.

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents. I am very blessed to have them as exemplars of authentic Christian Faith.

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## Introduction

In the summer of 1922, Clarence Macartney (1879-1957) and Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969), two prominent American preachers, delivered a pair of sermons that ushered in a theological war. For years, tensions had been building in the Presbyterian Church, as well as the whole of American Protestantism, between the liberal and conservative factions. These tensions remained mostly under the surface until Fosdick, a Baptist minister preaching in one of New York's Presbyterian pulpits, advocated for greater theological toleration in a sermon entitled "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" Filled with liberal theology and openly critical of what he considered the intolerance of fundamentalist Christianity, Fosdick's sermon was "a plea of good will, but what came of it was an explosion of ill will."<sup>1</sup> This "explosion" in part refers to Clarence Macartney, a conservative minister in Philadelphia, who preached a sermon in response to Fosdick entitled "Shall Unbelief Win?" In this sermon Macartney emphatically defended several points of traditional doctrine, and he even espoused a level of appreciation for Fosdick's frankness, as it made plain the points of distinction between both sides.<sup>2</sup> With the battle lines clearly drawn, Macartney coalesced a group of Presbyterian laymen and ministers to condemn Fosdick's liberal preaching. After careful deliberation from the denomination's governing body, the General Assembly, Fosdick was faced with the ultimatum of either confirming the official creeds of the denomination or resigning his position as preacher in one of New York's most influential Presbyterian churches. Remaining true to his liberal beliefs, Fosdick resigned from his

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<sup>1</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Living of These Days: An Autobiography* (New York: Harper, 1956), 145

<sup>2</sup> Clarence Macartney, "Shall Unbelief Win?" in *Sermons that Shaped America: Reformed preaching from 1630-2001*, ed. William Barker and Samuel Logan (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub., 2003)



Presbyterian pulpit and moved on to start his own interdenominational church, where he could find freedom from strict confessionalism.

When studying the lives of Macartney and Fosdick, it is this fierce disagreement over doctrine that takes center stage. While their disputes over such issues as the virgin birth of Christ or the reliability of scripture are certainly important, the prevailing historical narrative highlights these major theological differences while neglecting the many similarities they shared. My research into the lives of these men seems to demonstrate a striking level of accord on a wide range of cultural, political, and practical questions. On the issues of public morality, both men took firm stands against alcohol, divorce, and illicit entertainment. Before the theological controversy, both men supported the American entry into World War I and were quite measured in their attitudes toward the war. In regards to their education and class, both men were well educated and well connected to America's emerging middle class, and many of their sermons supported and protected these values and interests. How is it that these two men known for their great stands against one another could end up sharing so many similarities outside of their famous disagreement? This question will guide this thesis, and it will allow me to study the lives of Macartney and Fosdick through a myriad of factors including economic, cultural, political, epistemological, and of course, theological.

Of all their similarities, perhaps the most significant is the fact that both men were innovative celebrity preachers at a time when the position of the pastorate as a whole was uncertain. When Macartney and Fosdick began their ministries around the turn of the century, Protestant clergyman occupied a prestigious position within America's towns and cities and often leveraged informal power in local affairs. Ministers were generally the most educated members of their community, and the prestige of the pastorate is visible in both men's memoirs.

As young men they were scholarly, charismatic in the eyes of their peers, and optimistically ambitious about their futures. However, the prestige of the occupation began to gradually wane over the course of their lives as the nation as a whole went through a series of adjustments. The growth of cities, the rise of a mass media and popular culture, greater educational opportunities, and new immigration patterns are just a few factors involved in the gradual marginalization of the American Protestant pastorate. By the time of their deaths in the 1950s and 1960s, the American Protestant pastorate held far less sway than it had a half-century before. In many ways, it was just one voice among many in an increasingly pluralistic religious scene.

Yet, even in the midst of this gradual marginalization of the ministry, both Macartney and Fosdick thrived. Each man published over a score of books, contributed articles to well-known magazines and newspapers including *The Atlantic*, *The Ladies Home Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *Harper's Magazine*, and emerged as pioneers in the field of radio ministry. Even in their debates surrounding the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in 1922, they both gained publicity and notoriety from the interaction, though each was ultimately unsatisfied with the results. Macartney and Fosdick are worth studying because through their ministries one can gain an understanding surrounding the religious thoughts and concerns of early 20<sup>th</sup> century American Protestants. The fact that these ministers were able to thrive and develop a national reputation in an era when the influence and prestige of the American pastorate as a whole was in relative decline demonstrates that their messages resonated with listeners and effectively addressed their concerns and anxieties. This study will attempt to answer how these two men were able to develop a national reputation in the context of a changing religious landscape, and it will theorize what their respective popularity can reveal about the changing nature of American Protestantism.

I address several strands of historical scholarship. First, and foremost, are the theological studies of each man as well as the broader movements they represented. There have been many dissertations and articles devoted to the work of Macartney and Fosdick. Many of them, written by seminary students, emphasize the doctrinal positions and rhetorical styles of each minister. At a broader level, the development of theological modernism and fundamentalism has been amply covered through the scholarship of George Marsden, Sydney Ahlstrom, Sidney Mead, William Hutchison, Mark Noll, Robert Handy, and many others. These older studies tend to support the use of the “Fundamentalist-Modernist” term as a tool for characterizing the religious debates of the 1920s, but a more recent strand of scholarship has pointed out the limitations of this dualistic approach and has taken steps to complicate previous assumptions.<sup>3</sup> This study on the similarities between Macartney and Fosdick provides further evidence that the “Fundamentalist-Modernist” term does not convey the whole story. Another strand of scholarship addresses the cultural and sociological history of early 20<sup>th</sup> century America. Starting with the Lynds’ famous study of *Middletown*, many scholars have worked to explain the social and cultural volatility of this era, and I hope to explore how some of the era’s shifting attitudes affected American religion and how they contributed to an evolution in the role of the American pastorate.

This thesis will be centered on the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy of the 1920s particularly because these years correspond with both the well-known theological debates between the two men as well as the lesser-known agreements on issues outside of theology. Part I will discuss Macartney’s and Fosdick’s early lives as well as the changing role and place of the

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<sup>3</sup> This list is likely incomplete due to the relative novelty of this approach. First of all, thanks to Dr. Janine Giordano Drake for making me aware of this strand of scholarship through her blog posts as well as correspondence. A few notable instances of recent scholarship that has pushed back against the dualism of the “Fundamentalist-Modernist” approach include Christopher Schlect’s 2015 dissertation entitled *Onward Christian Administrators*, Tim Gloege’s 2015 book, *Guaranteed Pure: The Moody Bible Institute, Business, and the Making of Modern Evangelicalism*, and perhaps most importantly, Matthew Bowman’s 2014 book, *The Urban Pulpit: New York City and the Fate of Liberal Evangelicalism*.

typical Protestant minister at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Part II will analyze their reactions to World War I and the subsequent Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, but instead of focusing extensively on the controversy itself, this section will look at their similar strategies and use of media to spread their message. In addition, this section will present the controversy as somewhat paradoxical. On one hand, both Macartney and Fosdick failed to satisfactorily implement their goals and vision for the Presbyterian Church, yet each man emerged from this episode with greater influence and popularity than he had possessed before this episode. Finally, Part III will analyze their ministries following the controversy, and it will characterize the divergence between the two ministers as representative of the wider divergence that took place between liberal and conservative Protestants. Although they continued to demonstrate similarities in the years following their debates, Macartney's decision to leave the national spotlight and Fosdick's decision to remain a celebrity preacher renders them as distinct figures better understood by the "evangelical" and "mainline" distinctions that are used to understand American Protestantism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition to the similar level of success that both men experienced, another interesting similarity between Macartney and Fosdick pertains to their understanding of progress and change. Ministering to men and women confounded by the changes inherent to an increasingly interconnected world, Macartney and Fosdick had to provide a sense of continuity and comfort on any given Sunday. For both men, technological advancements meant nothing without simultaneous moral and spiritual uplift, and the changing landscape around him led Fosdick to ask himself in one sermon, as the Jews did while in Babylonian exile, "How Shall We Sing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land?" In spite of all the changes taking place around them, both men preached messages based on the permanence of the human soul.

## ***Part I: Early Lives and the Changing Protestant Pastorate***

By the time of their births shortly after America's centenary celebrations, American Protestantism was at its height of influence and prestige. Harry Emerson Fosdick and Clarence Macartney were born into a society with a strong civil religious tradition, one that emphasized America's role in bringing the Kingdom of God to fruition on this earth. Naturally, the social rearing and formative educational experiences they received as children were crafted with this specific worldview in mind. When studying the later disagreements between Macartney and Fosdick, it is helpful to place their quarrels in the context of their early lives and family backgrounds, their shared experience of an adolescent crisis of faith, and the changing role of the American Protestant pastorate.

### Early Lives

Clarence Edward Noble Macartney was born on September 18, 1879 in Northwood, Ohio. His parents (John and Catherine McCartney) were both the descendants of Covenanters, a rigorous Presbyterian sect from Scotland. Macartney's mother came from wealth (the daughter of a Scottish mill owner), and the family lived fairly affluently throughout Macartney's childhood. Because John McCartney was in feeble health for much of Macartney's adolescent years, the family moved frequently, allowing the young man to see a good deal of the newly settled American continent. By the time Macartney entered the University of Wisconsin around the turn of the century, he had already lived in Ohio, Pennsylvania, California, and Colorado. After graduation in 1901, Macartney struggled settling on a profession. He spent the following year travelling and waiting a "sign" that would lead him to his next stage of life, but by the time he enrolled in Princeton Theological Seminary in 1902, he was fully committed to a life in ministry.

Harry Emerson Fosdick was born on May 24, 1878 in Buffalo, New York. His entire early life was spent in Western New York, and he divided his youth between the city of Buffalo itself and a small village outside of Buffalo called Lancaster. His father and grandfather had spent their careers as teachers and administrators in the Buffalo public school system. Like most 19th century Americans, Fosdick's family experienced considerable heartbreak from poverty, infant mortality, and communicable diseases. In addition to his mother's recurrent panic attacks, Fosdick witnessed the deaths of his younger sister, to diphtheria, as well as his maternal aunt and uncle, to tuberculosis. The family was also fairly poor, and it would not be until Fosdick's popular ministry that he would enter into affluence. Invariably because of the hardships he faced during his youth, Fosdick could be aptly characterized as sensitive man, and his religious development bears witness to this sensitivity. When Fosdick was seven years old, he made a "clear and determined"<sup>4</sup> decision to join his local church, but as he grew in the knowledge of his chosen faith, anxiety emerged as a serious deterrent to orthodox faith. The young Fosdick struggled with many of the weightier doctrines of the Christian religion writing later that, "some of the most wretched hours of my boyhood were caused by the pettiness and obscurantism, the miserable legalism and terrifying appeals to fear that were associated with the religion of the churches".<sup>5</sup> Fosdick was terrified of God, and the common 19<sup>th</sup> century practice of overemphasizing personal vices such as dancing, card playing, theatre going, and swearing gave him an unwelcome taste of legalism that threatened to extinguish his already precarious faith.

In a society that predated radios and other forms of mass media, one's command over the spoken word was crucial. 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans can be seen as living in an oratorical society, unlike today's written or even digital society. Both men discuss their memories of oratory and

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<sup>4</sup> Fosdick, *The Living of These Days*. 22

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 33

debate with fondness, and their rhetorical education continued well into college, where they both garnered distinction in intercollegiate competitions. Fosdick, according to his biographer, “cantered off with more [oratorical] prizes than any other student in Colgate’s history... [By winning prizes equal to a year’s tuition] it is quite true, therefore, to say that Harry ‘talked’ his way through college.”<sup>6</sup> Though later ashamed of the militarism it exhibited, Fosdick delivered a speech in 1900 entitled “The Rough Riders” in which he celebrated the soldiers of the Spanish-American War. Very similar to Theodore Roosevelt’s book published the previous year, Fosdick’s speech emphasized the war’s ability to unify the Irishman, the “sons of Plymouth Rock”, Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Confederates, Unionists, and men from every state ranging from Maine to South Carolina.<sup>7</sup> Similar to his later sermons, Fosdick’s rhetorical success “rested in part on a similar conscious understanding of the audiences’ sensibilities... As a man Fosdick had an uncanny ability to write at different levels, from popular stuff for *Reader’s Digest* and *Ladies’ Home Journal* audiences to trenchant prose targeted at scholars. This knack for adjusting his writing to the purposes at hand he cultivated at Colgate.”<sup>8</sup> Macartney likewise excelled in oratorical competitions. In 1900 he represented his school, the University of Wisconsin, in the Northern Oratorical League competition. Similar to Fosdick’s theme, Macartney’s speech was entitled “National Apostasy” and it warned America of the dangers of pursuing an Imperialist foreign policy agenda. Though not necessarily anti-war, Macartney’s speech warned listeners, in emotionally tinged language, that empire building would cause America to lose her “character”, “lofty ideals”, and “her moral pride.”<sup>9</sup> For both future preachers, this rhetorical education would

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Moats Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick: Preacher, Pastor, Prophet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). 30

<sup>7</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, “The Rough Riders” (speech, Rowland Oratorical Contest, 1900), Colgate University.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*. 32

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Clarkson Trueblood, *Winning Speeches...* (American book Company, 1909).

prove to be invaluable in learning how to effectively communicate with America's growing middle class.

Perhaps the most significant early similarity between Macartney and Fosdick involves the shared experience of facing religious doubt and uncertainty. While Macartney merely glazed over his own crisis of faith in his later memoir, his older sister, Wilhelmina Guerard, made this episode very clear in a biographical sketch of her brother. Guerard notes that her brother's general religious attitudes exhibited "no evidence of a deep emotional experience."<sup>10</sup> For Guerard, the real religious significance for the family came out of Beaver Falls, whereas the other places where the family moved possessed their own unique flaws. In California, the ministers "lacked vitality... [and] gave the impression of a lack of positive belief."<sup>11</sup> In Denver, the family "had not felt in whole-hearted sympathy either with the colorless little group of Covenanters... or the Methodist spirit of the University."<sup>12</sup> In effect, the family became "neither fully convinced Covenanters, nor Methodists, nor Presbyterians", and this lack of denominational identity led to an "undernourished religious life" because, at that time, one was not able to "think of religion apart from any particular denomination."<sup>13</sup> By the time of his enrollment in the University of Wisconsin, Guerard presents her brother as being somewhat cold to the faith, and this was manifested in Macartney's attendance of a Congregationalist church of "decidedly advanced views"<sup>14</sup> as well as his intellectual attitudes. Guerard writes, "His graduating thesis on Byron's *Cain* had in it a note of pessimism, despair and unbelief". After

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<sup>10</sup> Wilhelmina Guerard. "Clarence Macartney: Biographical Notes". Typed manuscript, Macartney Papers. 31

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Guerard, *Clarence Macartney*. 32



reading such conclusions, Guerard asked her brother about the religious implications of the analysis to which he responded, “It is all very well if you can believe those things: I cannot.”<sup>15</sup>

Fosdick’s crisis of faith likewise occurred during his college years. After returning home from Colgate College, due to the family’s financial constraints, Fosdick started questioning the conservative religious notions he had previously believed. His move away from the traditional doctrines began when he started questioning the credibility of the story of Samson found in the Book of Judges. This Bible story recounts the life of one of Israel’s judges, Samson, who was credited with superhuman strength. Fosdick recalled asking himself “why should I feel under duress to believe the Samson stories, while feeling under no similar coercion to believe tales about the Greek strong man, Hercules?”<sup>16</sup> After considering this question, and others related to it, Fosdick came to the startling revelation that he “did not have to believe anything simply because it was in the Bible.”<sup>17</sup> For Fosdick, this was the magic key that would release him from his problems associated with literalism and legalism. No longer would he have to defend, personally or outwardly, the difficult passages of scripture or the seemingly harsh points of orthodox doctrine.

When Fosdick finally returned to Colgate after his own “year out”, he largely rejected the faith. He later recalled that “wild horses could not have dragged me into church” during this period of adolescent wandering. When he entered his third year of studies this rejection of orthodox faith reached its height, and he later recalled telling his mother, “I’ll behave as though there were a God, but mentally I’m going to clear God out of the universe and start all over to

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Fosdick, *The Living of These Day*. 52

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

see what I can find.”<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, Fosdick’s rebellion from the faith was short lived, and he made a return to the Christian religion, although not to the same orthodox position from which he started. Fosdick’s year of exploring truth outside of the confines of the traditional faith led him full circle. He began to “doubt some of [his] doubts”, and he began to see a way to believe old “spiritual values in new mental categories.”<sup>19</sup> By the start of his final year of study at Colgate, he had made up his mind that he wanted to enter the ministry in order that he could share his discoveries with others harboring similar doubts. Interestingly, both Fosdick and Macartney share a similar experience of adolescent religious doubt, and yet, they ended up embracing entirely divergent theological positions in response.

#### Changing Role of the Pastorate in America

The United States has always been a dynamic nation, and this certainly applies to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the period of time that shaped and influenced Macartney and Fosdick. When both of these men were born, America’s frontier was coming to a close, and this was accompanied by a growth of the nation’s cities and towns. By 1920, America would be a majority urban nation. Additionally, the American economy changed considerably over this period. Once a nation of farmers and independently supplied homesteads, America became an industrial juggernaut over the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it would lead the world in industrial production for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The nation also experienced new forms of cultural expression owing to increased immigration from non-Anglo-Saxon peoples, new technology, the growth of a consumer culture, and the proliferation of new forms of political expression including socialism, populism, and progressivism. All of these

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 54

developments, while not directly related to American religion, affected the way that the American people approached and experienced their religious faith, and this, in turn, shifted the role of the American pastorate.

For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “only a tiny fraction of Americans went to college; the educated clergy stood out as members of the intellectual elite.”<sup>20</sup> Since the beginning of American higher education beginning with Harvard College in 1636, American colleges were controlled by various Protestant denominations, and their purpose was largely centered on the education of future ministers. America’s ministers were not an entirely educated class (many populists in the frontier areas disavowed formal education), but in an era with low levels of general education, the ministry was typically one of the more prestigious and well-educated professions within any given American community.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, America’s clergy began to lose their near monopoly on higher education. “Around 30 percent of graduates in the 1830s entered the ministry, and in some colleges more than half sought ministerial careers. But in thirty-seven Eastern colleges the number of graduates entering the ministry declined from 30 percent in 1820 to 25 percent in 1840 and 20 percent in 1860.”<sup>21</sup> The largest factor informing this trend was the “professionalization” of the American labor force that developed in response to the industrializing economy. While much of the nation remained farmers, many realized that they could earn a better, and more consistent, income by becoming a professional in business, medicine, law, or within the growing government bureaucracy. Colleges and universities took notice of this trend toward “professionalization”, and they created new professional degrees

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<sup>20</sup> E. Brooks Holifield, *God’s Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America*, Pulpit & Pew (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2007). 116

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

alongside the traditional liberal arts curriculum they had always offered. In 1862, Congress passed the Morrill Land Grant Act, and it provided states with funds to create new public universities established with the purpose of providing a professionalized curriculum in such areas as agriculture, engineering, metallurgy, and commerce. These changes seemingly “democratized” higher education in the sense that more and more Americans (including more educational opportunities for women and African Americans) were provided access. With Americans as a whole becoming more and more professionalized, they demanded a similar level of professionalism from their ministers, and the growth and standardization of America’s seminaries can be seen as an attempt on behalf of the nation’s denominations to bring their ministers into professional conformity.<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly, 20<sup>th</sup> century business gradually took on religious undertones while 20<sup>th</sup> century churches began to more closely resemble businesses. Nowhere was this more evident than in the changing time allocation of ministers. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, American ministers divided their time between sermon preparation and pastoral calls. In an era before government welfare, church benevolence was one of the few forms of supplemental income that one could rely on during difficult times. The growth of government agencies and charitable organizations diminished the pastorate’s role in providing for the physical well-being of the community<sup>23</sup>, and it, among other factors, contributed to a gradual marginalization of the ministry. Another reason for the decline of pastoral calls may have been related to the increase in administrative duties that the typical minister faced. One Episcopal bishop in Ohio discussed the need for new priests to

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<sup>22</sup> For more on this idea see chapters 3 and 4 of Holifield, *God’s Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America*, Pulpit & Pew (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> Robert Staughton Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947). 344

“be a business leader,” with the ability to “make a bargain” and “do things.”<sup>24</sup> Another pastor confessed that, “I see myself becoming little more than the well-paid executive of a large business corporation.”<sup>25</sup> Churches, especially in cities, moved toward the ideal of the “institutional” church, and this meant that they aspired to be a church “with a seven-day-a-week program”<sup>26</sup> to meet the needs of children, teenagers, mothers, fathers, businessman, the elderly, and etc. The “institutional” church needed more staff, volunteers, and space to accomplish its mission, and all of this took careful organization and planning. Much of this fell on the minister, who became more and more of a “C.E.O” of his church.

The relationship between the minister and his congregation was also altered because of shifts among the congregants themselves. One feature of American religious history is competition. Congregants have always been members of their churches voluntarily, and one’s degree of activity within their congregation comes out of personal motivation rather than from state coercion. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, competition took place largely between ministers, churches, and denominations. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century maintained this same competition between churches, but it also included competition from new forms of entertainment and leisure. For 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans, especially on the frontier, a church sermon constituted spiritual nourishment, entertainment, news, and one’s civic duty. “The increase in popular education, the heavy diffusion of new channels of information,” as well as the growth in popular entertainment such as automobiles, radios, magazines, and movies tended “to dwarf the relative significance of the sermon.”<sup>27</sup> “From its inception, Protestant revivalism had functioned as a form of entertainment.

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<sup>24</sup> Holifield, *God’s Ambassadors*. 161

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Fosdick, *The Living of These Days*. 203

<sup>27</sup> Lynd, *Middletown*. 345

Holiness meetings were no less staged theatrical events than any others.”<sup>28</sup> This, as previously mentioned, was taking place as the sermon was “becoming relatively more important among the things done by ministers with declining pastoral work.”<sup>29</sup> In this type of environment, where the sermon was both losing societal influence while also becoming the principal pastoral duty, successful ministers were often the ones who used the office creatively and looked for new roles and outlets for their message.

Clarence Macartney was one of these creative ministers who noticed the changing role of the pastorate. In the spring of 1914, he gave an address to the Men’s league of Philadelphia on the topic of why men go to church. In preparation for this address, he wrote to several prominent leaders in the areas of American government, education, and commerce. Each man spoke to the spiritual benefits of attending church services, rather than any possible social or fraternal benefits. Macartney must have noticed early on in his ministry that those who go to church for social reasons or in search of entertainment were in decline and that the churches were left with men and women interested mainly in the spiritual matters. “The Rev. Mr. Macartney said the letters indicated that men do not go to church to ‘hear the music or to listen to a lecture on literature or a political tirade.’”<sup>30</sup> There were newer and better places to fill these types of needs, but the Church remained a place of spiritual nourishment and salvation for this new generation of churchgoers.

This discussion should not be interpreted as the portrayal of an overall declining ministry. Rather, it should be placed within the context of an increasingly dynamic American society. American Protestant churches in 1900 were spending more on foreign missions, baptizing more

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<sup>28</sup> R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). 150

<sup>29</sup> Lynd, *Middletown*. 345

<sup>30</sup> “Why Men Go to Church Is Topic,” *Columbus Daily Inquirer*, April 12, 1914.

believers into their ranks, building larger and more expansive churches, and opening new seminaries and universities. However, the American culture as a whole was broadening and advancing at an even faster rate. For really the first time, Americans had the option to meet needs that were traditionally met by churches outside of organized religion. Advances in psychology and counseling meant that one could discuss personal afflictions and struggles in an entirely secular context. The growth of civic clubs and fraternal organizations, particularly Rotary International, Lions International, and the Freemasons, allowed community members to experience fellowship with one another and serve their communities in a secular context. In regards to entertainment, the biggest draw from the church pew seems to have been the automobile. After working throughout the week, many well-to-do Americans felt the urge to travel and spend the day seeing new places and visiting neighboring attractions. In *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*, Robert and Helen Lynd's famous study of the "typical American city" in the 1920s, the authors feature an account describing an elderly man's Sunday daytrip and how it impacted his church behavior. The man recounts how he was able to visit a gorgeous lake about eighty miles from home and he credited the trip with broadening his outlook. However, when asked if he missed church to participate in this excursion, he felt the need to defend his decision saying, "I never missed church or Sunday school for thirteen years and I kind of feel as if I'd done my share... [if the ministers want to maintain members they should] make church interesting enough so they'll want to come."<sup>31</sup>

In this type of environment, one of increased competition, Fosdick and Macartney were able to thrive and gain national notoriety. Their most important attribute was that both of them were spellbinding urban preachers. They were able to connect with America's growing

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<sup>31</sup> Lynd, *Middletown*. 260

professional class because they possessed the intellect and class distinction to match. Fosdick, though quite poor in his youth, was able to make a name for himself early in his career, and he felt at ease among America's growing upper class. He even befriended America's richest man: John D. Rockefeller Jr, a sustained benefactor throughout his long ministry. Macartney, raised in an opulent setting of frequent travel and fine living, always sustained a sense of distinction and behaved with a *noblesse oblige* attitude in regards to his ministry. When discussing her brother's relationship with his Philadelphia congregation, Wilhelmina Guerard noted "strange as it may seem, Clarence found real companionship with these humble people. He appreciated their affection and devotion, which he returned in a lordly, feudal way."<sup>32</sup> In this respect, Fosdick and Macartney mirrored what America wanted to be during this time. Here were two masculine and high-class figures with dynamic visions for themselves, their ministries, and their communities. They spoke with a commanding presence, and their sermons left the masses waiting expectantly for the next week's installment. Even in their doctrinal debates, they possessed a level of confidence that allowed them to remain steadfast to their deeply held assumptions.

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<sup>32</sup> Guerard, *Clarence Macartney*, 57



## ***Part II: World War I, the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, and Radio***

Though they certainly exhibited similarities before the American entry into World War I in 1917, Clarence Macartney and Harry Emerson Fosdick do not constitute truly effective comparisons until their debates in the late 1910s and early 1920s. When the theological controversy began, both men were natural choices to serve as their respective side's spokesman because of their name recognition, powerful pulpit presence, and because of their social connections. The fact that this controversy played out in the court of public opinion as well as the ecclesiastical governing bodies provides another glimpse into the changing role of the Protestant pastorate in the modern era. This section will analyze the strategies employed by both men, and it will pay particular attention to their similar use of emerging media forms, their similar rhetorical appeals, and their similar support of the American entry into World War I.

### World War I

World War I was a pivotal moment for the whole of the American Protestant pastorate, and it was especially impactful for the ministers who experienced the battlefields of Europe firsthand through volunteer work and the chaplaincy. In terms of this study, the war opened up the first channels of dialogue and dispute between Macartney and Fosdick. Before the war, it was possible that they had heard of one another, and they might have even read each other's works. However, the war seemed to instill a sense of urgency in both of them, as it reintroduced theological concepts and divisions that had been largely under the surface up until that point. To a large degree, the divisive stands against one another in the summer of 1922 would not have been possible without the impetus of a catastrophic world war.

Right around the time of the war, both men had just begun to make their transition to the national stage. In 1914, Macartney, the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Paterson, NJ,

received the call to take up the pastorate of Arch Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Taking this call was a great opportunity for the precocious cleric's future, as "the position of the church, in the very heart of one of America's greatest and oldest cities, made a strong appeal" to him, and the church membership rolls featured a number of wealthy and prominent Philadelphians. Yet the new call also held challenges and potential for growth as, "the church was much run down, the congregation sparse; [and] it was on the 'wrong side' of Market Street."<sup>33</sup> Likewise, Fosdick had also been "rising through the ranks" in the lead up to World War I. In 1915 Fosdick left his pastorate at the First Baptist Church in Montclair, NJ to become the Morris K. Jesup Professor of practical theology at his *alma mater*, Union Theological Seminary. Before this appointment, Fosdick had been (simultaneously with his pastorate in Montclair) an instructor and associate professor of homiletics at Union as well as a popular speaker at student conferences and university chapels around the country, and it was these speaking experiences that helped him to develop a reputation for connecting with the younger generation.

It was during this time of teaching and scholarship that Fosdick later claimed to have settled his use of scripture. After discussing the challenges of Biblical scholarship with a colleague, Fosdick came to a realization that "the ancient writers [of the Bible] had to express the truths they saw in the mental frameworks of their time". From there he sought to devise a system that "makes clear what those ancient categories were, traces the changes by which new mental frameworks had arisen, and makes evident both how wrong the reactionaries are when they treat old conceptual forms as binding on us and how wrong the radicals are when they suppose that

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<sup>33</sup> Macartney, *The Making of a Minister*. 169

because an old way of putting truth has been outmoded the truth itself has been outgrown.”<sup>34</sup>

Fosdick elaborated on this idea further in his Union inaugural address from September of 1915. He publically acknowledged the inability of the scriptures to be harmonized with modern science and thought, but he encouraged preachers to embrace the scriptures nonetheless, as a source of truth written in the context of a different time and culture. While obviously critical of conservatives, who held to the absolute inerrancy of scriptures, Fosdick also used his speech to address the fallacies of religious progressives. Rather than ignoring troubling texts or pointing out their logical fallacies, Fosdick called upon preachers to an emphasis on experience and an eye for the Bible to see that “deeds are preachable when words are not.”<sup>35</sup>

It is not surprising that Fosdick and Macartney ended up in New York City and Philadelphia. As college and seminary educated ministers, both men were a part of the Protestant pastorate’s elite. Even into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Protestant pastors did not possess any sort of formal education. Those that were educated, such as Macartney and Fosdick, “gravitated toward the urban pulpits. By 1926, in the twenty largest Protestant denominations, 46 percent of the urban clergy had both a college and seminary degree.”<sup>36</sup> In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the demand for well-educated urban pastors was high. “At the most popular churches, crowds lined up before the doors opened to gain a good seat, and tourists flocked to hear celebrity preachers as part of their experience of the city.” As a sort of preview of Fosdick’s ministry later in the century, earlier urban pastors such as Washington Gladden “refashioned the sermon for an urban middle-class audience. . . the urban pulpit encouraged innovation.”<sup>37</sup> This trend only continued throughout both men’s lives. By 1920, America was, for the first time, a majority

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<sup>34</sup> Fosdick, *The Living of These Days*,. 118

<sup>35</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, *A Modern Preacher’s Problem in His Use of the Scriptures* / (New York :, 1915).

<sup>36</sup> Holifield, *God’s Ambassadors*. 173

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 161

urban nation, so both men's decision to answer the call of an urban pulpit gave them an important voice in the new American society.

The beginning of their ministries broadly coincided with their entrance to the world of book publishing, and both men were able to capitalize on a rapidly growing publishing market.<sup>38</sup> By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “a small [publishing] business could be staffed economically, and printing costs were such that it was economically feasible to print as few as 1,000 copies of a new book. It was thus comparatively easy to make a start, especially because the long-term credit that printers were prepared to grant made a minimum of capital necessary.”<sup>39</sup> In addition, they were the beneficiaries of new mail-order techniques, trade catalogs, book clubs, and increasing numbers of specialty bookshops. This, combined with the continued growth of literacy in America and the emergence of a large “middlebrow” culture, allowed Fosdick and Macartney to reach a considerable number of Americans. Culturally speaking, early 20<sup>th</sup> century Americans were arguably better suited for religious books than earlier generations had been. With the growing move toward “professionalization” and the accompanying rise of a middle class, writing served as the communicative medium that was preferred by most Americans. Whereas America's founding generation had used rhetoric to invoke emotional appeals and where eloquence and beauty stood center stage, the 20<sup>th</sup> century professional culture valued efficiency and precision in communication.<sup>40</sup> Books, both

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<sup>38</sup> In 1908 Fosdick published his first book; a short work with help from his wife entitled *The Second Mile*. The following years resulted in more popular books and articles, namely *The Assurance of Immortality* (1913), *The Manhood of the Master* (1913), and *The Meaning of Prayer* (1915). Macartney published a history of his Paterson, NJ Church in 1913 followed by a book of sermons, entitled *The Parables of the Old Testament* (1916).

<sup>39</sup> “History of Publishing | Britannica.com,” accessed January 16, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/publishing>.

<sup>40</sup> Cheryl Jean Glenn, *Rhetorical Education In America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012). See Chapter 1 “Rhetoric, the ‘Citizen Orator,’ and the Revitalization of Civic Discourse in American Life” by Wm. Denman

economically efficient to produce and precise standards of professionalized information resonated quite well with the professional class.

In the lead up to World War I, both Macartney and Fosdick agreed that the United States had a place and responsibility in the conflict. Both men wrote publicly about the war, and, interestingly enough, both published responses that were strikingly similar. Fosdick wrote a book on the topic entitled *The Challenge of the Present Crisis* (1917). It was fairly well-received and sold some two hundred thousand copies in addition to being republished in a British edition.<sup>41</sup> Later in life, Fosdick recalled, “It is the only book I ever wrote that I wish had not been written.”<sup>42</sup> In essence, the book represents a Christian defense of war, which Fosdick presents as being occasionally necessary to promote Christian ideals. Reflecting the general nuance of Fosdick’s call to arms, the book warns readers about the danger of relying too much on technological prowess. In a section entitled “The Limitations of Force”, he writes that “the peril with most Americans is not that they will undervalue force during these days of war; the peril is that they will be obsessed by it.”<sup>43</sup> Through this book, Fosdick was able to forge a critical and balanced view on the debate, and its popularity demonstrates that it, at least in part, helped to transform the isolationist American people into belligerents on the world stage.

Macartney made his own thoughts on the subject known in a published sermon entitled “Danger ahead: peculiar perils for the church arising out of the present national situation”.<sup>44</sup> Though much shorter than Fosdick’s exposition on the subject, it makes many of the same points, and it even includes a quote from Fosdick’s *The Challenge of the Present Crisis*. Macartney warned of four possible spiritual perils that could or were already facing the

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<sup>41</sup> Fosdick, *The Living of These Days*, 121.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Fosdick, *The Challenge of the Present Crisis*, 48

<sup>44</sup> Clarence Edward Noble Macartney, *Danger Ahead: Peculiar Perils for the Church Arising out of the Present National Situation* (1917).

American people, and these included the tragedy that results from secularization of the Lord's Day, the "undue exaltation of the achievements of force"<sup>45</sup>, the danger of excessive and vindictive nationalism, and the greatest peril, the war's potential to corrupt Christian doctrine and ethics. In regards to this last peril, Macartney feared that the sacrifice of Christ would face competition from those who sacrificed for democracy, and he prophetically predicted that, "when they who have died in a good and righteous cause are brought home for burial and we behold the noble panorama of human valor and sacrifice, there will be little inclination on the part of the great majority to hear the story of the Cross."<sup>46</sup> This statement was prophetic in that he would ultimately end up debating Fosdick on this very issue. This fight was down the road, however, and at the time of America's entry into the war in 1917, Macartney and Fosdick were decidedly allies in their calls for the nation to engage in a "Christian war".

Though both Fosdick and Macartney agreed on the appropriateness of America's entry into World War I, this agreement was not unusual within the ranks of America's Protestant pastorate. Both liberals and conservatives came together in such a way that "what the churches had failed to accomplish in the furtherance of church unity in half a century of virtual peace came about almost overnight in a united effort to help kill the Germans."<sup>47</sup> However, it is interesting to note that the similarities between Macartney and Fosdick went farther than a mere agreement on the merits of American intervention. At a time when a large contingent within the American Protestant pastorate exuded seething rhetoric directed against Germany, Macartney's and Fosdick's call for war against the Germans was relatively measured and lacked the vitriolic fervor that characterized some of their compatriots in the ministry. Lyman Abbott, the famed

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ray H Abrams, *Preachers Present Arms: The Role of the American Churches and Clergy in World Wars I and II, with Some Observations on the War in Vietnam*, [Revised]. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1969). 80

Congregationalist minister and editor of *The Outlook*, was unapologetic in his support of the war effort, and he went so far as writing that he vehemently hated the Germans and could not possibly forgive them in the way that Jesus commanded.<sup>48</sup> Abbot's successor at Brooklyn's Plymouth Congregational Church, Newell Dwight Hillis, garnered even more notoriety for his attacks against the Germans, and his rhetoric represents a significant trend within the Protestant pastorate that blurred the line between fact and fiction when it came to German war crimes. Hillis combined "crowd psychology" and brilliant oratory in rallies around the country.<sup>49</sup> Through his many speeches, Hillis debased the Germans with tales of graphic sexual violence and sadistic imagery that revolted but also intrigued listeners. Ultimately, Hillis' speeches and the many salacious and theatrical stories shared by his fellow pastors proved to have little basis in reality, but these stories did help to frame the conflict as a "Holy War", with the United States fighting for righteousness against godless German opponents.

The outbreak of the war in 1914 and the U.S. entry in 1917 had a direct effect on Fosdick and an indirect effect on Macartney. During this time, Macartney remained the pastor at Arch Street Presbyterian Church, and while the war certainly factored into his ministry, it did not alter it in any fundamental sense. In early 1918, Fosdick, on leave from his position at Union, sailed to France to become an itinerant speaker to allied soldiers under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A. and the British Ministry of Information. Fosdick left the States as a firm proponent of American entry into the First World War, yet he returned home a pacifist that would never again promote another war. Perhaps the most important reason for this change stemmed from the fact that "Fosdick, like almost every one of his age and class, brought to his understanding of the war a set of apparently

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<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Abrams, *Ibid.* 110

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 101

coherent and complete religious and moral precepts that would finally prove inadequate.”<sup>50</sup>

Before World War I, the world had never experienced a truly “modern war”. Fosdick witnessed the carnage of modern war firsthand in the battlefields of France, and the realization of just how destructive modern war truly was served as the main reason behind Fosdick’s drastic change of opinion. The experience changed his ministry, and “for eight months, beginning in November 1918, every sermon made extended reference to the war.”<sup>51</sup>

While the war may have deflated the liberal notion of progress for Fosdick, it served to only reinforce the need for another liberal notion... social ethics. When pondering the great irony of how predominantly Christian nations could wage the deadliest war in history against fellow Christians, Fosdick concluded that individualized religion had failed to influence the behavior of states, thus allowing collective bodies to behave in an “un-Christian” like manner even when individuals behaved correctly. Fosdick noted how this tendency was clearly reflected in the life of a German pastor and politician named Friedrich Naumann. According to Fosdick, “Naumann adores both Jesus, the Master of the neighborly life of individuals, and Bismarck, the master of the struggling life of states... and Naumann agrees with both.”<sup>52</sup> For Fosdick, the war seemed to only heighten the Church’s need for his theologically liberal message. Before, it was merely helpful for men and women cofounded by the modern age. After the war, professing the correct theology seemed to have life or death implications.

1918 and 1919 were pivotal years for Fosdick. Back in the United States, he resumed his teaching at Union Theological seminary, but he also picked up an offer that “combined the two

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<sup>50</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*, 79.

<sup>51</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, *A Preaching Ministry: Twenty-One Sermons Preached by Harry Emerson Fosdick at the First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York, 1918-1925* (New York: The Church, 2000). 26

<sup>52</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, “Judas, Not Iscariot,” *The Biblical World* 53, no. 5 (1919): 451–58.



vocations [he] had always cared for most, teaching and preaching.”<sup>53</sup> Fosdick accepted an unusual call from New York’s historic First Presbyterian Church. Because of changing demographics and pastoral retirements, the three principle New York City Presbyterian churches decided to merge under the First Presbyterian (Old First) name. Fosdick, at this time, was already known for his liberal theology and for a new outlook on the faith. The new combined church sought Fosdick as its first minister, as they were largely sympathetic to his liberal views. Fosdick declined this initial call because he did not want to leave his teaching position and because he “could not make the creedal subscription necessary to become a Presbyterian clergyman”<sup>54</sup>, but when the church came back with their second offer, he decided not to refuse it. In an unusual compromise, the new church decided to hire three preachers. Dr. George Alexander, the previous minister of Old First, decided to stay on in a reduced role and was given the title of Senior Minister. A young associate named Guthrie Speers was charged with the pastoral work, and Fosdick was responsible for preaching alone.

Fosdick’s January 1919 article in *The Atlantic*, entitled “The Trenches and the Church at Home”, represents the first time that Fosdick’s wartime experience can be seen exhibiting an influence on his doctrinal beliefs. The article was addressed to the average layman, and it called on them to develop “a new slant in [their] view[s] of the relationship we at home bear to these men in the trenches”<sup>55</sup> Based on his own experience at the front, Fosdick felt that America’s churches were inadequately prepared to meet the spiritual needs of returning soldiers. Fosdick believed that the returning soldiers’ greatest need was authenticity, and he noted, “they have a

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<sup>53</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*. 93

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, “The Trenches and the Church at Home,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, January 1919. 23

quick instinct for what is genuine, for what rings true and really counts.”<sup>56</sup> Additionally, Fosdick criticized the “selfishness” inherent in American Protestantism’s emphasis on personal salvation and the avoidance of damnation, and he noted that this type of religious engagement would prompt returning soldiers to leave the Church. In light of this, Fosdick noted the natural opposition that exists between the characteristics of a soldier, naturally sacrificial and “self-forgetful”, with the role of an American evangelist, advocating a “self-centered” faith.<sup>57</sup> Ultimately, Fosdick believed that American Protestantism’s survival rested upon its willingness to adapt to the new post-war reality and to present religion in a way that met the returning soldiers’ unique experiences.

Upon reading this *Atlantic* article, Macartney felt an affinity with the Prophet Zechariah when he penned the words, “I was wounded in the house of my friends”<sup>58</sup>, and he used this verse as the title of his responding article in *The Presbyterian*. Macartney was already familiar with Fosdick because of his many books, speeches, and publications (positively quoting Fosdick in his own 1917 article on the upcoming war), but this was the first time that Macartney publically opposed Fosdick on a doctrinal matter. Macartney’s article begins with a slight jab at Fosdick by praising the “hard-working ministers who have little time even for magazine reading, not to speak of writing for the magazines...”<sup>59</sup> Fosdick’s publication in a popular, secular magazine, such as *The Atlantic*, was intended to reach people outside of the traditional church auspices, but Macartney here speaks of it as if it is almost irreverent... an act of negligence to the noble role of pastoral work and counseling. Regardless of this interesting commentary on the changing role of the pastorate, Macartney explicitly condemned Fosdick’s departure from orthodoxy and went so

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 24

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Zechariah 13:6

<sup>59</sup> Clarence Macartney, “In the House of My Friends,” *The Presbyterian*, March 6, 1919.

far as to claim that Fosdick's plea "wounded him who is the Founder and the Lover of the Church."<sup>60</sup> Macartney also claimed that Fosdick was simply using the returning soldiers' unique situation to further his own hidden agenda, commenting that the "denial of some of the great truths of the Christian religion and ridicule of some of the others seem more formidable when they are put into the mouth of a returning hero from the slaughter pens of Europe."<sup>61</sup> This article was consistent with how Macartney would continue to respond to Fosdick's writings in the future, specifically in the sense that doctrine was paramount for him. Starting with this article, Macartney developed a pattern of logically going through each point of Fosdick's departure from orthodoxy, pointing out why and how he considered it inferior and incoherent.

What can help explain the shift between Macartney and Fosdick from general agreement before the war to opposition and distrust after the war? For one thing, their war time experiences were very different. Fosdick, as was previously mentioned, zealously signed up for the war effort, and he spent the war speaking to allied soldiers as a Y.M.C.A. chaplain. Macartney "was invited to take charge of the religious work in one of the principal camps, but had to choose between going into the army as a chaplain or a Y.M.C.A. worker and remaining at [his] present post [Arch Street Presbyterian pastor]."<sup>62</sup> Macartney eventually decided to stay on as a local pastor, as he decided it was "by far the more important and more difficult post, if less romantic."<sup>63</sup> This statement is revealing in that it may help to explain the asymmetrical levels of fame between both men at this point in their careers. Fosdick, the author and lecturer, had less experience on the congregational level; rather, he spent much of his time trying to reach the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Macartney, "In the House of My Friends."

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

widest possible audience with his message. Macartney, on the other hand, did not oppose publicity within the pastorate, but he viewed service in the local church as being preeminent.

While Macartney spent much of the war doing the same things as he had before the war, Fosdick's wartime experience as a chaplain exposed him to an entirely new perspective. The war brought Americans together from all different regions, social classes, religious faiths, and political persuasions. Levi Levinger, a Jewish Chaplain during the war, felt that "we were all one in a very real sense" and this stemmed from his experience "read[ing] psalms at the bedside of dying Protestant soldiers.... and [holding] the cross before a dying catholic."<sup>64</sup> Out of necessity, the war broke down religious and denominational division, and it aided in efforts for inter-faith dialogue and ecumenism. Given Fosdick's predisposition for these ideals to begin with, it makes sense that these wartime experiences only emboldened him to preach a novel Christian faith for a new generation, and it is likely that the plight of the war instilled a sense of urgency within him.

Ironically, the divergence between Macartney and Fosdick after World War I contributed to their similar experiences in the 1920s. Before the war, they agreed on many of the major issues and did not feel the need to vigorously advertise their theological beliefs. This is not to say that either man would have completely endorsed the other's theology in 1910 (as Fosdick openly espoused a modernistic understanding of the Bible in his Union Seminary inaugural address), but they certainly did not feel threatened by one another's views and this is evident in Macartney's conciliatory remarks toward Fosdick in his pre-war tract. On the eve of America's entry in 1917, both preachers believed that America had a definitive role in the European conflict. Yet, their differing wartime experiences led them to espouse very different ideas in postwar America. For Fosdick, sobered by the destructive power of a modern war, his wartime experience instilled in

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<sup>64</sup> David Mislin, "One Nation, Three Faiths: World War I and the Shaping of 'Protestant-Catholic-Jewish' America," *Church History* 84, no. 4 (December 2015): 828–62.

him a sense of urgency, and it moved his theological liberalism from being primarily focused on good behavior and assuaging doubters to one that was more militantly opposed to emerging fundamentalist theology. Though Fosdick did not blame the cause of the war completely on fundamentalist theology, he definitely (as we've seen with his analysis of Naumann) viewed the fundamentalist focus on individualized religion as being especially dangerous. Macartney, buttressed by his long view of history, stayed remarkably stable in doctrine and practice throughout the war. By the 1920s, these divergent attitudes led to the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates, and these differences have been the focus of historians ever since. Under the surface, however, the similarities in tactics that both preachers had practiced and honed in the 1910s grew unabated into the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates of the 1920s. Both men only increased the number of books published, their involvement with print media, and they both served as pioneers in an exciting new medium called radio.

### Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy

#### *Firing Shots*

On the morning of May 21, 1922, Harry Emerson Fosdick ascended the pulpit of the First Presbyterian Church in New York to deliver his famous sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" In doing so, Fosdick identified and vilified an emerging theological coalition that had been steadily organizing over the previous few years. As George Marsden notes in his famous volume, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, fundamentalism was made up of a diverse array of special interests and doctrinal communities. Rather than simply consisting of uneducated, rural, and older Americans, fundamentalists came from almost every denomination, included well-educated urbanites (such as Macartney), holiness sects, dispensationalists,

immigrant groups, and old-fashioned Calvinists.<sup>65</sup> The Fundamentalists that Fosdick criticized in his sermon were not monolithic, by any means, but the varying Fundamentalist factions did seem to rally around a common defense of the infallibility of scripture and a core group of doctrines laid out in *The Fundamentals*. *The Fundamentals* were a set of 90 essays financed and published in the 1910s by the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. It was dedicated to the promulgation of conservative Protestant beliefs, and it became the source from which the Protestant Fundamentalists received their name. Fosdick's sermon provided the reason and impetus for the fundamentalist and liberal debates to emerge on the public stage within the Presbyterian Church. Unlike an academic or a small town pastor, Fosdick had already developed national name recognition by the time of the controversy, so his involvement with this issue introduced the debate to many Americans for the first time.

In the opening lines of the sermon, Fosdick claims to be responding to fundamentalist assaults from within the Presbyterian Church, and to his credit, there were several instances of fundamentalist activity in the months preceding his sermon. For example, in early 1922 Fosdick had a public dispute with William Jennings Bryan over the issue of evolution, with their debates prominently featured in the *New York Times*.<sup>66</sup> Besides this dispute with Bryan, a famous Presbyterian layman, the 1921 General Assembly had also rejected ecumenical efforts to strengthen mainline Protestant unity, but it is unclear as to Fosdick's exact opinion on this matter because he did not appear to issue a public response. What Fosdick was sure to know about, however, involved developments on the mission field. In the early 1920s, several fundamentalist

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<sup>65</sup> See part II of Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture* for more detail on how these diverse groups came together

<sup>66</sup> "Professor at Union Theological Seminary HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK and New York Preacher at the First Presbyterian Church, ATTACKS W.J.B.: Preacher Says Bryan's Article on Evolution Works Injury to Bible--God Infinitely Grander Than Occasional Wonder-Worker Martin Luther and Bryan. The Bible's Precious Truths. Danger of Materialistic Teaching. Heart of Problem. ATTACKS W.J.B.," *New York Times*, March 12, 1922, sec. Special Features.

evangelists claimed that the Presbyterian missionaries in China were not espousing correct beliefs, and one observer reported to the Philadelphia Presbytery that he had witnessed “rampant apostasy among the Northern Presbyterian missionaries.”<sup>67</sup> In 1921, Fosdick was invited to speak in China, and he witnessed the mission situation there first hand. His speech, delivered before fundamentalists, moderates, and liberals alike, sought to “present a common platform on which the two sections may perhaps unite”, and it was perhaps the last instance when Fosdick was lauded as a unifying figure for both sides of the growing doctrinal debates.<sup>68</sup> Despite these fundamentalist activities, there had been no serious attempts from the conservatives or fundamentalists within the denomination to punish or dispel any liberal ministers. J. Gresham Machen, a well-known professor of the New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, was one of the more vocal opponents of liberalism in the denomination (both before and after Macartney’s sermon), but he came short of calling for full dismissal and merely called for Liberals to depart the confessional bodies voluntarily.<sup>69</sup> Although Fosdick’s sermon includes little background as to the actions that had inspired it, it is hard to imagine that Fosdick was not considering at least some of these fundamentalist actions when crafting his sermon.

Fosdick also began his sermon by distinguishing conservatives from fundamentalists (this is something Marsden also did in his study<sup>70</sup>), and at one point he even claims, “all Fundamentalists are conservatives, but not all conservatives are Fundamentalists. The best conservatives can often give lessons to the liberals in true liberality of spirit, but the

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<sup>67</sup> J. Michael Utzinger, *Yet Saints Their Watch Are Keeping: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and the Development of Evangelical Ecclesiology, 1887-1937*, 1st edition.. (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 2006). 241

<sup>68</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*. 106-108

<sup>69</sup> Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996). 8

<sup>70</sup> George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd edition. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Fundamentalist program is essentially illiberal and intolerant.”<sup>71</sup> By making this distinction, Fosdick attempted to broaden his support beyond only those that held liberal views of the Christian faith. In a denomination where the vast majority of laymen and ministers were generally conservative in their theological perspectives, Fosdick could never expect to make any progress by alienating the beliefs of the majority. This distinction helped Fosdick to convince some conservatives, not necessarily to reject the supernatural elements of the Bible or to accept evolution wholesale, but that new doctrinal beliefs deserve a place within the Presbyterian Church and should not be expelled.

On July 13, 1922, Clarence Macartney delivered the sermon “Shall Unbelief Win?” as a direct response to Fosdick and his allies. While it is unclear whether the Presbyterian Fundamentalists specifically chose Macartney to serve as the cause’s standard-bearer or whether Macartney’s response emerged more or less organically, there is little doubt that Macartney had the credentials to serve as the public face of those who opposed Fosdick. For one, Macartney had never identified as a fundamentalist before this episode. Recalling the event later while writing his memoir, Macartney admitted that he “had no association with any so-called ‘Fundamentalist’ group; but when [he] read Dr. Fosdick’s sermon...it struck [him] as a direct assault upon cardinal Christian truth.”<sup>72</sup> In addition, he sat on the Princeton Seminary Board of Directors and pastored a church in the Philadelphia Presbytery. In both cases, these associations gave him the historic conservative credentials that contrasted nicely with Fosdick’s emphatically liberal pedigree, a Union professor preaching in the New York Presbytery. From a symbolic perspective alone, Fosdick’s and Macartney’s respective sermons seemed to personify the growing divide in the Northern Presbyterian Church, and their dispute can be viewed as the final manifestation of the

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<sup>71</sup> Fosdick, *A Preaching Ministry*. 190

<sup>72</sup> Macartney, *The Making of a Minister*. 184



long expected and dreaded confrontation between the conservatives of Philadelphia/Princeton and the liberals of New York/Union.

While they do address each other's arguments, both Macartney and Fosdick speak past one another in their respective sermons. Fosdick mentions some examples of the finer doctrinal points (i.e. virgin birth, scriptural reliability, the second coming of Christ), but his message was principally centered on a call for greater doctrinal freedom within the Presbyterian Church, presumably for both conservatives and liberals. Macartney, on the other hand, spent the majority of his sermon defending the specific doctrinal points brought up by Fosdick, and his response to Fosdick's call for liberty was simply the insistence that when a man preaches from a Presbyterian pulpit he is bound by the official confessional creeds that he swore to abide by when ordained as a minister. This epistemological divide is reflected in a series of letters between Fosdick and Macartney, the only known direct communication between the two men. In it, Macartney inquires to whether he accurately quoted Fosdick in his sermon. Fosdick replies that he quoted the words properly but missed the real meaning of the plea. "What you have done is largely to neglect the whole purpose and object of my sermon, and then, lighting upon my brief and sketchy outline of certain liberal positions, you have with that scanty material imagined a theological position for me to hold which is a preposterous caricature of what I really think."<sup>73</sup> By the end of their correspondence they were not able to forge a consensus of any sort. They simply could not agree whether the Church ought to follow the spirit of the age-old doctrines (Fosdick) or whether they should follow the letter of those same doctrinal points (Macartney).

Despite this epistemological divide that has clearly dominated the discussions of Fosdick and Macartney, both men's sermons share subtle similarities in terms of their rhetorical

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<sup>73</sup> Macartney and Fosdick, "The Correspondance Between Dr. Fosdick and Dr. Macartney Anent the Philadelphia Overture." *The Presbyterian*, December 7, 1922

techniques. Although largely unnoticed by scholars, this should not be surprising given their similar rhetorical education and their powerful pulpit presence. In both cases, each minister exuded a sense of level-headedness and presented sound, logical arguments that appealed to the listener's sense of reason, and even when contending for a very specific worldview, each minister encouraged a sense of nuance on the part of their listeners. Part of this logic involved an appeal to history. Fosdick, in the initial sermon, argued that the reconciliation between science and religion was neither novel nor particularly controversial when placed within an historical framework. For Fosdick, the issues surrounding evolution and the age of the earth were really no different than the Church's adoption of a heliocentric model of the universe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In both cases, Fosdick believed that there had always existed an active minority that sought to impede progress but that history has continually proved the proponents of progress to be correct in the long run. Macartney, a historian in his own right<sup>74</sup>, also based his arguments from the lessons of history, though he reached opposing conclusions. Citing the experiences of prominent converts from liberal theology and naturalism, including biologist George Romanes and liberal cleric Reginald Campbell, Macartney viewed diversions from orthodox Christian doctrine as constituting only minor detours from the overall trajectory of the Church, and he believed and certainly hoped for the possibility of Fosdick's return to the traditional Protestant beliefs. Likewise, Macartney cited Fosdick's unorthodox sermon as representing only a mere continuation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century deists. Ultimately, Fosdick and Macartney believed that the best way to promulgate their respective position was to lay aside emotive arguments in favor of logical and historically rooted reasoning. Each preacher sought to reach the up-and-coming

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<sup>74</sup> Macartney was an amateur historian of the American Civil War. He wrote several books on the subject, the first one being *Lincoln and his Generals* (1925).

urban professional class, which prized logic and reason over the emotive revivalism that had won over their grandfathers back on the farms during the revivals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Another reason for this cool and detached rhetorical style had to do with reaching the non-militant conservative majority within the Presbyterian Church. While most preachers and laymen in the denomination were not fundamentalists, they were not liberals either, and convincing them was absolutely crucial for winning the ecclesiastical battles ahead. It is hard to define the beliefs of this group since they did not organize or profess a single message, but they tended to agree with the fundamentalists on the specific doctrinal issues while also being sympathetic to the liberals in their message of tolerance. One of the most important leaders in this group was a man named Charles Erdman. Erdman was principally a scholar, although he did pastor several churches including the Presbyterian Church in Princeton. Erdman had all of the conservative credentials that would have allowed him to be a pivotal fundamentalist figure during the doctrinal debates of the 1920s if he had so chosen. As such, he “accepted such doctrines as the virgin birth, bodily resurrection, and [the] physical return of Christ”; in addition, he served as a contributor for *The Fundamentals* with an article entitled “The Coming of Christ.”<sup>75</sup> However, Erdman lacked the militant zeal that characterized Machen and Macartney, and he believed that it was more Christ-like to work with liberals, despite disagreements, than to simply dismiss liberal theology as a non-Christian religion as Machen and Macartney did.

Bradley Longfield, in his book on the controversy, notes that both sides within the denomination’s conservative wing shared core beliefs with the divisions resulting from “differing emphases”. “For Machen the church’s mission was the preservation of and propagation of true belief; for Erdman, its task was to bring men and women into right relation

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<sup>75</sup> Bradley J. Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates*, Religion in America Series (Oxford University Press) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). Pp. 140-142

with God.”<sup>76</sup> These differences escalated to the point that when Erdman ran to replace Macartney as Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1925, Machen labeled Erdman as the candidate for the “Modernist and indifferentist party in the church.”<sup>77</sup> These disputes between conservatives only served to push Erdman into an alliance with the liberals, and this split within the conservative majority of the denomination can help to explain how Fosdick and his fellow liberals were able to accomplish much of their agenda despite being a small minority with fairly unpopular theological beliefs.

Another rhetorical strategy that Fosdick implemented in his sermon had to do with merging cultural currents with ecclesiastical matters. With the country as a whole in a “democratic mood”, Fosdick called upon the notions of “democracy” and “liberty” in his sermon to argue that the denomination ought not to prohibit the free expression of doctrinal thought, just as American society as a whole did not regulate the freedom of thought, speech, and expression of its citizens. In his sermon, Fosdick proclaimed that,

“This is a free country and anybody has a right to hold these opinions or any others, if he is sincerely convinced of them. The question is: has anybody a right to deny the Christian name to those who differ with him on such points and to shut against them the doors of the Christian fellowship? The Fundamentalists say that this must be done... If they had their way, within the church, they would set up in Protestantism a doctrinal tribunal more rigid than the Pope’s.”<sup>78</sup>

While Fosdick was quick to call for the end of the confessional nature of the Presbyterian Church, he did not have much to offer in terms of what could replace the common identity provided by a creed of shared beliefs. In his sermon, Fosdick does defend many of the liberal doctrinal points, but the thrust behind his argument is that in a free society such as his own, the church should not delineate between what a church member can think and what a church member cannot think. His strategy and rhetoric was built on the hopes of endearing the

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 149

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Fosdick, *A Preaching Ministry*. 193

conservative majority while simultaneously deflating the fundamentalists and discouraging them from enforcing the doctrinal standards. In this way, Fosdick is shown to be a strategic and methodical thinker that “carefully calculated the timing and the wording of the sermon.”<sup>79</sup>

Fosdick’s strategy to invoke democratic virtue in order to support his argument for allowing liberal doctrine in the denomination was savvy, especially when considering the general societal trends. In the early days of the American Republic, democracy was viewed with skepticism by large numbers of Americans. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, America was much more sympathetic to democracy as evidenced by the passage of the 17<sup>th</sup> amendment, the popular election of U.S. senators, in 1913 and the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, guaranteeing women the right to vote, in 1920. Macartney was aware of the immense rhetorical power of the term “democracy” during the 1920s, so he made sure to carefully craft his arguments against ecclesiastical democratization. This was most clearly fleshed out in an article he wrote regarding the debate on allowing women into the ranks of church leadership. In an article written for *The Presbyterian* in January 1921, Macartney argued against an amendment to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church that would have allowed “women to ordination as ruling elders or as deacons” principally because “the Presbyterian Church is a New Testament Church.”<sup>80</sup> He acknowledged early in his article “the question before us now is not one as to the usefulness and honorable work of women in the church... that is an altogether different question.”<sup>81</sup> It is important to note that Macartney makes a clear distinction between the culture at large and the culture of the church.<sup>82</sup> In the case of the later Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, the logic

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<sup>79</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*. 116

<sup>80</sup> Clarence Macartney, “Shall We Ordain Women as Elders and Deacons?,” *The Presbyterian*, January 13, 1921.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Though Macartney was not quite the civil libertarian as was his ally, J. Gresham Machen, in this particular argument, Macartney embraces the separation of church and state. Though, in this case, he is particularly concerned about keeping the attitudes of American society out of the Church.

would be the same. Macartney believed that regardless of the mood of the culture at large, the Presbyterian Church should function as a distinctive body that takes its authority from the official creeds that govern it. Fosdick, though free as an American to believe anything he wanted at large, ought to be bound by the traditions of the denomination when speaking from one of its pulpits. In both cases, each preacher used their oratorical and educational backgrounds to create sound arguments for their respective side, and their arguments proved to be convincing enough that they emerged from the summer of 1922 as the *de facto* public faces of fundamentalism and liberalism within the Presbyterian Church.

While Fosdick may have crafted his sermon to be a “plea of good will” to the tolerant and non-militant conservatives in the denomination, his use of the sermon and subsequent actions convey an altogether different message. Following the sermon, Fosdick may have only “passively” agreed for its printing and distribution, but the relationships he had forged since his move to New York guaranteed the sermon’s growth and dissemination. Even before his preaching duties began at Old First, Fosdick had befriended the Rockefeller family and had very close ties to John D. Rockefeller Jr., the heir of one of America’s most successful companies and an avid proponent of liberal Christianity. Rockefeller was familiar with Fosdick as early as 1908, when he was still only a young preacher in Montclair, NJ, and by 1916, Fosdick and Rockefeller were in definitive contact as Fosdick was elected to the Rockefeller Foundation Board. Fosdick’s sermon was mass distributed and edited by an employee of Rockefeller named Ivy Lee, known today as the “Father of Public Relations”.<sup>83</sup> The published version of Fosdick’s sermon, entitled “The New Knowledge and the Christian Faith”, was distributed to 130,000 preachers across the

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<sup>83</sup> See Ray Eldon Hiebert, *Courtier To the Crowd: The Story of Ivy Lee and the Development of Public Relations*, First edition (Iowa State University Press, 1966)

nation, and Rockefeller largely financed its mailing.<sup>84</sup> Rockefeller suggested the name change in an attempt to make the treatise less polemical to the broader public;<sup>85</sup> even still, the treatise did not sit well with many fundamentalists who responded with a clamor of their own. In the previously mentioned correspondence between Fosdick and Macartney, Fosdick makes the claim that he had no role in the publication of the sermon, as he writes,

“Allow me to say that Mr. Ivy L. Lee, a gentleman not of our congregation and whom I have no recollection ever of having met, took my sermon, slightly abridged its introduction and conclusion, reprinted it, gave it a new title, and broadcasted it widely through the land. I had nothing whatever to do with this, and did not have the slightest idea that it was being done until a few days before the sermons were actually mailed.”<sup>86</sup>

Yet, as Gary North points out in his book entitled *Crossed Fingers*, Fosdick in his own autobiography admitted that he had given Lee permission to publish the sermon.<sup>87</sup> Fosdick’s sermon, rhetorically crafted to evoke a sense of innocence, was published and distributed in a much more confrontational manner.

Ivy Lee, much in the same way as Fosdick, believed in the power and importance of popular opinion in the emerging interconnected society. Born a preacher’s son from Georgia, Ivy Lee served as a public relations specialist for the Rockefellers starting with the Ludlow Massacre in 1914. Lee’s public relations advice can be summed up in one of his better-known quotes: “Tell the truth because sooner or later the public will find it out anyway. And if the public doesn’t like what you are doing, change your policies and bring them into line with what the people want.”<sup>88</sup> Along these lines, Lee advised that the Rockefellers show more interest in the lives of their workers, and he arranged visits between the Rockefeller family and the workers at their plants, adding a personal touch to the employer-employee relations. In many ways, this was

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.thisday.pcahistory.org/2014/07/july-13/>

<sup>85</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*. 117

<sup>86</sup> Clarence Macartney and Harry Emerson Fosdick, “The Correspondance Between Dr. Fosdick and Dr. Macartney Anent the Philadelphia Overture.”

<sup>87</sup> North, *Crossed Fingers*. And see page 146 of Fosdick’s *Living These Days*

<sup>88</sup> Quoted in Hiebert, *Courtier To the Crowd*, 4-5

similar to Fosdick's religious attitudes. Both were members of the elite, but they realized that their power stemmed from forging relationships with the average man on the street, and their shared interest in speaking to individuals as opposed to representatives of institutions was both unusual and a risky proposition. Both Fosdick's and Lee's rationale behind the distribution of the sermon was that "in a democracy nothing can succeed that does not have the acceptance of the public. An idea must be understood before it can be accepted."<sup>89</sup>

#### *Use of New Media*

Much of the literature on the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in the Presbyterian Church has made much of the ecclesiastical battles that took place during each summer's General Assembly meetings. The developments that took place in these meetings were crucial to the outcome of the controversy, and Macartney played a direct role in the proceedings, culminating with his election as moderator of the 1924 General Assembly in Grand Rapids, Michigan. However, this approach is somewhat limiting in the sense that it makes little mention of the public relations battle that took place on a much broader scale. Between their sermons in 1922 and until Macartney's move to Pittsburgh in 1927, both Macartney and Fosdick spent considerable energy in the attempt to reach the average middle class listener with their respective messages. In this sense, the theological disputes and the shared public relations strategies are inexorably linked. Because of the growth of American media, both pastors would have had a difficult time avoiding the media spotlight that accompanied the controversy even if they had wanted to. In his later memoir, Macartney remembered the early days of the controversy as being a time of great excitement; "The newspapers of New York and other great cities gave the matter extraordinary publicity. Mass meetings of conservative and evangelical Presbyterians were held

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid. 227



in different centers, and the battle raged in all parts of the Church.”<sup>90</sup> The pastorate as a whole followed a similar path in the first half of the twentieth century, as celebrity preachers and religious popularizers eclipsed those endowed with formal offices within Protestantism’s many denominational institutions.

Despite the highly visible ecclesiastical debates surrounding their opposing sermons, Fosdick and Macartney spent the early 1920s using similar tactics behind the scenes. These years were busy for both of them, and they effectively utilized newspapers, magazines, books, tracts, and speeches to cultivate a popular following. In the aforementioned series of correspondence between Macartney and Fosdick, Macartney actually lauds Fosdick for his organizational prowess and skill in cultivating a public following. Macartney writes, “I congratulate you upon the skill and courage with which, consciously or unconsciously, you are leading the whole rationalistic and naturalistic movement in the Protestant church. Your friends and supporters and admirers are legion [veiled insult from Mark 5, perhaps?]... You are gaining recruits by the thousands. In academic circles you and your friends have practically captured the field.”<sup>91</sup> Both men assuredly believed that they stood for the cause of righteousness and that in the end they would be vindicated through Divine means, but they would have also agreed that it sure is helpful to have public opinion on one’s side.

Newspapers and magazines have been a feature of American life since the colonial era, but the first few decades of the twentieth century seemed to revolutionize this medium of communication so much that a study of this era is incomplete without mentioning its impact. In *Middletown*, Lynd equates newspaper consumption with status, writing “every business man in

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<sup>90</sup> Macartney, *The Making of a Minister*. 185

<sup>91</sup> Macartney and Fosdick, “The Correspondence Between Dr. Fosdick and Dr. Macartney Anent the Philadelphia Overture.”

Middletown wakes in the morning to find a newspaper at his door.”<sup>92</sup> Moreover, the growth of communication and transportation networks allowed the news to transition from focusing on solely local issues, to national and even international stories. In Middletown, “the circulation of out-of-town papers, which, according to the older citizens, was negligible in 1890, now totals 1,200 to 1,500 a day.”<sup>93</sup> In addition, publications including *The New Yorker* (1925), *Colliers* (1888), *The Saturday Evening Post* (1821), *Liberty* (1924) and *Reader’s Digest* (1922)<sup>94</sup> grew to become must-reads for any middle class family across America. Similar to how the whole of the modern consumer culture was premised on making emotional connections with consumers, “publications like *Reader’s Digest* filled a need; they allowed readers to feel they had mastered the crucial questions of a complex and fast-changing era.”<sup>95</sup> Macartney and Fosdick recognized the power of print media, and they used this medium of communication to directly relate with the middle class.

Not long after the controversy in the spring and summer of 1922, both men began engaging with the media to win popular support to their side. Their choice of publication reflects their respective strategies and attitudes toward the controversy. Macartney’s first interaction with print media had occurred early in his life when he submitted an article to the *Chicago Inter Ocean* during his undergraduate days at the University of Wisconsin. His “first published article was the story of an encounter with a mountain lion in the San Bernardino Mountains in California... [it was] mostly fiction, but with some background of fact.”<sup>96</sup> During the theological controversy in the 1920s, his most ardent supporter and his primary place for publication became

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<sup>92</sup> Lynd, *Middletown*. 471

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> See Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, (University of Illinois Press, 1956)

<sup>95</sup> David Welky, *Everything Was Better in America: Print Culture in the Great Depression* (University of Illinois Press, 2008) .

<sup>96</sup> Macartney, *The Making of a Minister*. 216

a Philadelphia based weekly entitled *The Presbyterian*. This journal, founded in 1831, was an independent publication with a decidedly theologically conservative bent. In 1911, David Kennedy was selected as the editor of *The Presbyterian*, and both Macartney and Machen served as associate editors of the publication during the 1920s. At each stage of the controversy, *The Presbyterian* was Macartney's first point of attack. As was discussed in the previous section, after Fosdick's 1918 article in *The Atlantic*, "The Trenches and the Church at Home", Macartney responded in kind with his article, "In the House of My Friends", in *The Presbyterian*. During the initial stage of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in 1922, Macartney's sermon in response to Fosdick, "Shall Unbelief Win?", was featured first in *The Presbyterian*, as was the correspondence between the two men. Though a Fundamentalist stronghold throughout the 1920s, the publication's last conservative editor, Samuel G. Craig, was removed from the position in 1930.<sup>97</sup>

What exactly were Macartney's goals behind using *The Presbyterian*? For one, it was a Philadelphia based publication, so it was likely read by every Presbyterian minister in the area in addition to prominent laymen interested in church affairs. Fosdick, when publishing his thoughts on the controversy, published primarily in the nationally recognized publications, particularly *Harpers Weekly*, *The Atlantic*, *The Ladies Home Journal*, and *The New York Times*. From the perspective of the sheer number of readers alone, Fosdick's articles reached many times the amount of people that Macartney's articles reached. However, Macartney may have chosen *The Presbyterian* in order to reach a specific audience. Macartney's immediate reaction to Fosdick's May 1922 sermon was to organize an overture within his Philadelphia Presbytery to the General Assembly. This overture (developed in conjunction with his like-minded colleagues in the

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<sup>97</sup> "A Brief History of The Presbyterian Magazine," - *The Continuing Story* -, April 23, 2011, <https://continuing.wordpress.com/2011/04/23/a-brief-history-of-the-presbyterian-magazine/>.

Philadelphia Presbytery) called upon the New York Presbytery (Fosdick's presbytery) to demand that Fosdick preach within the officially stated creedal standards of the denomination. While he used letters, meetings, sermons, and other means to gain support for the overture, his use of *The Presbyterian* was one of the more effective ways for him to garner support from within the official denominational apparatus, as it was a widely disseminated platform within the Philadelphia presbytery. However, another possibility is that Macartney would have liked to publish in a more prominent secular publication, such as *The Atlantic* or *The Ladies Home Journal*, but simply did not have the name recognition or skill as a writer to do so. Macartney's first article for a national publication was an article entitled "Believers and Doubters", and it was featured in *The Ladies Home Journal* in May 1924, the same month that Macartney was elected as moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly. When compared to the earlier criticism he levied at Fosdick for publishing the "Trenches and the Church at Home" in the *Atlantic*, Macartney must have at least softened his views on secular magazines, but his relative dearth of articles in the national publications compared to his plethora of articles in smaller denominational publications supports the idea that he was most interested in garnering influence through institutional channels and that Fosdick's popularizing tendencies slowly encouraged him to move into the national spotlight in order to effectively compete with liberalism.

In contrast to most Protestant preachers before him, Fosdick primarily used popular, nationally circulated publications to get his message out, and this method also reflects his values and overall strategy during the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates. Fosdick harbored deep skepticism of the denominational structure of American Protestantism, and his whole career can be aptly characterized as an attempt to foster Christian faith and sentiment in a nonsectarian manner. Fosdick also believed in communicating in such a way that lifted up and encouraged the

individual (one of his more famous articles was entitled “Building a Personality”<sup>98</sup>).

Traditionally, Protestant preachers had used an expository manner for preaching, and their sermons routinely employed the historical setting, theological implications, ethical considerations, and the exhortation of the applicable truths of a particular Biblical text.<sup>99</sup>

However, Fosdick felt that this method of preaching no longer connected with the average man or woman on the streets of New York, and he believed that he could do better by using sermons to address real life and pragmatic concerns within his congregation. He thought that he could attract and assist a greater number of people through a “head-on constructive meeting of some problem,” and he later labeled this approach as “counseling on a group scale.”<sup>100</sup> With the backdrop of an increasingly consumeristic society, Fosdick crafted his sermons to fill listeners’ spiritual desires, and he appears to have found success in this strategy because Fosdick commonly reported listeners saying that his sermons seemed as if they were written specifically with their concerns in mind. While other theological liberals were dabbling with the abandonment of the sermon altogether, Fosdick attempted to save it by pushing aside that which he considered outdated while maintaining the sermon’s essence and all that had comforted Christian believers for two millennia.

If Fosdick’s sermon style was considered new and exciting for listeners, Macartney’s sermons exhibited a similar level of creativity and novelty. Macartney likewise veered away from more of the traditional expository approach to preaching most likely because of the average parishioner’s inability or disinterest in the study of weightier theological points. Though he believed in the total inerrancy of scriptures, he perceived that most ordinary listeners, even when

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<sup>98</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, “Building a Personality,” *The Reader’s Digest*, May 1937.

<sup>99</sup> Fosdick, *The Living of These Days*,. 92-94

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

devout, were less inclined toward the formal study of scripture and were more interested in engaging stories and lessons. Macartney enjoyed reading biographies of famous men in history, and he brought this love of biography into his preaching of the Bible. Scores of his sermons involved the lives of Biblical characters ranging from the well known to the more obscure. Macartney did not stop with biblical biographies, however, as he included relevant biographical vignettes from history and literature. Because Macartney believed that the Bible possessed absolute truth revealed by God to humanity, he used examples from history, biography, and literature as evidentiary support for the overarching truths exhibited in any given particular biblical passage.<sup>101</sup>

In order to generate further excitement from the congregation and to solidify his sermon as the centerpiece of each weekly service, Macartney delivered sermons in anthological form that kept parishioners eagerly awaiting the next Sunday's installment. In 1941, Macartney published a book that stemmed from a series of sermons he had delivered several years before. In preparation for a series of biographical messages on the greatest men in the Bible, Macartney "set aside a space in the weekly bulletin of the First Presbyterian Church and invited the members of the congregation to vote for 'The Ten Greatest Men in the Bible'".<sup>102</sup> These sermons, though definitively conservative in their theological orientation, were prepared with the average middle class parishioner in mind. In this sense, Macartney and Fosdick were quite alike in their popularity in the pulpit. Both of them were eager to be creative in their homiletic approaches, and the vast majority of their sermons were not polemical in nature. Though they realized the severity of what was at stake in the theological controversy, their sermons from

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<sup>101</sup>For more on Macartney's rhetoric and the epistemological worldview that informed it, see Harry Farra, "The Rhetoric of Reverend Clarence Edward Macartney: A Man Under Authority." (Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University, 1970)

<sup>102</sup> Clarence Edward Macartney, *The Greatest Men Of The Bible* (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), 5.

week to week shared the same desire to reach middle class listeners with spiritual truths that had direct application to their changing lives and resulting anxieties.

When Fosdick contributed articles to *The Atlantic*, *The Ladies Home Journal*, or to *Reader's Digest*, it is likely that he employed much of the same strategies and insight as his “counseling on a group scale” preaching style. Whereas Macartney initially used *The Presbyterian* and other denominational publications to garner support within the denominational apparatus, Fosdick utilized the popular and nationally circulated publications to connect directly with the average middle class American. By 1924, with his first submission to the *Ladies' Home Journal*, Macartney seems to have given up the opposition he had once harbored against popular magazines, and he effectively embraced Fosdick's use of middlebrow publishing thus “catching up” to his opponent in this respect. In this sense, both men pushed one another to become more and more dynamic and expansive in their use of communicative mediums. Though elite, they were forced to present themselves in a populist light as exemplified by their desire to create sermons and articles that could be accessible to all. By contributing to secular publications, Macartney and Fosdick were given an opportunity to influence individuals who may have been outside the realm of organized religion. Though initially opposed to the pastorate's role in magazine publications, Macartney was possibly spurred on by the prospect of his liberal antagonists gaining ground in the battle for public opinion.

Fosdick's involvement with the secular press was not limited to the major magazines and newspapers based out of New York. Fosdick received positive newspaper editorials in places as far as Tulsa, Oklahoma, where an editor named Crawford Wheeler wrote an article entitled “The Heresy of Millions” defending Fosdick during the height of the controversy.<sup>103</sup> Already an author

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<sup>103</sup> Crawford Wheeler, “The Heresy of Millions,” *The Tulsa Tribune*, December 3, 1922.

before the controversy, Fosdick's literary fame and prominence only grew throughout the controversy. Throughout this period, Fosdick continued to make his opinions known through publications including the *Modern Use of the Bible* (1924), *Christianity and Progress* (1922 speech, but later adopted into a book and article), and *Science and Religion: Evolution and the Bible* (1924). Macartney likewise continued to publish. As was already mentioned, Macartney's only known articles featured in the national press were in the *Ladies' Home Journal* between 1923 and 1926, and this broadly coincided with his election as moderator of the denomination. Interestingly enough, Macartney, during his time as moderator, did not actively seek to use his position within the denomination to curtail liberalism through formal institutional means. Instead, he used his position to gain a national platform for his message, and his year as moderator was filled with speaking engagements and articles that sought to rally the majority of non-militant conservatives (as we have already seen with the case of Charles Erdman) to the fundamentalist side.

An interesting consequence stemming from the growth of a truly nation-wide media was the breakdown of the denominations and the subsequent growth of new movements. These developments were often unpredictable, and they did not fit into the nicely developed historiographical molds that predated Marsden's study. For one, the mass production of Fosdick's books, articles, and radio addresses allowed men from across the country (Wheeler from the *Tulsa Tribune* is an example) to have a meaningful connection with Fosdick's brand of religious liberalism even in the "heartland" of fundamentalist religious beliefs. The new proliferation of media softened the geographical divisions that had long shaped men's opinions of the world around them, and they allowed new relational contacts that would have been very difficult to foster in an earlier age.



By participating in the national media channels, Macartney was more similar to Fosdick than to many of his more insular fundamentalist allies. For many fundamentalists, especially exemplified by the career of a Minneapolis Baptist minister named William Bell Riley<sup>104</sup>, the national media channels proved difficult to effectively control, so they instead sought to create a fundamentalist sub-culture complete with their own publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, conferences, and Bible schools. The creation of this sub-culture contributed to the ultimate divergence between the fundamentalists and liberals. Macartney's activities between the years 1922 and 1926 were mixed in the sense that he utilized both fundamentalist channels and national channels. While he wrote many of his articles in smaller fundamentalist publications, *The Presbyterian* and *The Sunday School Times* for example, he also showed an interest in the national media channels as is evident in his article submission to the *Ladies' Home Journal*, his election as moderator of the denomination and the national platform that came with it, and his early use of radio (which will be discussed in a later section). Though initially reluctant, Macartney ultimately followed Fosdick onto the national stage, and their use of new and improved communicative channels to oppose one another doctrinally vaulted both of them into the position of celebrity preacher.

There were many celebrity preachers in the 1920s, so Macartney and Fosdick were not distinctive because of their fame alone. Billy Sunday, a late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century evangelist, was already well known even before his entry into the ministry because of his professional baseball career. In addition, his sensational and highly dramatic pulpit presence captivated listeners, and at the very least, left them intrigued by his passion and vigor. Across the country, the growth of Pentecostal Christianity vaulted a woman named Aimee Semple

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<sup>104</sup> For a helpful study on Riley, see William Vance Trollinger, *God's Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism*, History of American Thought and Culture. (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

McPherson into national fame followed by notoriety. McPherson established her own church, called Foursquare Gospel Church, in 1923, and she quickly became one of the more recognizable public figures of the 1920s. Similar to Macartney and Fosdick, she was an early radio pioneer, and her dramatic style and public healings provided her with ample media coverage. However, her reported kidnapping in 1926 followed by allegations of an extramarital affair did much to stymie her national reputation. Sunday and McPherson spoke to different audiences than Fosdick and Macartney. These populist evangelicals resonated more with America's lower and working classes, and their reliance on large tent revivals as their primary communicative method reflected this emphasis. When Sunday spoke, rural and working class people liked that his message "was plain and practical, appealing to common sense and reasonable judgment."<sup>105</sup> Sunday's plain speaking was a world apart from Macartney and Fosdick, who dotted their sermons with poems (Lord Byron makes many appearances in Macartney's sermons), historical anecdotes, and social statistics. As members of the educated Protestant establishment, Macartney and Fosdick spoke to a much more affluent crowd, and their media involvement and publishing strategies were chosen with this goal in mind.

#### *Mixed Results*

Ultimately, the results of the controversy were mixed for both men. Macartney's mobilization efforts within the denomination largely paid off in the short term. During Macartney's tenure as moderator in the summer meeting of 1924, the judicial commission finally put the Fosdick issue to rest once and for all. In a move that was lauded by liberals, fundamentalists, and moderates alike, the Judicial Committee of the Presbyterian Church announced that if Fosdick planned to preach "for an extended time he should enter our Church

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<sup>105</sup> William Cooper, *The Great Revivalists in American Religion. 1740-1944* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010). 132

through the regular method and become subject to the jurisdiction and authority of the Church.”<sup>106</sup> Conservatives favored this resolution because it placed Fosdick under their rules and regulations, and it would become easier to discipline him in any new doctrinal breach. The liberals favored this decision because it allowed Fosdick to maintain his pulpit at Old First, and it would guarantee that the liberal wing of the church had a strong advocate in its midst. Fosdick, when learning of this decision, decided to resign rather than subscribing to the Presbyterian creeds needed for ordination within the church. One reason that he cited for this decision was that it would be a “violation of [his] conscience”<sup>107</sup> for him to subscribe to a creed that lacked relevance to the modern world. He also viewed a move toward Presbyterian ordination as “moral surrender”; as such a move would indicate to his many supporters that the liberal ideals they had strived for were less important than maintaining one’s job. Based on his strategy of disseminating his message widely through the use of the secular press, Fosdick’s decision to leave the denomination was less severe than it might have been for a lesser-known preacher. His popularity ensured that any future endeavor, writing or preaching, would garner a following, and his connection with “the people”, through his books and articles, provided him with religious authority, though he stood outside of any denominational structure.

Macartney may have “won” the controversy in the short run by ridding the denomination of Fosdick, but the denomination as a whole experienced a leftward drift in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Around this time, the fundamentalist faction within the Presbyterian Church experienced a split between those who believed in remaining with the denomination so that they could reform it from within with those who saw the denomination as completely apostate and sought to leave it altogether. J. Gresham Machen, Macartney’s ally throughout the debates, fell

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<sup>106</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*. 132

<sup>107</sup> Fosdick, *The Living of These Days*. 172

into the latter camp, and in 1929 he left Princeton Theological Seminary to found his own conservative seminary and by 1936 he was out of the denomination all together.<sup>108</sup> Additional losses in the 1926 General Assembly left Macartney marginalized within the denomination as the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy was largely settled under an official position of tolerance for individual belief and conscience. These experiences were disheartening for Macartney, who later reflected on them in an article for *The Christian Century* entitled “Warm Hearts and Steady Faith”. Following the controversy, Macartney started to “feel that the strength of my own church, the Presbyterian, has been greatly reduced by its failure on certain occasions to witness strongly to its creed... I value less the whole ecclesiastical structure, and feel that more and more for the true witness to the gospel and the Kingdom of God we must depend upon the particular local church, the individual minister, and the individual Christian.”<sup>109</sup> Just like that, Macartney largely laid up his Fundamentalist mantle, and the remainder of his ministry was carried out in a less polemical and correspondingly less visible manner.

As we have seen so far, both Macartney and Fosdick used similar means to establish their differing theological and ecclesiastical goals. This analysis would be incomplete without at least mentioning the role of wealthy and influential laymen in both cases. Rockefeller, the longtime friend of Fosdick, was directly involved in financing and planning for the distribution of Fosdick’s “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” sermon. Macartney, though not nearly as directly, received support from a wealthy Philadelphia businessman named John Wanamaker (Wanamaker’s Department Store). After Fosdick’s sermon was initially distributed, prominent members of the Philadelphia Presbytery met in Wannamaker’s home to plan the fundamentalist

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<sup>108</sup> See chapters 7, 8, and 9 in Longfield's *The Presbyterian Controversy* for more detail on the results of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in the Presbyterian Church.

<sup>109</sup> Clarence Macartney, “Warm Hearts and Steady Faith,” *The Christian Century*, March 8, 1939.

strategy, and the eventual Philadelphia overture came out of this meeting. Likewise, Wanamaker's Philadelphia pastor, a man named Gordon MacLennan, played a pivotal role during the floor fights of the Fosdick case in the 1923 General Assembly. Of greater importance for Macartney was his relationship with William Jennings Bryan. Though he lacked the wealth of Rockefeller or Wannamaker, his name recognition and powerful oratorical skills were invaluable in both waging the ecclesiastical debates and in generating newspaper coverage on the national scale. Behind both Macartney and Fosdick stood wealthy and influential laymen that helped to cull resources and curry influence to accomplish their mission and goals.

### Radio

Radio was the most significant new medium of the 1920s. The first official radio station in the United States was KDKA, established in November 1920 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The following January, the station broadcasted the world's first religious radio broadcast from Pittsburgh's Calvary Episcopal Church.<sup>110</sup> "The new medium of radio was to the printing press what the telephone had been to the letter: it allowed immediacy. It enabled listeners to experience an event as it happened."<sup>111</sup> More than that, even, radio served as the characteristic culmination of all the media advances previously discussed in this study. While advances in newspapers, magazines, and publishing did much to forge a common culture for modern Americans, it was ultimately "radio [that] made America into a land of listeners, entertaining and educating, angering and delighting, and joining every age and class into a common culture."<sup>112</sup> The new medium was quick to catch on. In 1923, the same year that Macartney began his radio ministry, "an estimated 400,000 households had a radio, a jump from 60,000 just the year

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<sup>110</sup> Tona J. Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial: Radio, Religion & Popular Culture in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). 21

<sup>111</sup> Tom Lewis, *Empire of the Air: The Men Who Made Radio*, (New York: Harper Perennial Press, 1993). 1

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

before.”<sup>113</sup> During the 1920s and beyond, radio was a powerful tool for both Macartney and Fosdick, and their use of the new medium raises many interesting questions involving the changing role of the American Protestant pastorate.

In August of 1922, Fosdick was approached by Charles Popenoe, RCA executive and station manager of New York’s WJZ station, about the prospects of beginning a radio ministry.<sup>114</sup> Fosdick was initially dubious about the idea, unsure of whether it would catch on with the general listening public, but he was encouraged to undertake the project by his church’s board of trustees as well as his senior pastor. Although negotiations took place between Fosdick and the radio station, a deal was not reached in 1922. However, negotiations began again almost two years later, and a deal was ultimately reached in the fall of 1924 with Fosdick’s first broadcast taking place on October 12, 1924 from Aeolian Hall.<sup>115</sup> Fosdick’s change of opinion with regard to the use of radio cannot be ascertained for certain, but it may have had to do with Macartney’s embrace of the medium.

Macartney submitted an article for the September, 1924 edition of *The Ladies’ Home Journal* under the title “Preaching by Radio”. The article discusses Macartney’s opinions and experience after about a year and a half in radio ministry, and his evolution on the subject bears a marked resemblance to Fosdick’s. Macartney began broadcasting sermons sometime around the beginning of 1923, and the article begins with a discussion surrounding his former reservations about the use of radio for preaching. Based upon his “conservative training and experience in the severe dignity of Presbyterian worship, it seemed to me that a radio attachment would be almost

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 162

<sup>114</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*. 381

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

grotesque and irreverent. I felt that it would cheapen the meaning of the church service.”<sup>116</sup>

However, experience with the new medium convinced him that these initial reservations were overblown, and Macartney discovered that the benefits of radio ministry far outweighed the costs. In the typical vivid style characteristic of Macartney’s writing, he included several dramatic, and seemingly apocryphal, vignettes describing those who benefitted from the sermons: a “group of men who were smoking and playing cards when the service started [yet when they heard the sermon] one by one laid by their cigars and cards”, a bedridden woman in the hospital who “beckoned [Macartney] to her side saying that she had recognized the voice she had heard so often over the air”, and the city bootlegger who “had stills in several quarters of the city and was making a great deal of money” yet who confessed to experiencing regeneration writing to Macartney, “your sermon on Paul finished me”.<sup>117</sup>

It is an interesting coincidence that Fosdick’s second try with radio occurred only a month after this article by Macartney was published. Although he never explicitly identified Macartney’s use of radio as the impetus for his return, he did cite the desire to provide a modernist perspective to oppose fundamentalist voices as a central reason for opting into the radio ministry. In a letter to a disgruntled small town pastor who believed that radio sermons reduced his own church’s attendance, Fosdick replied in part, “Sunday mornings the air will be full of sermons in any case. The query is only whose sermons will be on the air. It is needless to name those representing a type of Christianity which you and I do not believe in. Ought we to leave the air to their monopoly? I do not believe we should.”<sup>118</sup> Unlike the arena of magazine

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<sup>116</sup> Clarence Macartney, “Preaching By Radio,” *The Ladies Home Journal*, September 1924, Berea College.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Harry E. Fosdick to Howard D. French, November 24, 1926. Harry Emerson Fosdick Papers, Series 4D, Box 1, Folder 8, Burke Theological Library.

publishing, where Macartney seemed to trail Fosdick in use of the medium only to later embrace it after presumably noticing Fosdick's success, Macartney's was the earlier voice on the radio.

While both men experienced great success in their radio ministries, they also experienced pushback from lesser-known (and mostly rural) preachers who claimed that radio sermons kept would-be parishioners at home by their radios and diminished their churches' overall attendance. The widespread adoption of radios had a profound impact on rural Americans. Never before had these people been given access to the nation's preeminent musicians, orators, or entertainers, and both Fosdick's and Macartney's radio ministries helped to hasten their transition from mostly local figures to truly national personalities. When presented with these allegations, Macartney denied the negative aspects of his radio ministry and focused solely on its benefits. Of all the letters that Macartney received in response to his radio ministry, he claimed to have only received "two which intimated that the broadcasting in the city churches was having a bad effect on the attendance elsewhere."<sup>119</sup> Fosdick received similar letters, and for one minister in Brooklyn, the competition that resulted from Fosdick's radio ministry added yet another "great handicap... to ministers whose fields already are difficult."<sup>120</sup> For another preacher in Western New York, radio ministries served "a growing number of religiously indolent and socially selfish mortals who morally and financially starve their own communities and churches who both enjoy and find a sop for conscience in listening to sermons over the radio."<sup>121</sup> In response to these types of allegations, both Macartney and Fosdick cited how the broadcasts brought religious comfort to shut-ins and how they increased, rather than diminished, the general population's religious affections and local church involvement. Regardless of whether the net results of

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<sup>119</sup> Macartney, "Preaching By Radio."

<sup>120</sup> Howard D. French to Harry E. Fosdick, November 23, 1926, Harry Emerson Fosdick Papers, Series 4D, Box 1, Folder 8, Burke Theological Library.

<sup>121</sup> J.W. McGavern to Harry E. Fosdick, November 30, 1926, Harry Emerson Fosdick Papers, Series 4D, Box 1, Folder 8, Burke Theological Library.



religious broadcasting were positive or negative for American Protestantism as a whole, both Macartney and Fosdick certainly increased their personal reputation and fame through the use of this new medium. However, their success must be considered within the context of these countless lesser-known pastors who struggled to compete in the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

When historians of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy have previously studied the doctrinal competition between Macartney and Fosdick, they have largely ignored the competition that existed under the surface between innovative celebrity preachers and small town and lesser-known preachers. This conflict, rather than being theological or doctrinal in nature, existed on a methodological plane. In the background of their famous sermons, both preachers seemingly recognized each other as representatives of “the other side”, theologically speaking. If this dichotomous relationship is to be fully accepted, American Protestants in the 1920s should have simply lined up behind their representative figure, regardless of the countless other historical, doctrinal, and methodological differences that divided American Protestantism. Furthermore, the fact that their popularity only increased throughout the controversy shows that there was far more to gain than to lose in the decision to engage in the theological debates of the 1920s. By maintaining a position in the public spotlight, Macartney and Fosdick both forwent the everyday struggles that plagued the authors of these letters as they wrestled with the challenges of a changing America.<sup>122</sup>

Fosdick was able to develop a larger radio presence than Macartney principally because his theological emphasis was closer to the nonsectarian and nonpolemical vision that radio

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<sup>122</sup> For more on the deficiencies inherent in the “Fundamentalist-Modernist” historiographical category, see <http://usreligion.blogspot.com/2015/02/putting-to-bed-term-fundamentalist.html> for a short summary and Matthew Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit: New York City and the Fate of Liberal Evangelicalism* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014).

executives had in mind for religious broadcasting. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC), the nation's first radio network, came into being in 1926 as a subsidiary company of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). As a part of NBC's general radio programming, radio executives featured religious broadcasting. However, in acknowledgement of the nation's changing religious landscape, NBC decided that they would donate "a block to time to representatives of the three major faith groups in the United States: Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant."<sup>123</sup> To the ire of the fundamentalists, the Protestant time block was delegated to the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, a group that "represented twenty-five mostly liberal mainline Protestant denominations."<sup>124</sup> Eventually, Fosdick was given a primetime program known as "*National Vespers*", and his nineteen-year stint on the radio garnered enough public interest that it concluded with a weekly listenership of somewhere between "2,500,000 to 3,000,000 persons" by the end of his radio career in 1946.<sup>125</sup>

According to historian George Marsden, "Fundamentalism was a mosaic of divergent and somewhat contradictory traditions and tendencies that could never be totally integrated. Sometimes its advocates were backward looking and reactionary, at other times they were imaginative innovators."<sup>126</sup> While this is especially apparent in the lives of fundamentalists, these contradictions can also be applied to American pastorate as a whole in the 1920s, and in many ways, these contradictions and trepidations came about out of necessity rather than choice. In a society with novel technological innovations being offered up every year, the American pastorate was forced to decide whether these advances could be used for edifying and godly purposes or whether they were to be opposed. This line was not always easy to draw. With the advent of

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<sup>123</sup> Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial*. 23

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> "Bonnell Succeeds Fosdick on Radio: Named Broadcaster," *New York Times*, November 22, 1946.

<sup>126</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. 43

motion pictures, for example, Macartney and Fosdick primarily opposed the industry. For Fosdick, the reason was primarily moral, as movies were generally associated with sexual suggestiveness on the screen. Back in 1911, during his Montclair pastorate, Fosdick wrote a letter to the *Montclair Times* stipulating a list of “Conditions On Which Moving Picture Shows Should Be Licensed.”<sup>127</sup> Among other demands, Fosdick called for moving picture theatres to feature “interiors so well lighted that it would be possible to read with comfort or recognize the faces of one’s friends across the hall.”<sup>128</sup> For Macartney, the son of Covenanters, the motion picture industry threatened to cheapen the Lord’s Day and competed with churches for attendance (he also likely agreed with Fosdick on the immoral messages). Radio could have been viewed by both men in the same light as movies, as it certainly served as a Sunday distraction and contained immoral entertainment. The fact that it was not condemned, but actually endorsed by both figures is worth noting. In the case of radio, it appears that the competition between fundamentalists and liberals over doctrinal issues and the direction of the Church led both sides to embrace not only radio, but print media and middlebrow book publishing, as a way to promote their respective viewpoints. In this way, strong theological commitments corresponded closely with the willingness to experiment with novel forms of communication and media.

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<sup>127</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*. 61

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

### **Part III: *The Protestant Pastorate Diverges***

Following the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates, Macartney and Fosdick took divergent paths and, at this point, their usefulness for comparison began to wane. That being said, Macartney and Fosdick still remained committed to the common defense of Victorian social mores and values in the 1930s and 1940s, but even in this realm, their divergence can be seen in their tendencies to promote different specific social values and often to varying degrees. This divergence between Macartney and Fosdick reflects a broader divergence within the whole of American Protestantism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as “neo-evangelical” and “mainline” Protestants became increasingly alienated from one another and unwilling to engage in the same channels of dialogue that Fosdick and Macartney did in the 1920s.

#### The “Moral Muddle” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Pastorate

Beyond the theology that divided them, both Macartney and Fosdick offered up a similar defense of Victorian social mores in an increasingly relativistic 20<sup>th</sup> century moral landscape. However, their discussions on public morality in the 1920s and early 1930s began to show glimpses of a divergence that would ultimately split American Protestantism (into mainline and neo-evangelical camps) and leave each side unable to relate to the other. While it takes no stretch of the mind to see how Macartney’s theological conservatism directly translated into social conservatism, Fosdick’s temperamental and often social conservatism deserves longer consideration. As was discussed in an earlier chapter in reference to Fosdick’s early life and crisis of faith, Fosdick’s contention with orthodox Christianity was intellectual rather than moral. When returning to college after his year out, he pledged to think and learn as if there was no God but to behave as if there was a God. In his memoir, he included this pledge as if Christian moral living was somehow the expected and unquestioned route. It is interesting to consider that by the

time Fosdick died, in 1969, adhering to a Christian moral code did not have the same “self-evident” quality that it had just a little over a decade earlier when he penned his memoir. In a 1924 interview with a New York City journalist named William Shepherd, Fosdick credits the moral compass he maintained during his time of doubt as being paramount for his later spiritual development. Looking back, he said that losing his faith was hard, but “if I had a moral complication... I couldn’t have held my own... Because I was able to hold my moral ground I was able to fight out the battle of faith. I left the hill of my old faith, went down into the valley of doubt and then climbed away up to loftier heights of positive faith on the other side of the valley.”<sup>129</sup>

The issue of public morality became increasingly important to both men in the later years of their ministries, and this can be credited to many factors including the prohibition debates, the nation’s rising divorce rates, and the development of a new youth culture. In a tract published in 1940 entitled “Christian Faith and the Spirit of the Age”, Macartney focused exclusively on the moral perils that threatened American society. In a nod to his doctrinal considerations that dominated his preoccupations less than two decades before, Macartney noted, “formerly, the men who assailed Christian doctrines and attacked the credibility of the Bible were the very ones who had much to say in praise of Christ and his precepts... [Today] the attack is not merely a theoretical and academic one, but something much more dangerous-the spirit and the practice of the age.”<sup>130</sup> Needless to say, Macartney likely thought of Fosdick when describing his former detractors who levied theoretical attacks against the faith but still admired the ethical practices of Christ. For both men, many of their concerns after the Fundamentalist-Modernist

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<sup>129</sup> William G Shepherd, *Great Preachers as Seen by a Journalist* (New York, Chicago [etc.]: Fleming H Revell company, 1924). 34

<sup>130</sup> Clarence Edward Noble Macartney, *Christian Faith and the Spirit of the Age* (New York: American Tract Society, 1940).

Controversy were primarily moral and ethical in nature. Similar to their shared views on America's entry into World War I, both Fosdick and Macartney can be seen as allies in the protection of Victorian values and moral practice.

Most of Macartney's stands against alcohol took place in the early 1930s when the repeal of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment was up for consideration. By the early 1930s, Prohibition had become deeply unpopular within the American electorate, and many who had initially supported temperance efforts, John D. Rockefeller Jr. in particular, lost hope in the law and started to believe that Prohibition caused more problems than it solved. Macartney, well-versed in the scriptures and in the art of persuasion, generally avoided using biblical rationale to support his arguments for the total prohibition of alcohol. This is not to say that his views on the issue were somehow divorced from his underlying faith, but Macartney likely realized that it was problematic to build a case for teetotalism from biblical texts. Some passages in the Bible warn of drunkenness and cite it as an "act of the flesh".<sup>131</sup> Other passages identify wine as a substance that can "gladden the heart of man"<sup>132</sup> and serve as a means of grace at the communion table. Perhaps the most famous biblical defense of alcohol comes from the fact that Christ's first miracle was turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana.<sup>133</sup> In spite of these Biblical justifications for moderate alcohol use, Macartney focused solely on the destructive effects of alcohol in the context of his society. His argument against alcohol was built on reason, and he relied on facts and statistics regarding the increase in crime and automobile accidents that stemmed from alcohol use. Specifically, in in one sermon entitled "Awake, O America!" he cites a doctor from Columbia hospital who "found that 60% of the [automobile] accidents, and 75% of

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<sup>131</sup> Galatians 5:19-21

<sup>132</sup> Psalm 104:15

<sup>133</sup> John 2:1-11

the people injured or killed, were in alcohol accidents.”<sup>134</sup> While his sermons during the doctrinal debates were heavily reliant on scripture, it is worth noting that many of Macartney’s sermons on issues of morality were made under the guise of common sense and rational thinking.

On the issue of alcohol, Fosdick was largely in agreement with Macartney, and his defense of Prohibition exhibits the same tendency to promote teetotalism on account of its practical benefits. In a sermon from 1928, Fosdick unequivocally stated, “if ever there has been an institution in this country which the ne as a whole heartily has hated, it has been the organized liquor traffic.”<sup>135</sup> Despite being a fervent enemy of the liquor traffic, Fosdick did not initially support the passage of Prohibition in 1917 and called it a “mistake in strategy... as laws that would make it illegal for a man to have a glass of wine with his dinner would involve us in a reactionary movement, presenting endless difficulty.”<sup>136</sup> That being said, once Prohibition was passed, Fosdick supported it wholeheartedly and concluded that as “bad as the situation is now, it is better than the pit out which we were digged.”<sup>137</sup> This line of reasoning is almost identical to Macartney’s defense of Prohibition, and the majority of Fosdick’s Prohibition sermon went about trying to remind listeners of how regretful the nation’s situation was before Prohibition was enacted. Compared to the pre-Prohibition days, Fosdick reminded listeners that New York was both less politically corrupt and more industrious than it had been before the passage of the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment.

Going beyond the experiences of Macartney and Fosdick, the issue of public morality constituted an area of agreement that seemingly united liberals and fundamentalists in the first half of the twentieth century. Rockefeller, no theological conservative, praised fundamentalist

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<sup>134</sup> Clarence Macartney, “Awake o America!”, in Macartney Collection

<sup>135</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, “The Prohibition Question” (Sermon, Park Avenue Baptist Church, October 14, 1928), Series 1A, Box 11, Folder 5, Burke Theological Library.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

evangelist Billy Sunday on numerous occasions for the fervency of his anti-alcohol campaign and for his ability to raise religious awareness among the New York populace.<sup>138</sup> From simply reading some of the newspaper headlines that covered Fosdick's sermons in the 1920s and 1930s, one will quickly come to the conclusion that Fosdick was not shy in defending traditional moral values. In a sermon from 1930, Fosdick criticized the "filth that like an open sewer flows through our theatres and magazines."<sup>139</sup> Macartney eagerly agreed with Fosdick on this point (he saved this article in his own personal file collection for later use), and he expressed a similar level of excitement on the issue of licentiousness in popular culture writing that "the Church has a more difficult task than it has ever had since the days of the Roman Empire, when the gospel was preached to those whose minds and imaginations had been steeped in the brutal and licentious scenes of the pagan amphitheaters."<sup>140</sup>

In the area of divorce and the home, both Macartney and Fosdick were quite critical of rising divorce rates and the proliferation and normalization of sexual experimentation outside of marriage. In a sermon entitled "The Age of Revolt", Fosdick acknowledged the changing societal understanding of marriage, and he concluded that "companionate marriage", a marriage based upon the mutuality between members as well as an emphasis on companionship over child rearing, was both "innocent and inevitable." However, Fosdick believed that society had "pushed the term 'companionate marriage' over the brink to the slope and now it commonly signifies trial

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<sup>138</sup> Matthew Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit: New York City and the Fate of Liberal Evangelicalism* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2014). 190

<sup>139</sup> "OLD IDEALS NEEDED, DR. FOSDICK ASSERTS: Says in Future Our Times Will Be Regarded As 'the Dirty Decade' of Society. CONDEMNS FILTH ON STAGE Declares We Must Go Back to Purity, Self-Control, Family Devotion and Care of Children." *New York Times*, June 2, 1930.

<sup>140</sup> Macartney, *Christian Faith and the Spirit of the Age*. 127



marriage.”<sup>141</sup> Fosdick went on to say that he might be able to endorse some sort of “divorce by mutual consent [as long as conflicting partners agree to] adopt the Norwegian plan where the parties must wait a year between the application and the granting of divorce. That, at least, prevents a thoughtless separation due to a temporary quarrel.”<sup>142</sup> Macartney likewise condemned divorce, albeit in slightly stronger terms. Macartney believed that the health of American families was directly related to the health of American society as a whole. “In the long run, the character of the nation depends upon the noble tradition of the home founded upon marriage between one man and one woman... What is happening to these homes? This is of infinitely greater importance than the subjects which are discussed in the newspapers.”<sup>143</sup>

For some in the Fundamentalist camp, the changing societal understanding of morality and philosophy had a direct impact on the doctrinal debates of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy. John R. Straton, a New York City fundamentalist Baptist preacher, believed that the rise of theological liberalism was directly linked with the rise of moral degeneracy in the dance halls and saloons. In his book, *Fighting the Devil in Modern Babylon*, Straton mentions Fosdick in his chapter about religious modernism, and he notes his observations surrounding the release of Fosdick’s famous sermon, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” Straton remembers,

“I happened to get hold of the church calendar for the Sunday in which distribution of that sermon was announced, and it contained two notices that were significant. One announced that any who desired a copy of the sermon could get it in the vestibule of the church, and the other announced a dance in the church Friday night of that week. Thus skepticism in the pulpit and worldliness in the pew stood linked arm in arm.”<sup>144</sup>

This equation between moral degeneration and theological modernism is similar to what William Jennings Bryan expressed in his crusade against evolution in the mid-1920s. For Bryan,

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<sup>141</sup> “Trial Marriage Idas Assailed By Dr. Fosdick: ‘Fitting on Wedlock Like Shoes’ Opposed By Pastor Who, Sanctions Liberal View Toward Family Life Sees Love as Heal Tie Approves Norwegian Divorce Plan of Waiting Year for Decree ‘If Any Is Needed,’” *New York Herald Tribune* (1926-1962); *New York, N.Y.*, January 16, 1928.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> Macartney, *Christian Faith and the Spirit of the Age*. 130

<sup>144</sup> John Roach Straton, *Fighting the Devil in Modern Babylon* (Boston: Stratford Co., 1929).

the argument against Darwinism was more than a friendly dispute regarding the origin of man; rather, Bryan viewed it as representing a larger struggle for the very survival of Western civilization itself. World War I left most of Western society unsettled on account of the devastation it wrought, and as we have already seen in Fosdick's life, it left many searching for answers and for a way to prevent the next great war. Bryan believed that "Darwinism had laid the foundation for the bloodiest war in history,"<sup>145</sup> and his great stand against evolution, culminating with the Scopes Trial of 1925, was his attempt to save Western civilization from the diabolical forces that left it ravaged after World War I. Though Bryan may have been fairly unique in regards to the degree in which he fought the theory of evolution, his dramatic stand against a perceived moral vice in society was shared by Macartney and Fosdick alike (albeit in different ways).

Macartney made similar moral stands as Straton, Bryan, and even Fosdick, but all of these emanations on morality from the pulpit took on a decidedly personal bent. Macartney likely agreed with Straton on the dangers of dancing and its role as a temptation for youth, but he did not preach many sermons nor write many articles that specifically condemned the practice. In Fosdick's case, a difference in moral emphases can even be seen over the course of his life. When he began preaching, he took firm stands against the saloons, gambling and even against the movies opening up in Montclair, NJ. Yet, as he grew famous for his liberal theology, he faced the challenge of reconciling both doctrinal openness, on one hand, and moral absolutes, on the other. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became increasingly difficult for liberal moralists to condemn alternative sexual practices, for example, when they also preached Universalism. No two preachers were truly alike in all of their moral pronouncements, and even

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<sup>145</sup> Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy*. 55

when they found common moral ground, they often did not emphasize the issues in the same way or with the same vigor. When Macartney and Fosdick began their ministries around the turn of the century, it was quite common for theological conservatives and liberals to share similar opinions on issues of morality. By the end of their ministries, however, differences between Protestant ministers on moral questions were part of a growing divergence within the American Protestant pastorate.

### Epilogue

Following his departure from New York's First Presbyterian Church in 1924, Fosdick's fame and notoriety gave him ample opportunities to pursue a ministry outside of the Presbyterian fold. Long an admirer of Fosdick, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. seized upon the opportunity to enlist Fosdick as the pastor of his church, Park Avenue Baptist Church. Before agreeing to take on the role, however, Fosdick laid out several steep conditions that the church had to meet in order for him to accept their call, and these included the construction of a new church edifice, open membership for all Christians, and the selection of a nondenominational pastoral staff working under a collegial system.<sup>146</sup> Park Avenue Baptist Church, largely propelled by Rockefeller, eagerly accepted these conditions stipulated by Fosdick, and Fosdick was formally installed as the senior pastor of the Church in 1926. Over the course of the following five years, Fosdick led the Park Avenue congregation into the "promised land" of Riverside Church: an interdenominational, interracial, and doctrinally tolerant megachurch built for the future. The Rockefellers largely funded the construction of the new Riverside Church edifice<sup>147</sup>, and their

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<sup>146</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*. 162

<sup>147</sup> The neo-gothic cathedral was (and still remains) the tallest church in the United States rising to an impressive height of 392 feet.

total contribution to the project totaled over ten million dollars.<sup>148</sup> Though constructed and dedicated at the dawn of the Great Depression, Fosdick and Rockefeller continued unabated in the opening of Riverside. To them, the new church represented optimism and hope for the future of New York City at a time when many faced economic hardship and struggle.<sup>149</sup>

Around the same time, in 1927, Clarence Macartney switched pulpits himself. Leaving Arch Street Church in Philadelphia, Macartney accepted the call to the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The move placed Macartney closer to his childhood home of Beaver Falls, and this was likely a consideration when accepting the call. Interestingly, the move also seemed to signify another transition for Macartney. In Philadelphia, Macartney was prevalent on the national stage as evident in his roles as moderator of the 1924 Presbyterian General Assembly, contributor to *The Ladies' Home Journal* in the mid-1920s, and as Fosdick's chief opponent during the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates. The move to Pittsburgh may have caused, or more likely simply reflected, a shift in Macartney's mission and purpose. According to George Marsden, being a fundamentalist requires a sense of militancy that goes beyond simply adhering to conservative beliefs.<sup>150</sup> By this definition, Macartney can really only be considered a fundamentalist, as Marsden would understand the term, for a relatively brief time in the 1920s. Macartney, always consistent in his doctrine, transitioned from more of an active participant in the theological controversy to more of a passive observer. His almost thirty year tenure at First Presbyterian, Pittsburgh can be characterized as a retreat from the active fundamentalism of his Philadelphia tenure toward a more mild-mannered conservatism.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid. 212

<sup>149</sup> This opinion was shared with me by David Rockefeller, the son of Riverside's financier John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

<sup>150</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. 4

<sup>151</sup> Macartney did not give up the fight against liberalism completely, however. He was an active member and later president of an organization known as "The League of Faith". This group believed that the Presbyterian Church

Fosdick's publicity reached its height during his ministry at Riverside in the 1930s and 1940s, and along with radio, a large part of this success came in conjunction with his publishing efforts. A large part of Fosdick's commercial success had to do with the confluence between his style of teaching and the tastes of the American consumer culture. In his study of 20<sup>th</sup> century religious publishing, entitled *The Rise of Liberal Religion*, Matthew Hedstrom argues that liberal books were better suited for the rising consumer culture in America because liberalism's non-sectarian bent appealed to a wider swath of consumers and this helped to creatively merge "the priesthood of all believers... with the kingship of the consumer".<sup>152</sup> Hedstrom later went on to say that, "As many booksellers and publishers were quick to realize, the kinds of religious books that in fact sold in the 1930s were works, by and large, with mystical, psychological, and positive-thinking orientations."<sup>153</sup> Several of Fosdick's later books seem to fit this mold, and their commercial success speak to their ability to connect with consumer tastes.

These types of positive thinking, self-help books went beyond Fosdick and were later popularized by men like Norman Vincent Peale and Dale Carnegie in the 1950s and 1960s. Fosdick's biographer notes that Fosdick "once expressed his personal affection for Dr. Norman Vincent Peale... adding however that 'his harp has only one string.'"<sup>154</sup> It is important to note, however, that Fosdick predated both Peale and Carnegie in his self-help and positive thinking approach. Fosdick's first articles submitted to the *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1923 were collectively entitled *Twelve Tests of Character*. These articles, though contemporaneous with the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy, were focused entirely on the importance of "right

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itself was doctrinally sound, even if certain leaders had moved the Presbyterian Church in the wrong direction, and they sought to reform the denomination from within. For more see <https://www.opc.org/books/conflict/ch14.html>

<sup>152</sup> Hedstrom, *The Rise of Liberal Religion*. 79

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. 87

<sup>154</sup> Miller, *Harry Emerson Fosdick*. 273

living” and were non-polemical in their overall tone.<sup>155</sup> One important distinction between Fosdick and the later “positive thinking” preachers was the theological emphasis. Peale, for example, did not fall neatly into either the fundamentalist or theologically liberal fold, and his conservatism was more political in nature than theological. By the time of Peale’s success in the 1950s and beyond, American Protestantism was effectively stratified and this meant that the fundamentalists operated in their own sub-culture rather than debating religious popularizers on the national scene. Over the course of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, America’s religious landscape became increasingly political. Theological conservatives and fundamentalists gradually coalesced around conservative political figures (the Republican Party by the end of the century) and many of the theological liberals became increasingly tied to the anti-war, anti-poverty, and racial integration policies of the political left.<sup>156</sup> In the first half of the century, especially in the 1920s and 1930s when Macartney and Fosdick were at their height, the political stances of the liberal and fundamentalist factions were inconsistent and in no way uniform. For most of their lives, Macartney and Fosdick voted similarly and held broadly complimentary political views.

Though opposed on the doctrinal positions that characterized their debates in the early 1920s, Harry Emerson Fosdick’s and Clarence Macartney’s similarities were as conspicuous as their differences. This was not because the doctrinal issues were not important. They were extremely important, and the results from the doctrinal debates of the 1920s led to an estrangement within American Protestantism that is still painfully relevant for many today.

However, both Fosdick and Macartney realized that the changing role of the American pastorate,

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid. 274

<sup>156</sup> For more on this latter 20<sup>th</sup> century political divergence, see Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America Since 1945 A History*, Columbia Histories of Modern American Life (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). And Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II*, Studies in Church and State. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988).

on issues outside of theology, placed them on a common ground. Starting with their adolescent training in oratory and debate, both of them realized the power of the spoken word in relating to 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans. When the relative importance of the spoken word began to decline in favor of the print revolution of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, both men adapted their training in the oratorical arena to make their messages more relevant to men and women more interested in cheaply produced books, newspapers, magazines, and finally radio broadcasts. Their prodigious work ethic allowed them to crank out spiritual messages and materials at industrial-like speed and quality. The fact that each man became a spokesman and representative of their respective theological position speaks to their shared success in engaging with a 20<sup>th</sup> century audience.

Yet, for all their commitment to modern venues and means, both men were really offering up a message that was quite old. In their own unique way, Macartney and Fosdick shared the belief that much of the human experience transcends one's era, one's situation, or one's location. At their core, both men believed in the existence of abiding truths that went beyond the changes in politics, technology, and society as a whole, and much of their pastoral energy was devoted to comforting Americans anxious and uncomfortable with their society's entrance into modernity.

Fosdick and Macartney interacted in the common arena of American Protestantism. They were painfully aware of one another, and they were often speaking to the same group of middle class, Anglo-Saxon, and northern Americans. After their deaths in the 1950s and 1960s, American Protestantism became fractured in such a way that prevented any sort of similar encounter to what Macartney and Fosdick experienced in their theological debates in the early 1920s. From that point on, fundamentalists slowly created their own neo-evangelical sub-culture, consisting of smaller denominations, devoted adherents, and an increasingly conservative

political and cultural agenda. Fosdick, and his fellow liberals, may have “won” the large Protestant denominations, but this victory has been dampened by the fact that many of these traditional, or mainline, denominations experienced marked membership and financial stagnation since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite later attempts, the most prominent being the Religious Right in the 1970s and 1980s, American Protestants were both unwilling and largely unable to exercise the same unified hegemonic political and social control that they had demonstrated in the 1920s. Macartney and Fosdick were comparative figures in the 1920s partly because they operated on the same institutional and cultural plane. By the end of the Second World War, the divergence within American Protestantism made it so that the debates within the Protestant pastorate would no longer garner the same societal recognition and involvement that had accompanied Macartney’s and Fosdick’s famous sermons back in 1922.



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