PEACE OR WAR? RELIGION IN THE DEBATE BEFORE THE IRAQ WAR

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate School
of the University of Notre Dame
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Christopher A. Morrissey

Mary Ellen Koniecny, Director

Graduate Program in Sociology
Notre Dame, Indiana
February 2012
©Copyright 2012

Christopher A. Morrissey
PEACE OR WAR? RELIGION IN THE DEBATE BEFORE THE IRAQ WAR

Abstract
by
Christopher A. Morrissey

In this dissertation, I analyze religious actors debating the decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003 as well as the religious cultural dimensions of the larger public discussion. I argue that one cannot adequately explain the country’s entry into the war without understanding the role of public Christianity in the argument for it. Furthermore, by analyzing elite religious advocacy both opposed and in favor of the conflict, I theorize the sets of identity relations and cultural repertoires that explain whether religious advocates will support or criticize state-sponsored violence. I find that the varying identity relations between religion, nation, and state largely predict religious advocates’ positions on the war. Given these basic religious positions, I then explicate the constellation of symbolic codes that inform and sustain the basic positions of religious advocates vis-à-vis war. These include the nature and constitution of political order, the nature of evil, the role of peace—particularly as it relates to the political order, the proper object of Christian love, and the value and practicality of nonviolence in the
world. Additionally, I analyze patterns of discourse that differentiated between war supporters and war opponents—war supporters used less secular discourse than war opponents. I find that the social and political context primarily explains the particularly religious tenor of these actors. Advocates’ sense of identity and their expertise influenced how they participated in the debate. Finally, I find the social sources of these distinct positions. Significant social contact with victims of structural violence tended to lead advocates to positions against the war. The dissertation concludes with a consideration of the direct contributions of this dissertation to academic understandings of religion, politics, war, and peace as well as its contributions to knowledge about public religion’s relations to the politics of war and peace in America and our understanding of the relations between religion and violence.
This dissertation is dedicated to Javaughn, without whom little would be possible.
CONTENTS

Figures........................................................................................................................................... vi

Tables ............................................................................................................................................... vii

Acknowledgments......................................................................................................................... viii

Chapter 1: God and the United States of America ................................................................. 1
  Religion Matters: Deciding to Go to War................................................................................. 6
  On Popular Support for the War.............................................................................................. 7
  Understanding How the War Happened.................................................................................... 18
  Theoretical Concerns of this Dissertation................................................................................ 27
  Religion’s Ambivalence with Respect to War and Peace......................................................... 28
    Religion and Violence.............................................................................................................. 30
    Religion and peace................................................................................................................ 34
  Mixed Religious and Secular Discourse in Political Engagement........................................ 40
  On the Social Origins of Counter-Hegemonic Ideas............................................................... 47
  Structure of the Dissertation.................................................................................................... 57
  On Analyzing a Contentious Issue............................................................................................ 60

Chapter 2: The Importance of Discourse in Interpreting Threats to America.................. 63
  9/11 as Discursive Context for Understanding the Debate Over Iraq.................................. 65
  America at the Turn of the Third Millennium..................................................................... 73
  Encoding and Narrating Erstwhile Chaos: the War on Terror............................................. 78
  Dominant Yet Contested........................................................................................................... 90
  Discourse and the War on Terror........................................................................................... 99
  The War on Terror Seeks New Targets: the Turn toward Iraq........................................... 102
  Conclusion................................................................................................................................. 109

Chapter 3: The Battle is Joined: Religious Advocacy on Iraq.......................................... 111
  The Discursive Contours of the Debate.................................................................................... 114
  Direct Discussions with the Presidential Administration....................................................... 123
  Lobbying....................................................................................................................................... 133
    The United States Congress................................................................................................. 133
    The United Nations............................................................................................................. 137
  Public Sphere Debate............................................................................................................. 143
War Opponents: Meaningful Encounters with the Other ............................................. 302
War Proponents: Mediated Contact ........................................................................... 319
Proponents’ Representation of Iraqis ......................................................................... 330
Opponents’ Representation of Iraqis ............................................................................. 336
Representation and Narration ................................................................................... 344

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Considering Contributions ......................................................... 348
Direct Contributions .................................................................................................... 348
  Better Understanding of Christianity’s Ambivalence .............................................. 348
  Better Understanding of Religious Political Participation in America ............. 350
  Understanding the Social Origins of Religious Positions on the War .............. 352
Broader Contributions ............................................................................................... 353
  Public Religion in America ...................................................................................... 353
  Understanding Religious Violence after 9/11 ...................................................... 354
  Understanding Iraq ................................................................................................. 356

Appendix A: Methods .................................................................................................... 358
  Documentary Evidence of the Public Sphere Debate ............................................ 358
  Interviews to Understand Processes of Cultural Production ............................. 362
  Analysis of Data ....................................................................................................... 365

Appendix B: Interview Schedule ................................................................................... 367

Appendix C: List of Interviewees .................................................................................. 369

References ................................................................................................................... 374
FIGURES

Figure 3.1 New York Times Anti-War Religion Advertisement ........................................ 167
Figure 3.2 The Church Leaders’ Plan ........................................................................... 182
TABLES

Table 1.1: Gallup Poll, February 17-19, 2003 ................................................................. 13

Table 3.1 Advocates Opposed to the War ................................................................. 120

Table 3.2 Advocates Supporting the War ................................................................. 122
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the sociology department for shaping my intellectual development these last years. More specifically, thanks to Mary Ellen Konieczny for directing this project her guidance and advise made this possible. Additionally I offer thanks to Robert Fishman, Christian Smith, and Lyn Spillman—all members of this dissertation’s committee—for shepherding me through the long process and being generous with their feedback.

This research has been made possible by a number of generous grants. The Institute for Scholarship in the liberal arts at the University of Notre Dame provided two grants to initiate this work. The National Science Foundation assisted with further research with a Dissertation Improvement Grant in the spring of 2010. Thanks too to these funders.
CHAPTER 1:

GOD AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

We Americans have faith in ourselves, but not in ourselves alone. We do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the loving God behind all of life and all of history. May He guide us now, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

--President George W. Bush, State of the Union, January 28, 2003

In the fall of 2002 and the winter of 2003, an intense public debate nearly devoured the nation: should the United States forcibly remove Saddam Hussein from power and disarm his regime from its presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction? It was a serious question and a serious debate engaging complex issues of a perceived global threat, the newly salient dangers of a War on Terror, and Realpolitik—the “hard” concerns of states, sovereignty, and security. The nation, and to a significant degree the world, engaged one of the most elemental questions states and nations decide. When is it necessary and good to go to war?

Yet, there was a “softer” dimension to the story, particularly in the United States of America. The Christian God kept surfacing in the arguments for and against the war. Underneath and interpenetrating much of the concern for safety and international
order were claims about God and God's relation to the United States and God's role in its future. Does God really favor freedom? Is God particularly favorable to the United States of America? What kind of role will America play in the world order, both political and cultural, in the third millennium? This dissertation argues that religion and the religious meaning of America were a central factor in the debate and, ultimately, the decision to go to war in Iraq in March of 2003.

Perhaps the most prominent advocate for the war grounding his argument—at least in part—in religious terms was the 43rd President of the United States, George Walker Bush. Strongly politically supported by conservative, evangelical Christians, Bush's administration was in many ways steeped in religion. From White House prayer meetings, to policies like the president’s Faith Based Initiative, to religiously inflected presidential rhetoric shaped by a devout team of speechwriters, religion mattered to the administration, both personally, in terms of Bush's own faith, and politically, in terms of his broadest base of support. My analysis of religious discourse and the public debate before the Iraq War begins with the president’s use of religious discourse in making the case for the war.

In the 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush identified Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an Axis of Evil that threatened the United States. Despite the identification of this trinity of threats, it was clear that the administration was most focused on Iraq, whose pernicious reluctance to submit to the discipline imposed by the United Nations under the terms of defeat of the 1991 Persian Gulf War made it the
most likely next front on the so-called War on Terror. The administration’s case for engaging the perceived threat of Hussein became more and more amplified throughout the second half of 2002. The 2003 State of the Union served as rhetorical capstone of the case for war with Iraq. The president spent the first portion of the speech reporting positively on his administration’s accomplishments such as substantial tax cuts, the proposed Faith Based Initiative, and progress made in the war on terror such as establishing the Department of Homeland Security. In the speech’s rhetorical climax, he turned to the triple threats of the so-called Axis of Evil, identified in the previous year’s State of the Union. The final act of the speech dealt extensively with Iraq and its leader, “A brutal dictator, with a history of reckless aggression, with ties to terrorism, with great potential wealth,” Saddam Hussein. Aligning himself with the wishes of the Iraqi people to be free from such tyranny (see Lincoln 2006), Bush clarified the intention and purpose of the country in this time of trial.

America is a strong nation and honorable in the use of our strength. We exercise power without conquest, and we sacrifice for the liberty of strangers.

In the next line of the speech he clarified the importance of freedom and the ultimate source of such freedom.

Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world; it is God’s gift to humanity.

Though Americans cherish freedom, they are not the ultimate source of it in the world. It is God’s gift to the world. In sacrificing for the liberty of strangers, we are doing God’s
work. American and God are intimately committed to the same project: they both spread freedom in the world.

Yet this understanding of God and America working together on the same grand project of freedom was not the only way to understand the relationship between the two. Just eight days earlier in an event called the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Prayer Service for Peace and Justice, a number of the nation’s prominent religious leaders gathered in the National Cathedral in northwestern Washington DC to pray, reflect, and preach a rather different understanding of God and America. Afterwards they walked down Massachusetts Avenue taking their message to the White House where they held a quiet vigil. In the Cathedral, the Right Reverend John Bryson Chane, Episcopal Bishop of Washington D.C. prayed.

Most gracious God. . . Help our nation, its leaders and the leaders of Iraq and other nations that would use violence as a threat or means to accomplish their ends to understand that we are living in a new global age, where war is no longer an option in settling disputes.

Here Chane imagines a very different relationship between God and America. Chane prays to God to stop the president and the nation from embarking on this war to spread freedom. Indeed, Chane goes further in claiming that war—that most basic protective function of the state—is “no longer an option.” God, in this vision of Bishop Chane is not involved in the same project of bringing freedom to the world. Rather, God is calling the nation to account for its manner of treating others in the world. God and America are not unified in the same basic project. Instead, God and America are in
tension, as God may be more or less pleased by what America does in the world. And, as Chane argues, God is opposed to America’s war plans.

This dissertation investigates and analyzes the role of religion in the debate over whether the United States should go to war with Iraq. Different understandings of God, the Christian tradition, and America greatly informed, structured, and gave meaning to the country’s pre-war debate. Religion, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, gave form and structure to much of the argumentation both for and against the war. In this investigation, I analyze the various meanings and the social origins of those meanings that informed both sides of the religious divide on the war. Additionally, this dissertation explains how religion was important in the decision to go to war in Iraq as well as the political support for that decision.

In order to analyze religion’s role in this important public discussion, this dissertation relies on two primary data sources. First, it analyzes the arguments in the public sphere made by religious advocates on whether the United States should go to war against Iraq in approximately the year preceding the beginning of the conflict. Christian advocates work for denominational, lobbying, parachurch, academic, media, and policy (think tank) institutions. Most of this advocacy took place in the public sphere through a variety of media (including print, electronic, and news media), important (but brief) lobbying attempts with public officials, and occasional public protests. I analyze

1 Putnam defines the public sphere as “a common space in which the members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media: print, electronic, and also face-to-face encounters; to discuss matters of common interest” (Putnam 1995).
264 documents from the public record of this advocacy in this dissertation. Second, to better understand religious meanings for these advocates and to better understand how their positions were produced, I conducted 44 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the religious advocates who produced these arguments and were active in the public debate. These interviews allowed me to clarify meanings for these religious advocates, better understand the social origins of their advocacy, and learn of aspects of the public debate that did not make it into the public record and would otherwise be obscured from my analysis. (A full explanation of my research methods can be found in Appendix A: Research Methods.)

Religion Matters: Deciding to Go to War

In analyzing this debate, this dissertation engages a number of important questions for understanding the role of religion in America at the turn of the third millennium. The primary question addressed by this dissertation is how and why did religion matter in the decision to go to war? This is a question of great interest at the turn of the third millennium as the United States, particularly in the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the rest of the world, wrestle with old questions (Wellman and Tokuno 2004) of the various relations between religion and violence. Other important questions addressed in this dissertation include: What precisely did religious actors do in the pre-war debate? How and why did religious advocacy against the war differ from religious advocacy for the war? How did religion enter the public sphere in this debate? How can we understand patterns of religious and secular discourse by
religious advocates? What are the social origins of differing religious positions on war and peace? What does all of this mean for the religious meaning of America?

In this dissertation, I argue religion significantly contributed to the context, interpretation of events, the policy debate, and the political support for the war within the United States’ population. More specifically, two varieties of American Christianity, one supporting the war and one opposing it, clashed in the public discussion over the war. The war supporting position prevailed in the debate and was a significant reason the American public supported the war (even as most elite religious advocates opposed this view). But, how can we best understand this religious support for the war?

On Popular Support for the War

There is very little extant data that allows us to examine how popular American Christianity either supported or challenged the war before it happened. The few polls that were taken before the war that asked questions about religion did not ask good enough questions to better understand religion’s role in generating political support for the war. By focusing on the statements and activities of elite Christian advocates, this dissertation can better understand the differences between war opponents and supporters before the war started, in ways that are not otherwise possible. In understanding the differences between these two cultural structures and their social origins, we may infer some of the reasons that American Christians were crucial for the support that made the Iraq War politically possible.
What are the differences between elite and regular Christians on war and peace? Christians in the general public are certainly not as articulate as their elites are, but they participate in the same structures of cultural meanings. By analyzing the discourse of Christian elite advocates, we may better understand the meaning systems that inform and reflect the understandings of millions of Americans in the pews. I argue that though they do not necessarily speak as extensively or elaborately about these matters as elites do, the religious public in the United States, tends to partake of key elements of these two distinct constellations of religious meanings and, to some extent, identify with (implicitly or explicitly) with either of the two Christian traditions on state violence that support these meanings. Elites are much more ideological, that is consistent and explicit with their use of culture. The public tends to be much more implicit and commonsensical in their use of culture. They may be less ideologically consistent than religious elites, but they do have a basic sense of where they stand with respect to their understanding of religion and the America state or nation as well as with respect to the basic meanings of Christian theological ideas about war and peace. Even as the elite religious leaders are more articulate and knowledgeable about it, these basic cultural structures are familiar to Americans and largely commonsensical. This religious culture structure is extensive throughout the United States. Better understanding this religious culture structure is the primary goal of this dissertation.

But some may object that it does not matter what elite religious advocates said about the war. Even if they were active and received media coverage, they were not
central factors in the decision to go to war or the public support of that decision. I have
two responses to this objection. First, it is correct that the religious leaders as such did
not drive this decision. The cultural meanings they articulated, however, were important
in justifying the claims that the war was both necessary and good. These meanings
expanded, clarified, and contested the rationales for the war given by the president and
which, in large measure, were found convincing by the American public. Second, in
explaining the war itself I must switch our attention to other actors, specifically the
American people whose political support made the war politically possible. I do this
even as I stress the same set of religious meaning and socializations. Explanations of the
war with an exclusive focus on the power of the administration to unilaterally push its
agenda miss the necessity of popular support for war and overestimate the power of
the executive branch. The available evidence suggests that the types of religious cultural
understandings that I have analyzed in this dissertation are likely very important in
explaining public support for the war. But first we need to consider briefly the sources of
our information on these issues.

Here we briefly consider poll or survey data. All surveys are conducted under
conditions of financial and temporal constraint. Journalistic polls operate under extreme
versions of these conditions. They must be done quickly in order to be relevant to the
quickly changing news cycle and fickle public attention. Data from the period before the
war began are largely from news organizations and polling organizations working to
establish reliable indicators of levels of public support for important public issues. News
polling trades off sampling size against number of questions—splurging to get large samples to ensure their surveys are representative of the American public, while saving costs by reducing the number and variety of questions asked. Consequently, indicators of religion, if included at all in these polls tend to be very basic measures, rather than more nuanced questions about religious beliefs or participation.

Research surveys, on the other hand, tend to get up and running more slowly than news polls, so there tends to be a lag between the growth in the saliency of a public issue and the detailed investigation of it. Accordingly, most research polls did not capture public sentiment before the war began. Though these polls also operate under conditions of financial constraint, they do tend to have a much greater variety of questions addressing a broader range of potential variables of interest to researchers. Many research polls, however, still do not ask many good religion questions, a weakness that further limits the possibility of a direct assessment of this chapter’s claim that religion directly and substantially contributed to the public support necessary for the war. Fortunately, some polls throughout the war’s duration have asked substantial religion questions that allow us to analyze religion’s influence on support for the war as it played out. From these data, we can attempt to infer the shape of religious support for the conflict before the war began.

In order to see the importance of religion in public support for the war, we must compare it to the most reliable predictor for its support, political party affiliation. A growing partisan split on approval of the war opens precisely at the beginning of public
consideration of a military confrontation with Iraq (Jacobson 2011). Support for the war was largely bipartisan at the beginning of the public debate, but considerable partisan gaps emerged between levels of support as the start of the war approached (Jacobson 2011). Republicans supported the war in higher numbers than Democrats. This gap grew considerably over the duration of the long conflict and was quite large, averaging 58% points between July 2004 and January 2009, the end of Bush’s presidency (Jacobson 2011).

How does religion compare to partisan affiliation in explaining political support for the war? First, let us consider the influence of religion on support for the war before it happened. Second, let us consider a multi-variate analysis of the research data from after the war started. Generally, scholars have paid scant attention to the role of religion in American foreign policy, at either the popular or elite level (Abrams 2001a; Inboden 2008b; Smidt 2005). There is a relative dearth of scholarship on the issue of the Iraq War as well. The extant survey data is often quite superficial in its religious questioning from the time. Most of the survey data from news agencies asked rather basic religious questions if they asked them at all.

But, a Gallup Poll from February 2003 (Gallup 2003) was one of the few pre-war polls that asked a range of religious questions and found some interesting results with respect to religion and support for the war (See Table 1.1 below). First, those respondents that said religion is not very important in their lives were the least likely to support the war (with 49% support), while those who identified with the Religious Right
(70%) and Born Again or Evangelical (64%) were the biggest supporters of the war. Respondents who belonged to a church (at 60%), rated religion as very important to them (at 60%), and frequently attended church (62%) all were above the national average (59%) in this poll of support favoring military action toward Iraq. Conservative Christian support of the war remained strong even as the war later entered its most unpopular phases. In a poll conducted in 2005, 60% of evangelicals believed that the “U.S. was justified in entering Iraq,” while less than 40% of the public other than evangelicals supported this (Froese and Mencken 2009).
### TABLE 1.1: GALLUP POLL, FEBRUARY 17-19, 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Favor Military Action/Iraq</th>
<th>Oppose Military Action/Iraq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Member of Religious Right</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born Again or Evangelical</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend Church Almost Every Week</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion Fairly Important</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend Church at Least Once a Week</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended Church Within Last 7 Days</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion Very Important</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of Church/Synagogue</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NATIONAL AVERAGE</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Attend Last 7 Days</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend Church Once a Month</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom Attend Church</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Member of Religious Right</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Member of Church/Synagogue</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Born Again</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Attend Church</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion Not Very Important</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To compare the relative contributions of religious and political party affiliation, we need to consider what social scientists call a multi-variate analysis. This statistical technique compares the relative contribution of a particular factor compared to other factors on some outcome. It allows us to evaluate the relative contributions of each factor both in terms of actual contribution and the statistical significance of that contribution. Next, we consider the few extant studies that perform multivariate analyses on support for the war that compares measures of religion with other important political and social variables, most notably party affiliation. First, Smidt (2005) analyzed a news poll from December 2002, finding that religious variables tended to rival political variables such as Republican Party affiliation and conservative ideological orientation in explaining support for war in Iraq. Smidt also found variation by religious tradition in support for the war. Specifically, evangelical Protestants were most likely to support the war, with black Protestants the least likely religious group to support it. All religious traditions were more likely than secular people to support the war.

Later survey work investigating religious support for the Iraq War in 2005 took advantage of more detailed questions on religious belief and practice. Froese and Mencken (2009) found that sacralization ideology, “little differentiation between religious and secular institutions” (Stark and Finke 2000b) better predicted support for

---

2 An interesting finding that supports my thesis in chapter 6 that familiarity with structural violence or its victims leads to less support for war.

3 The survey discussed below, the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey, specialized in such questions.
the war than either religious tradition or party affiliation. A sacralization ideology implies that the “primary aspects of life, from family to politics, are suffused with religious symbols, rhetoric and ritual” (Ibid.). A sacralization ideology supports the view that religion should be a part of policy debates, including foreign policy debates. Froese and Mencken summarize their principal finding this way: “we find that sacralization ideology has played a crucial role in providing the Bush Administration with the public support necessary to carry out its war agenda” (2009). Additionally, they find that the effects of sacralization ideology cross affiliations with political party, so that strongly identified Democrats with high sacralization scores are more likely to support the war than a strong Republican with a low sacralization score (Froese and Mencken 2009).

In terms of the argument of this dissertation, I believe that a sacralization ideology is a reasonably good measure for the concept of America as a Redeemer Nation as expressed by my elites (discussed at length in Chapter 4). Those surveyed who scored high on Froese and Mencken’s sacralization index would be very likely to support the idea of America as a Redeemer Nation. This is strong evidence that this idea has broad popular support and may help explain political support for the war. Unfortunately, as noted, their data (from 2005) clearly do not offer evidence to the opinions of people prior to the war, the time period investigated in this dissertation. Assuming that the social mechanisms of support for war operate similarly before a war as during it, we may presume that popular support for the war operates in a similar fashion before the war as it did after it began. This suggests that popular support for the
war depended on the same set of religious identity meanings both before and after the war commenced, especially with respect to religion and nation and state. The lack of empirical information on the other Christian meanings described in Chapter 4 makes assessing those aspects’ of culture relation to support for the war much more difficult. In so far that the cultural orders I describe at length in Chapter 4 are constellations of meanings that tend to hang together, however, a connection between popular and elite understandings of religious identity relations between nation and state may suggest a broader relation with the full set of meanings that Christians use to make sense of the propriety of a proposed war.

Another point of connection between elite and popular support (or lack thereof) of the war rests on the social foundations of these positions that I have analyzed in Chapter 6. There, I argue that contact with structural violence or its victims seemed to be related to prophetic religious positions against the war. I believe this relationship to result in a different understanding of victims or putative victims of policy decisions, which was of consequence for how advocates narrated events concerning the possible use of state violence. There is reason to believe that that the sort of immediate, transformative interaction with structural violence’s victims is rather rare in American Christianity and that therefore only a small portion of American Christians will have the sort of experiences that were so important to elite war opponents. The significant, profound contact and interaction with the suffering of victims of structural violence that was a common and immediate reference in the narratives and biographies of my
respondents is largely missing in the majority of the American public. American religious groups are strongly homophilic, that is, similar in their social composition and limited in their ability to reach out to socially different others (Emerson and Smith 2000; McPherson, Smith Lovin, and Cook 2001). In Putnam’s terms, they largely consist of bonding capital, social ties between similar people, rather than bridging capital, ties that cross social divides (2000). Indeed, religious groups often have a very hard time connecting with socially different others and it is the rare group that accomplishes significant, ongoing interaction (Lichterman 2005). So, even given American Christianity’s global reach via network and institutional connections, immediate transformative encounters with victims seems unlikely.

In finding that advocates’ significant contact with victims of structural violence formed the social foundation of contesting the war in the public debate, I believe I have also found an important source of much of the social support for the war in the public at large. To be sure, it is not the only source, there are other sociological, political, and psychological reasons that can explain popular political support for the war, but analyzing these is beyond the scope of my data specifically and this dissertation more generally. Realizing the social foundation of significant experience with victims of structural violence helps explain the shift from majority opposition to the war among Christian elites to majority support for the war among Christians in the population at large. Whereas an overwhelming majority of national-level religious advocates were opposed to the war, in the country at large, Christians were clearly a significant, if not
the most significant support for the war effort. The broad public support for the Iraq war is, sociologically speaking, not surprising and the result of social factors that are relatively well known to students of American public life. To better understand how religion mattered in the Iraq War debate, I study the best available data—that from elite Christian advocates.

Understanding How the War Happened

As we shall see, the attacks of 9/11 and their interpretation set up the symbolic terrain for the public discussion of whether or not we should invade Iraq as the next front in the War on Terror. The second Bush administration was very successful in pushing a religiously inflected interpretation of the world and America’s role in it into the public sphere. They achieved cultural/interpretive dominance in a way that allowed for a substantial increase in the power of the administrative branch of government to surveil Americans, detain foreign combatants indefinitely, and expand the war on terror. Their discourse also gave religion a prominent place in the debate.

Religious actors engaged the Bush administration’s push for war with Iraq on many levels and in many capacities and on both sides of the issues. They were involved from the very beginning, trying to convince the American state and public of their positions. Beginning in the winter of 2002 and lasting until the commencement of combat in March 2003, a wide variety of American Christian groups vigorously debated the appropriateness of an American military engagement of Iraq being developed and
promoted by the George W. Bush administration. Most were opposed to the war, but some were in support of it. Some engaged the debate strictly in just war terms, others brought in a mix of other religious, as well as secular reasons to their public arguments. We shall see in chapter three the variety of ways that Christian groups engaged the debate. Religiously, the debate was dominated by Christian groups and individuals. Jewish groups and individuals, for a variety of reasons, were not as vocal as they had been in earlier war debates. Some Jewish groups took different positions on the war, though there were not as many Jewish groups opposed to the war as Christian ones (see Cortright 2004; Tipton 2007). Muslim groups were similarly marginal during the debate. The Christian debate occurred in the context of a broader secular American (as well as global) debate on the war (see Cortright 2004, Epstein 2003, Nikolaev and Hakanen 2006, and Smith 2005 for accounts of the media debate). Because most religious contributions to this debate came from Christian advocates and because most public expressions of religiosity in America tend to be Christian (though the “Judeo-Christian” heritage of the country tends to complicate a distinction between Christian expressions and Jewish ones (Bellah 1967; Williams 1999), this dissertation focuses on the Christian

\[\text{\footnotesize A broader debate over the appropriate response to the threat of international terrorism began in the days following the attacks of September 11, 2001. We will see in chapter one how the social and cultural disruption of those terror attacks cast a long shadow over the Iraq debate.}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize In terms of both the documentary and interview evidence that this dissertation relies on, evidence of Jewish and Muslim contributions in the form of strong advocacy in this debate were comparatively rare. Searching through old internet pages turned up few documents and generally, my attempts to interview Jewish and Muslim advocates were unsuccessful.}\]
elements of the religious public discussion, even while it acknowledges that there were other religious contributions to the debate.

The debate over the war presents an intriguing case for study. The prolonged debate in the public sphere before the initiation of the conflict allowed for clear sides to be drawn on the debate and for collaborations to be pursued by interested parties. Religiously, it a rare case when many organizations took a clear stand, for or against, the proposed conflict. Culturally, it presents a fascinating example of the power of schemas to organize interpretations of incomplete information about potential threats. These features allow for a theoretically profitable case study.

Religion’s role in American domestic politics is well documented in the sociology literature (Beyerlein and Chaves 2003; Driskell, Embry, and Lyon 2008; Guth et al. 2006; Silk 2000; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wood 2002) as is its influence on our foreign policy (Abrams 2001b; but see Abrams 2001a; Beyerlein and Chaves 2003; Chaplin and Joustra 2010; Hertzke 2004; Inboden 2008a). This dissertation examines an important historical moment in the nation’s history when religion significantly contributed, on both sides of a decision to go to war against a foreign enemy. This dissertation will shed light on the religious contribution and influence on these issues, a topic that has received scant attention in either the popular or academic literature. Popular publications examining the war in Iraq have been a growth industry for several years now, but social scientists have only begun dissecting the conflict, leaving a rather small scholarly footprint on the subject. The relative lack of scholarly
attention to the role of religion and the Iraq War leaves a significant empirical lacuna that this dissertation helps to fill.

The decision to go to war has been explained by a variety of factors. Often, the beginning of the Iraq War is understood as an issue of faulty intelligence. Seliktar (2008) analyzes the limits of intelligence, competing paradigms of interpretation, and prediction in the foreign policy debate over how to deal with Iraq. Other scholarship examines how and why the pre-war Iraq intelligence was wrong (Drogin 2007; Hooker 2005; Jervis 2010). Other literature that focuses on intelligence as the principal explanation of the Iraq War explains that the administration’s manipulated intelligence to achieve its political objective of Invading Iraq for other reasons (Bamford 2004a; Bamford 2004b; Collins, National Defense, and National 2008; Hoyle 2008; Ritter and ebrary 2005). Other scholarship focuses on the failure of the media to perform its traditional role as the so-called fourth estate—to check the power of the government (Bakir 2010; Conroy and Hanson 2008; Dadge and Schechter 2006b; Edwards and Cromwell 2006; Miller 2004). A third vein of research focuses on the role of the administration in the decision to go to war. Kelley describes Bush’s rhetoric as “protofascist,” relying on “extreme appeals to superstition and religious dogma” p. 31 (Kelley 2007). Urban focuses on the politically savvy nature of Bush’s religious rhetoric pared with an administrative penchant for secrecy that rationalized a global extension of American power while characterizing this movement as an altruistic act (Urban 2007). Hybel and Kaufman find that the decision to invade Iraq was not rational in that the
administration considered primarily the positive dimensions of their preferred policy while simultaneously stressing the negative elements of other options (Hybel and Kaufman 2006). Other research focuses on the war as typical behavior for a global hegemon, in pushing for the war, the United States was simply acting as great powers do (Dower 2010; Record 2010).

A fourth type of research focuses on the role of religion in the argument for the war as articulated and used by the presidential administration in arguing for the war. While almost all of this scholarship agrees that the president used religion adroitly and ultimately persuasively to convince the American public that the Iraq War was both necessary and good, they diverge on what about his use of religion is most important his rhetorical victory. Many focus on the president’s Manichean symbolic dividing up off the world into absolute evil (in this case principally Saddam Hussein and his regime in Iraq) and absolute good (the United States), which allowed the president to credibly claim that the country should militarily restrain that evil (Lincoln 2006; Singer 2004). Others cast the president’s use of religious rhetoric as in some meaningful sense extreme and inconsistent with the American tradition of religion and public life and a putative separation between church and state. These characterizations range from the president conducting some sort of crusade in this war, that is an overtly religious war, (Brewer 2009; Carroll 2004), to the use of religious fundamentalism in politics (Domke 2004; Urban 2007), to attempts to describe the particular mix of religion and nationalism that allowed this war (Gunn 2009; Rozell and Whitney 2007). These studies help us better
understand the various facets of the administration’s rhetorical use of religion to convince the public and the congress of the rightness of the war. Yet, they should not be taken as the final word on the role of religion and the decision to begin a military conflict in Iraq.

In their focus on the administration and religion, the extant studies do not engage the fullness of the religious discussion in the country. The president was not the only public figure speaking in religious terms in this debate. There were other actors using them as well, we should better understand what they are saying. Furthermore, religious language was not used exclusively in support of the war, there were many religious voices critiquing the war plans. To really understand the role of religion in the war debate we should understand what they were saying as well. Finally, all of these religious voices relied on a deeper, cultural structure of religious meanings that informed these distinct individual voices, both those supporting and those opposed to the war, to really understand religion’s role in arguing for or against war in this country, we need an exegesis of these patterns of cultural meaning that informed those particular voices. These cultural patterns have a long history in informing American debates about war and peace (see Brewer 2009; Gunn 2009) and only in better understanding their stable meanings may we really understand religion, war, and peace in America.

Individual religious actors offered a variety of frames to interpret the potential threat that Iraq posed in late 2002 and early 2003. This dissertation attempts to explain
the sources and stability of these frames in religious understandings of war. If we want to see the larger cultural patterns that shaped the debate, especially across the divide of opposing or supporting the proposed military engagement with Iraq, it is necessary to engage the broader, commonly held elements of discourse that were available to religious actors for their cultural contestation. Seeing these broader cultural resources allows us to see the cultural structure that these religious actors used in their advocacy; it allows us to see distinct religious ideologies with respect to the state’s potential use of violence.

While the framing of war as necessary or problematic may take a variety of forms (see Smith 1996c for examples of this), the basic set of religious ideas that inform these frames is rather simple. There are Christian ideas about identity and meaning for key symbols that tend to either support or criticize the war-making power of the state. These sets of meanings tend to (though imperfectly so in the real world) “hang together” or come as a set or constellation of meanings. My theory of distinct Christian traditions of moral orders with respect to peace and violence aims to elaborate these constellations of religious meanings as a manner of explaining the difference between religious voices that supported the war compared to those that did not.

At stake in a discussion of the potential efficacy of a public debate is nothing less than your understanding of how determined collective political life is. Theoretically, we rob ourselves and our research subjects of agency, if we look at the acts of any administration and see them as unavoidable. Clearly some are politically easier and
expedient, but none are beyond the reach of the culturally permissible and
comprehensible. And some degree of structure and constancy in the realm of the
politically feasible notwithstanding, the content of what is permissible and
understandable is precisely what is up for debate in public discussions. Politicians ignore
this cultural dimension at their own peril. They may act in ways that offend what is
culturally legitimate, but they will likely not be able to do so for long. Politicians may
argue for policies in ways that are culturally problematic, but they are apt to be
removed from office if their arguments are too problematic.

In war this is no less so than in usual politics, though the increased stakes of
existential security usually offered by states in waging it make it more difficult for those
who oppose it. Philip Smith (2005), in making a strong case for the difficulty of waging
war using the wrong narrative genre describes the tension in this way.

Fighting without the correct cultural systems in place is like driving with
the parking brake on. It can be done but it is rarely a good idea. Sooner or
later there are clouds of smoke and then wheels fall off. Likewise a war
without a cultural mandate is hard work: It drains morale, sometimes
secrecy is required that limits effectiveness, there is dissent, parliaments
become noisy and editorials shrill, budgets are hard to justify, and deaths
even more so. . . Our political leaders know this. That is why they work so
relentlessly to establish cultural foundations for conflict before the bullets
start flying.

In the context of much academic understanding of war that tends to privilege
the hard, rational, and strategic concerns of states (Clausewitz 1993; Howard 1984;
Hörnqvist 2004; Morgenthau and Thompson 1993; Philpott 2002), this dissertation
examines the ways in which religion undergirded the cultural mandate for war and
which, as Smith claims is a prerequisite for the initiation of combat. In this understanding, religion and culture is not the mere epiphenomenal rationale for policy decisions driven by other concerns, but rather, the very stuff of political contention that makes real combat possible. The fury of the state’s war-making power is only able to be unleashed when the public is convinced that the reasons for the war are valid and good and the sacrifice entailed in war is worth it.

While there is a good deal of evidence that the presidential administration was determined to proceed with the war (see Haass 2009; Woodward 2004), the public discussion was still potentially powerful with respect to possibly alter the administration’s war planning and ambitions. Although public opinion certainly never reached a level of opposition to the war that could have stopped the war, that is not a sufficient reason to think that the public debate could not have steered public opinion in a more forceful manner in opposition to the drumbeat of war. Indeed, the administration, despite many protests that it was impervious to public opinion, made a concerted though ultimately unsuccessful effort to win a United Nations security council resolution authorizing the use of force to make Iraq comply with previous UN resolutions calling for its disarmament. While there is no doubt that the administration enjoyed substantial advantage in making its case for war, it is an overstatement to argue that it was impervious to the pressure of public opinion and the war was, in any meaningful sense, inevitable. The seemingly clear vistas of hindsight can often obscure
the relative contingency and potential alternative courses, not taken, that characterize
collective political life.

Theoretical Concerns of this Dissertation

The principal theoretical contribution of this study of the pre-war debate on Iraq
is creation and clarification of knowledge about the relation of religious culture to
violence and peace realized through the analysis of the cultural structure of religious
arguments for and against war and an argument for the social foundation of those
structures. This contribution also has practical importance for those interested in a
more peaceful world. Additionally, it will add to knowledge about how and what religion
contributes to American public debates over the use of military force, an important
question in the so-called “Age of Terror” when America struggles with questions about
how to respond to international security threats. Answering my research questions will
contribute to social scientific knowledge on how religion enters the political arena and
the resources it brings to bear on that engagement. It will further illumine the general
ways in which culture is used in political debates over policy. Finally, it will join a small
but growing body of social scientific understanding of the important historical case of
the Iraq War.

The ability of religious peace movements to mobilize against violent state activity
(Nepstad 2004b; Pagnucco 1996; Smith 1996a), is an important empirical phenomenon
and area of theoretical research because the legitimate exercise of violence is at the
very heart of the conception of the state (Weber, Gerth, and Mills 1958). Challenging
the state’s legitimacy on the ability to use violence is perhaps one of the most
fundamental challenges states can endure. Furthermore, religion’s moral challenge of
that legitimacy is both an example of contemporary strong public religion (Casanova
1994) and a central tension in the origins of modernity, the struggle over authority
between religion and the state, a tension that continues to be of relevance today.

Religion makes distinctively valuable contributions to national debates on the
potential use of force by a state. Considering war can engender one of the most
challenging and vexing discussions the nation can have, especially when advocates offer
competing understandings of the stakes, threats, and goods involved. While secular
advocates can struggle to articulate moral rationales for their positions, religious
advocates often specialize in offering moral argumentation that may enrich a discussion
otherwise dominated by realpolitik concerns. In what follows, I address the three areas
of social scientific theory that this dissertation addresses.

Religion’s Ambivalence with Respect to War and Peace

The question of whether religion is inherently extremist and inclined towards
violence (Liebman 1983; Wellman and Tokuno 2004) or whether any violence is a
perversion of truly peaceful religion—as many faithful are likely to claim—is moot. The
intellectually honest answer is that religion is both; it can be an intoxicatingly powerful
inspiration for war and a deeply transforming call for peace. Either of these dynamics
may occur internally to groups or across the deepest of group divides (Appleby,

Scholarship has only begun to explore the conditions under which religion can contribute to either outcome. Unfortunately, much research on these relations fails to analyze variation in support of either violence or nonviolence, that is it only studies cases of empirical religious support of violence in isolation from other cases (or studies) of religious support of nonviolence. As a result, our general understanding of religion’s ambivalence is underdeveloped. My research will begin to address and ameliorate this shortcoming in previous studies by analyzing variation between religious advocacy for and against war in the same historical case. To fully explain any outcome, we need to account for alternative results as well. For example, if we were to fully explain why social movements succeed, we would need to consider movements that failed in addition to successful ones. Most studies of religious support for violence or peace study a case where religion is seen to support only one of these outcomes. To better understand religion’s ambivalence, its sanction of both violence and peace needs to be analyzed.

Additionally, most studies of religious support of violence investigate the violence of non-state actors. From the global networks of Al-Qaeda, to the urban apocalypticism of Aum Shinrikyo in Tokyo or the People’s Temple in Oakland and
Jonestown, Guyana, to rural white supremacists in the Pacific Northwest of this country, many scholars bring much needed light to the subject of so-called religious terror. They miss, however, the role of religion in supporting or challenging state violence, especially in highly religious countries like the United States. But as we have seen, very little academic work develops robust theory that explicitly explains religion’s ambivalence, its potential to contribute to both peace and violence, as well as aims to explain both state and nonstate violence. This dissertation begins to fill these significant lacunae.

*Religion and Violence.*

Religion’s relationship to violence is the better developed half of the study of this religious ambivalence. Theories investigating religion and violence can be classified into two broad types, theories of scarcity and theories of identity. Theories of scarcity focus on competition over resources, either material or symbolic, while theories of identity tend to analyze the factors leading to the creation of a religious collective sense of self and purpose that sanctions violence. Let us consider these theories in turn.

Our account of scarcity theories necessarily begins with the seminal work of Girard (1977). Girard theorizes universal escalating cycles of appropriative mimicry, rivalry, and conflict over scarce material resources culminating in scapegoating of religious others and religious violence. The pleasing parsimony of Girard’s theory of imitative violence is probably also the target of its strongest criticism as the theory stretches until the breaking point with the consideration of a wider variety of empirical cases despite Girard’s claims to universality. Two influential biblical scholars also argue
that religion is inherently inclined towards violence via processes of scarcity. Schwartz (1997) focuses on the scarcity of identity and the consequences of violence in identity formation itself that result from theological assertions of monotheism, especially in the Hebrew Scriptures. If there is only one “God” and one people of God, then any group in opposition can be constructed as other, which often leads to actual violence against them. The work of Avalos (2005) focuses on the scarcity of symbolic resources in explaining religious violence and is quite critical of those who claim that religion is “really” peaceful and only the misuse or abuse of religion results in religious contributions to violence. Avalos provocatively refers to this as “crypto-essentialism” because it surreptitiously essentializes religious as really peaceful. Avalos’ own fairly blatant essentializing of religion as always violence producing remains unavailable for critical self-analysis in his work.

A major problem with literary approaches to the study of religion and violence is they often miss the substantial differences between religious sacred writings and religion as lived in the real world. This only compounds the lack of balance they have toward religion’s ability to either violence or peace. Textually, the evidence for religion’s contribution to peace is dismissed as trivial and inconsequential relative to the putatively overarching support of violence. Empirically, religion’s various contributions to peace in the world are largely ignored. The problem with scarcity approaches to

\[ \text{Schwartz’s theory is also indicative of the difficulties in classifying these theories as either scarcity or identity theories. Because scarcity primarily drives the othering processes in her account, I classify her as a scarcity account, even as identity clearly plays a significant role in her theory.} \]
religious violence more generally is that they either fail to specify what cultural elements in religion logically precede and lead to appropriative mimicry and scapegoating (in the case of Girard) or neglect to account for elements of religious culture that may attenuate the potential violence of scarcity in identity or symbolic resources created by religion.

What I am categorizing as identity theories are a heterogeneous grouping of theoretical accounts, which while emphasizing a variety of factors in explaining religious violence, all put the creation of a religious identity near the center of their analysis, even if they are not self-referentially an identity theory per se. Hall, Schuyler, and Trinh (2000) focus on the importance of apocalypticism in religious groups that sponsor violence. They offer a two-pronged theory of apocalyptic religious violence that they apply to a range of contemporary new religious movements either envision a warring apocalypse of religious conflict (such as the Branch Davidians or the members of the People’s Temple in Jonestown) or a (less common) mystical apocalypse of deathly transcendence (as in the case of Heaven’s Gate and their attempted rendezvous with the Hale-Bopp comet). Hall, Schuyler, and Trinh’s theory, however, can only help explain a small universe of highly sectarian groups and does not fully develop how religious groups come to either type of apocalyptic religious vision. The work of studying more mainstream religious groups remains undone.

Juergensmeyer’s (2003) study of religiously inspired terror focuses on the particular combinatory power of geopolitical forces, religious identity, and local contexts.
in the creation of sacralized worlds that inspire religious violence intended to convey symbolic resistance to the perceived aggression of the capitalistic and imperialistic west. More specifically, religious terrorists criticize “weak” adherents of the faith, refuse to compromise with secular institutions, and reject the public-private split of western modernity. Juergensmeyer provides useful explanations for the generation of religious terror, and helps explain its meaning, a particularly important contribution as some elements of religiously inspired terror present great challenges to the contemporary world. But, as Nepstad (2004a) points out, many of the characteristics of religious terrorists are also shared by religious activists who wish to stop violence. The question of what makes religious sanctioning of violence particularly religious is not yet clear.

Aho (1994) studies Christian separatists in the United States and analyzes the mutual construction of enemies at the infamous and influential (to among others, Timothy McVeigh) showdown between the federal government and the separatist Weaver family at Ruby Ridge, Idaho in 1992. For Christian patriot movements as well as the federal government, the construction of enemies depends on a deep sense of righteousness and persecution that calls for the destruction of the enemy to protect itself. Aho’s work shows how both sides in a conflict are simultaneously victims and victimizers in escalating cycles of violence. Such an interactionist insight contributes to our understanding of the mutually re-enforcing processes in the social construction of violence. What remains to be seen in Aho’s work is how religious identity is particularly important to this process of enemy construction.
These identity theories all contribute useful knowledge concerning the various reasons that religious groups construct an identity that legitimates or promotes violence. They are limited, however, in that as often as not these theories’ account often steer analysis away from religion towards other, nonreligious, explanations for religious violence. The central question of which religious elements lead to violence and which do not, remains unanswered. More broadly, despite the contributions of these studies of religion and violence, of either the scarcity or identity variety, significant gaps in our knowledge remain. These investigations analyze extremely small religious communities that create very high tension with the larger society and how they make sense of the violence that they commit. The important question of how we can we account for religious groups that do not exist in such relatively high apocalyptic tension and their legitimization of state violence remains unanswered. It is reasonable to think that meaning-making processes will be different in religious groups in relatively high sectarian tension with society than in those groups which are comfortable enough with the social order to have their own elite participants in the public sphere, as was the case in the prelude to the Iraq War. A more fully developed theory of religious legitimation of violence should center on religious reasons for violence and be able to explain religion’s relationship to both state and nonstate violence.

Religion and peace.

There is a growing literature of religion’s contribution to peace—the relatively neglected half of the relation between religion and peace and violence—but our
knowledge is relatively undeveloped and suffers from a general lack of cohesion. In the literature, I see three categories of contributions. First, there is the centrality of the relation between religion and the nation in determining whether religion may contribute to war or peace. Second, there are a number of empirical accounts that contribute evidence on religion’s abilities for peace while not clearly developing theory that can account for religion contributing to peace. Finally, there are sociological approaches which analyze frames, resources, and agency in religion’s advocacy for peace. We next look at these in turn.

Most of the inquiries into religion and nationalism focus on religious nationalism, or the significant merging of religious and national identities, and the potentially powerful synergy for the motivation of violence that such a combination of collective identities may engender. The actual relations between religious identities and nationalistic ones and their relation to violence are complex and our social scientific understandings reflect this empirical complexity. Whether understood as religious nationalists against a secular state (Juergensmeyer 1993; Juergensmeyer 2008), a so-called “Clash of Civilizations” (Huntington 1996) between the Christian West and the Muslim Near East, the consequence of material progress in the production of the printed word (Anderson 1983), or religion providing both the literature and the affective bonds that made modern nationalism possible (Hastings 1997), a basic set of conclusions begins to emerge. Both religion and nationalism may contribute to violence. Together, they may especially do so.
Understanding the nuances and mutual influence and independence of religion and nationalism is a difficult thing. For example, Appleby’s (2000) assertion of the ambivalence of religion is an extremely useful theoretical proposal that accommodates a greater degree of empirical variation and accounts for religious contributions to peace as well as violence. But while Appleby is correct in assigning primary importance to the interplay between religion and other factors of collective identity such as nationalism and ethnicity, he misunderstands the problem by explaining religious violence solely as the result of manipulation by these other collective forces. Religion certainly can be manipulated by these, but it is also true that religion, on its own terms, can and often enough does understand itself as extremely coextensive with them. This close relationship can allow religion’s internal potential for the sanctioning of violence to be put toward distinctly national or ethnic ends. In these cases the cause of the violence is religious. Appleby’s theoretical promise, therefore, suffers from Avalos’ charge of crypto-essentialism in Appleby’s normatively-charged assertion that strong religion is immune from manipulation by outside forces and can therefore stay “true” to religion’s peaceful tendencies, while only “weak” religion can be used by other collective forces to promote violence. Ultimately, while valorizing the internal pluralism of religious traditions with respect to ideas on war and peace, Appleby does not take it theoretically seriously, by failing to acknowledge that ontologically religion, on its own, can go either way, even when we might wish that it were not so.
For our purposes of better understanding religion’s capacity to work towards peace, we may glean an important implicit lesson from the research on religion and nationalism: increasing the “distance” between religious and nationalistic identities and loyalties opens up some space for religion’s potential to motivate or argue for peaceful resolution of conflicts. This is especially so with respect to state-sponsored violence. Given nationalism’s tendency (far from absolute) to support the state in its war-making power, religion’s potential for peace may be developed when religious identity does not overlap significantly with national identity. This dissertation aims to better understanding how religion can advocate for peace (or war) in a single case when its degree of overlap with nationalism varies.

Much of the rest of the religion and peace literature is edited collections with widely varying contributions that suggest religion’s capacities towards nonviolence with little systematic integration of their various insights and a lack of consistent and explicit attempt at theory building. Little’s (2007) collection of contributions from peacemaking religious activists is the best attempt at synthesis among these types of contribution to the literature. The book is filled with rich details from peace practitioners around the globe and Little helpfully summarizes some general lessons in his concluding chapter. These include the “proper” (437) role of religion as promoting peace, rather than war, the common response of hostility and violence to religious promotion of peace, the

---

7 In a Christian context, the Anabaptist tradition of attempting to be separate from the nation and state is but the most obvious example of this.
important role of women as a resource for religious peacemaking, and
acknowledgement that religious peacemakers are divided between those who advocate
a form of pacifism and those that advocate a just war approach to interpreting conflict
ethically. Despite Little’s identification of these general lessons, there is little theoretical
development of them. Most of the rest of the literature of religion and peace is similarly
more suggestive and fragmentary than definitive and comprehensive. For example,
Broadhead and Keown’s (2007) edited collection contains chapters about religion,
violece, and peace from around the globe, but completely demurs from making any
attempt whatsoever to make sense of the volume in toto. Other collections (see
(Coward and Smith 2004; Haar and Busuttil 2005b; Smock and United States Institute
2006) make some attempt to synthesize, but none are more ambitious than Little’s
effort.

In the sociology literature there is a tradition of studying religious peace
movements against violent state activity (Nepstad 2004a; Pagnucco 1996; Smith 1996c;
Woehrle, Coy, and Maney 2008) Smith and Nepstad’s analyses of the Central American
peace movement both highlight the particular contributions of religious activists and
culture in the largely church-lead resistance to militaristic American policies in Latin
America. Smith’s account of the competing discursive frames surrounding the United
States’ Central American policy is particularly helpful for better understanding public
debates over foreign policy. The Reagan administration and protesters were involved in
a framing contest over how to interpret American involvement in Central America. This
debate was filtered via the media and full of tactical choices by both sides trying to capitalize on available resources to define the “reality” of the issue. A problem remains, however, in a lack of explanation of the sources and stability of the frames in Christian understandings of war. This dissertation aims to correct this problem.

This scholarship also analyzes the resources religion can bring to bear in political engagement. Multiple resources help religion in its potential to mobilize politically including the provision of a transcendent motivation, organizational resources, a strong collective identity, and privileged legitimacy in the public arena (Smith 1996b). Additionally, religions helpfully provide distinctly moral arguments, expressed in narratives, which can prove to be powerful motivators of social action (Smith 1996c; Smith 2003). When the importance of religious symbolic resources is fostered in processes of socialization and highlighted by salient biographical experiences activists of remarkable resolve can be produced, even in the midst of an ostensibly losing cause (Nepstad 2004b). Smith and Nepstad show the particular resources that religion mobilizes for political action compared to those mobilized by secular actors, but they do not directly address comparisons across distinct religious positions. This dissertation analyzes this type of comparison across religious positions on the Iraq War.

Finally, there is the issue of agency of religious actors. Nepstad’s (2004b) attention to culture and agency are useful for my project in that they direct me to pay attention to the agents actually organizing, arguing, and protesting. While Nepstad studied important protestors in the Central American peace movement, her analytic
focus on the importance of culture to central social actors will help me better understand religious experiences and cultural impacts on the religious elites who argued over the Iraq War. Understanding the influence of religious culture, biography, and history (and their interpretation) on these elites will help me better explain the production of religious arguments by them.

Mixed Religious and Secular Discourse in Political Engagement

Another area of theoretical inquiry that this dissertation addresses regards the conditions under which religion may participate in a public debate. The debate before the Iraq War began was marked both by the high presence of religious reasoning and discourse throughout the debate and a distinct difference between war supporters and war opponents in their use of secular discourse. While religious opponents were quite likely to use both religious and secular discourse, religious supporters of the war were much more likely to use religious discourse exclusively or nearly exclusively. What contextual factors and attributes of the advocates encouraged both of these patterns to occur? My analysis leads to both a macro- and cultural explanations. Because I am analyzing national political discourse, the macro-level context is an obvious factor in contributing to the terms of the debate. Hearing directly from the advocates in this debate also leads me to consider the ways in which they understood their identities and expertise in the public as key influences in how they participated in the prewar debate. But, first, what does the extant literature tell us about how and why religion participates in public discussions?
Despite earlier claims of its privatization, religion is clearly asserting its public importance in many areas of contemporary social life and the de-privatization of religion thesis (Casanova 1994) is widely accepted. In this dissertation, I will investigate a variety of public religion in which religion provides both a critique of and support for a key foreign policy decision. It is important to remember that demonstrating a public religious contribution is not limited to evidence that religion has clearly imposed its agenda upon society. Rather, Casanova argues that raising questions, redrawing moral boundaries, and the forcing of a public debate are examples of religion playing an important public role (1994:43).

There is debate in the literature over how religion enters the public sphere. How much do actors specifically use religious discourse when it speaks to the secular public? Does it need to change or adjust how it makes arguments in the public sphere? Most research indicates that religion changes the content of its discourse when it politically engages. Religious lobbyists in the Wisconsin state senate, for example, had a difficult time making arguments in explicitly religious terms (Yamane 2005). Distinct anti-abortion discourse from Southern Baptists and the Catholic Bishops demonstrates that crafting arguments for the public arena is influenced by a variety of theological and historical characteristics of religious traditions and that religion faces many challenges in translating its principles into public discourse (Dillon 1995). Byrnes (1991) argues the emergence of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on the national scene with their assertions of Catholic social teaching as a way to communicate to the
broader public was the result of solicitation from politicians seeking to gain political advantage by winning the Catholic vote. Byrnes challenges the autonomy of the Bishops’ voice in the political arena and highlights how politicians used their moral concerns for their own advantage. The remarkable success of the interfaith movement to enshrine freedom of religion concerns as a formal element of America’s foreign policy in the International Religious Freedom Act depended significantly on religious advocates’ ability to translate their concern for their persecuted brethren into legalistic human rights language (Hertzke 2004).

In contrast to these studies, Hofrenning’s analysis downplays religious accommodation to the public sphere and indicates that in their prophetic stance vis-à-vis the values and policy of Washington, religious lobbies speak radically different and more powerful languages than secular lobbyists. Their common use of symbols that are simple, powerful, and meaningful to many people is seen as a distinct advantage. Furthermore, Hofrenning judges conservative groups to be more skilled than liberal ones in the utilization of these symbols.

One middle path through this dichotomy of findings on whether religion is secularized in public life elaborates how religious actors adjust to the rules of the secular political game, if they want to have success. This accommodation does not necessarily mean an abandonment or dilution of religious presence in public, but rather, a tactical adaptation that increases the odds of religious efficacy in public policy contests. For example, Hertzke (1988) details the degree to which religious advocates at
the national level turn to rights language in their work. Hertzke’s later (2004) study of interfaith and bipartisan organizing to pass the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, exemplified how religious groups used rights language to pass a major piece of federal legislation. The mainline religious denominations are perhaps exemplary in this balancing of religious presence and yielding political leverage (with varying degrees of success). Tipton’s exhaustive coverage (2007) of the United Methodists extensive public engagement and progressive tilt since the 1960s demonstrates that the country’s third largest denomination can exert itself in the political arena, even as substantial divisions and debates conflict its membership as it is doing it. The mainline maintains its ability to speak with religious discourse to the pressing issues of the day with primarily a progressive voice is clear, even as in the long-view its membership and centrality to the core of the American elite diminishes (see Wuthnow and Evans 2002 for more on the mainline).

In the contemporary United States, it seems likely that successful religious engagement of politics is often a mixture of religious and secular argumentation. Religion does not speak solely in exclusivist terms that are incomprehensible to others nor does it completely translate all of its claims into secular terms to which all in the public debate can relate. Yamane (2005) argues that any religious group that wants to be taken seriously in the public square comes to present their arguments in ways that are persuasive to people who act on motivations that may include religious ones, but also other ideas and ideals, such as the need to represent one’s constituency and be re-
elected, the need to raise money and keep donors happy, ideas advanced by competing interest groups, and ethical belief beyond those that are prescribed by religion.

Yamane considers groups that are able to do this “mature” (Ibid.). The subtitle of his work, “negotiating prophetic demands and political realities” (Yamane 2005), well captures his meaning, the ability to speak in both religious and other registers. This view of doing both religion and politics certainly suggests an adaptation to the demands of political discourse and concern for wanting to affect social policy, not just witness to it. Religious groups as diverse as the Christian Right (MOEN 1994) and the Mainline (Steensland 2002) have shown a tendency to accommodate to the demands of the political arena. But how to explain war opponents’ use of both religious and secular discourse while religious war supporters primarily used religious discourse remains a central task of the empirical analysis in Chapter 5.

A focus on elite advocates’ understanding, as well as the research process of listening to many of them discuss their thoughts, hopes, and feelings as they recalled their strategizing of how to participate in the debate before the war leads to a consideration of their agency. How do actors’ understandings of a situation contribute to their decisions to use act and use religiously prophetic language? What conditions lead to difference in religious and secular argumentation? In the investigation and theorizing of these questions I am following in the footsteps of Jasper, who in the context of the study of social movements, has strongly argued that researchers need “to give the voice back to protesters we study” (1997). Jasper emphasizes how movement
activists use culture to create meaningful lives and meaningful movements that are guided by moral concerns. Moral protest is artful, people “play on cultural meanings and strategic expectations” (1997) in ways that are intended to make their advocacy as likely of success as possible. My interviews with many of the religious advocates reveals the myriad ways in which they worked creatively and doggedly on any tactic that they thought might result in influencing the decision to go to war. This is particularly true for the war opponents, who were most likely to be creative, faced with the administration’s relentless push for the war in a post 9/11 milieu of fear.

Viewed with an eye towards their artfulness in the face of the political constraints of the broader public discussions, the culture, biography, and moral evaluations of advocates become particularly important aspects of culture for analysis to understand how advocates decided to enter politics. As Jasper claims, these motivate, rationalize, and channel political action (1997). These elements of meaning from both the private world (biography) and public (culture) can be utilized for strategic purposes. Jasper defines strategies as “The choices made by individuals and organizations in their interactions with other players, especially opponents” (1997). Because advocates were strategic, their choices varied as their evaluations of their options in the strategic game varied. If they wanted to win, as the discursive and political contours of the debate shifted, their tactics towards their strategic goals also shifted. Additionally and most fundamentally, given the discursive opportunity structure
that 9/11 and President Bush opened up, religious discourse was, in fact, a very good strategic choice.

But how do advocates choose among the possible tactics available to them? Even as public advocates are strategic, they are also empowered and constrained by their own identities. Identity gives a sense of both who groups are as well as how they should do things (Becker 1999). Though sometimes making tactical decisions based on identity is understood as following an expressive logic as opposed to a rational, instrumental logic based on pure strategy (see Polletta and Jasper 2001 for more on this), this dissertation takes a both/and approach to considering the role of strategic and expressive action. The advocates I interviewed expressed strong desires to both act in consistent ways with their identity and be effective. Indeed, they understood acting in these ways to be the way they could be most effective. In this, my findings disagree with inquiry that posits that religious groups are primarily about witnessing to public debates with little interest in actually affecting the outcome (see Epstein 1991; see Lichterman 1996 for examples of secular groups that do this). Religious groups’ identities can also influence their abilities to work in coalitions or partnerships as exclusivist senses of identity make such work difficult (Carroll and Ratner 1996; Ferree and Roth 1998). Some religious groups work in coalitions easily based on their identities, while others found coalitional work much more difficult.
On the Social Origins of Counter-Hegemonic Ideas

This dissertation also addresses the question of the sources of religious ideas for political debate. Why did some Christian religious elites support the war and why did others not support it? In other words, why did some religious advocates act in a priestly manner on this issue while others acted in a prophetic one? In this dissertation, my interview data leads me to take a distinctly micro-level, interactionist approach to explain the power and perseverance of ideas. A micro-level perspective means that my argument for accounting of the origins of ideas starts with individuals and their social lives. It analyzes formative experiences in their significant interactions with other humans and how they make meaning in those interactions. But it does not end there. As we have seen, these ideas that arise out of social interaction also have a macro, society-wide, life and impact of their own.

My analysis of the social origins of elite religious advocates’ positions is grounded in the symbolic interactionist tradition within sociology. This perspective allows us to see how the social world is constructed and given meaning in small-scale, interpersonal interactions. Blumer summarized symbolic interactionism in three propositions: 1) humans act toward things (including other humans) based on the meanings of those things, 2) meaning arises out of social interaction with others, and 3) meanings are modified through interpretive human processes (Blumer 1969). In a symbolic interactionist approach, meanings are rooted in the interpersonal relations and interactions in which people engage. Taking such an approach lets us see how even
the most developed and publicly important ideas, such as religious perspectives on a possible war, can be traced back to their social roots. But this approach, as we shall see, is not reductionistic. There are multiple roots of these ideas and individual advocates’ commitment to them is not completely socially determined. The religious formation of these advocates is always a contingent and ongoing process, throughout individuals may exercise agency relative to their use of culture in any given situation. All of these interactions and processes combine, in a patterned fashion to form people into traditions. From within these traditions, they may act consistently or not, in any given situation, and which, ultimately, they can decide to remain in the tradition or not.

In order to understand how these social processes work, it will be helpful to imagine these two distinct positions on the Iraq War particularly as instances of a more persistent pattern within American Christianity. We can understand these patterns as distinct traditions within American Christianity on the issue of American use of military force, one rather priestly and the other prophetic. Given the observed general restructuring of American religion into progressive and traditional traditions that are now more important than traditional denominational cleavages (Wuthnow 1988), this division on the specific issue of the use of force seems reasonable. The priestly support of America would be the hegemonic position because it supports the position of political power (i.e., the administration in this case). I call this the American Christian Realist tradition. In times of war or the prospect of war, arguments for the use of American force to defend collective security have a distinct rhetorical advantage compared to calls
for restraint. The prophetic critique of the American state would be counter-hegemonic, in that it argues against this position. I call this the Peace and Justice American Christianity tradition. This analytic lens lets us understand these two positions on the war in Iraq as particular manifestations of a broader tradition of American religiosity on the issue of American state and its frequent use of violence.

The question now becomes how do we explain advocates’ formation into these traditions? Given the difficulties of a taking a counter-hegemonic position compared to the relative ease of taking a hegemonic one, a more pointed way to consider the question is to ask, why might a person take a counter hegemonic position on the issue of war? Such a question is interesting because in a debate over war, being or becoming counter-hegemonic is difficult. Constructionist accounts remind us that internalization of society’s culture is often unconscious and unproblematic (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and challenging that dominant culture is a relatively rare act. On the issue of war more specifically, Woehrle, Coy and Maney (2008) characterize the United States peace movement as creating oppositional knowledge in contrast to the hegemonic knowledge produced largely by political insiders in the foreign policy promotion process. It is a rather subversive and socially hard thing to challenge the hegemonic knowledge surrounding war and the necessity of it. It is seen as a betrayal of our troops, those directly in harm’s way, representing us. To protest a war can be seen as a fast way to demonstrate one’s civil irresponsibility, especially when compared to the grave responsibilities of the nation’s fighting forces (Coy, Woehrle, and Maney 2008a;
DeBenedetti and Chatfield 1990). In the country’s new War on Terror, it was incredibly difficult to be critical towards America and American policy. Given the grave social risks and social conditions, why did some religious leaders choose to counter hegemony and argue against the Iraq War? Of particular interest is how did religious opponents of the war come to take such a publicly difficult and counter hegemonic position?

To answer these questions, we need the insights of two distinct research traditions in the sociology of religion. We need to build on the extant knowledge about the characteristics of counter-hegemonic religion and we need the insight into the processes of religious conversion for individuals. We first consider the properties of religion that allow for a counter-hegemonic position. Shortly, we will consider the research into religious conversion.

Antonio Gramsci, Italian intellectual and would-be revolutionary, the intellectual architect of hegemony and counter-hegemony, views culture as a semiautonomous sphere of society that has the potential to transform society (1991). For religious culture, what allows this possibly transformative stance? The literature identifies several important factors in this process. Westhues identifies membership homogeneity, a theological tradition that is at variance with the existing social order, and leadership preferences as important factors in determining religious oppositional stances (1976). Smith identifies a wide variety of religious assets for activism, ranging from transcendent motivations, organizational resources, shared identities, and social and geographic positioning (1996a). Morris shows that charismatic religious leaders depend
on independent and flexible religious institutions that can withstand withering public pressures (1984). As we have seen in chapter five, shared identities were particularly important in how religious advocates participated in the public debate. More generally, however, these factors that allow for a counter-hegemonic position, in the case of Westhues, the “tools” of that work, in the case of Smith, or the organizational analysis of Morris do not give us sufficient insight into the social processes by which religious actors come to hegemonic positions.

For insight into that, I turn to the work of Billings who investigates the difference between quiescent and oppositional religious roles in political issues (1990). Billings’ Gramscian analysis helps explain why some religious groups come to take oppositional positions on political issues, while others do not. Billings identifies three mutually supportive conditions for oppositional movements: autonomous organizations that allow for freedom of reflection independent of the hegemonic positions, organic intellectuals who develop alternate worldviews that challenge the status quo, and social interactions that sustain these new worldviews and insure their plausibility. For the purposes of this dissertation, I am particularly interested in the last two of these conditions. My interview data lead me to focus on both the creation of organic intellectuals and the social interactions that allow for the formation of counter-hegemonic religious advocates.

My analysis of interviews with elite religious advocates begins with a focus on the experience of meeting victims of structural violence in ways that allows them to
become a type of organic intellectual, who speaks out for the these victims. In chapter six, we will find that religious advocates are not precisely organic intellectuals, at least as Gramsci originally described them (Gramsci 1991). They are not from the same social position (i.e., the working class in Gramsci’s formulation), rather they are distinctly other, but come to have concern and knowledge of the plight of structural violence’s victims resulting often from close encounters with them. They are, as I have been describing them throughout this dissertation, advocates. But what allowed them to become advocates for social “others”?

In emotional terms, they empathize with these victims. The research into empathy as a socially important emotion is helpful in understanding their role as “organic advocates,” if you will, for structural victims. In my understanding of empathy as an important and socially significant emotion, I am following, in part, the model of Davis (2007). An important antecedent factor in developing empathy is the strength of the situation, meaning how salient the encounter is in a person’s memory, a factor clearly evident in the accounts I heard in the course of my interviews. The fact that my respondents recounted these encounters in telling their brief biographies also indicates that the situation was important to them. The most relevant outcome of empathy in subjects is an increase in “interpersonal accuracy” in estimating other’s peoples’ experience, their thoughts and feelings. This occurs through the process of perspective taking of the other (Jones and Nisbett 1971) and can result in what Davis and others have called “a Merging of Self and Other” (Davis et al. 1996), so that the concerns of the
other become central to the concerns of self. In chapter six, I argue that the war’s opponents were significantly more likely to have empathy for the potential victims of the Iraq War. This mattered in their advocacy because the creation of empathy for war’s would-be victims points towards an emotional alternative to the fear and demonizing of enemies necessary for constructing an apocalyptic genre in arguing for war. Advocates create opposing narratives against going to war in no small part via creating empathy for those would be hapless victims of war.

In order to more fully round out our understanding of the micro-level origins of counter-hegemonic religious advocacy we also need to consider the social scientific insights into processes of religious conversion of individuals. What other factors help us understand how advocates came to be socially and religiously formed? If we understand the priestly and prophetic strains as relatively stable variants of American religious tradition, religious switching from an explicitly or implicitly priestly stance to one of prophetic stance can be understood as changing one’s religious tradition. The declining importance of denominational differences and the increasing salience of liberal and conservative religious traditions across denominational cleavages (as described by Wuthnow) make a change across the liberal/conservative divide at least as meaningful as a change across denominational differences used to be. Religious conversion to a new denomination usually involved a social transition to a clearly marked new identity category (for example, practicing Catholic, Unification Church member, saved believer, etc.) with a new place to worship. Conversion to a peace and justice tradition may not
necessarily involve such a clear break to others and may not necessarily include a change in church attendance. Once discovered or marked, however, a change in tradition with respect to the use of American violent power within a denomination may actually be quite socially disruptive as former co-traditionalists question one’s religious judgment and most probably ones’ patriotism too.

Given this theoretical lens of conversion, what does the research on religious switching of tradition tell us? Most clear in the literature is the importance of social networks, social ties, and extensive interaction among those ties and networks that connect to the new religious tradition (KOX, MEEUS, and HART 1991; LOFLAND and STARK 1965; SNOW and PHILLIPS 1980; Stark and Finke 2000a). These have long been an area of central agreement in the study of religious conversion. People simply must be well connected socially to the people and networks of their new religious traditions in order for conversion to occur. Minus these social ties and interactions, they are far less likely to switch their religious tradition. Research highlights the importance of socialization processes before, during and after the conversion process, although there is disagreement about whether the order in which ideological commitment and religious socialization typically occur. In a related finding more closely related to the issues addressed in this dissertation, Munson’s (2009) study of the pro-life found that socialization in to the movement often occurred well before commitment to the

---

8 I am indebted to Gooren’s synthetic approach to religious conversion (2007) for guidance in my coverage of the relevant research.
movements’ ideals and goals. This dissertation will not resolve the question of which comes first, religious ideological commitments or socialization. Rather, it will build on the consistent finding of the importance of socialization, ties, and interaction in coming to a new religious identity, regardless of its temporal order in the process.

Central to many theoretical accounts of conversion are converts experiencing some sort of personal or existential crisis prior to their conversion (Kox, Meeus, and Hart 1991; Lofland and Stark 1965; Lofland and Stark 1965; Rambo 1993). Converts’ old tradition and accompanying worldviews are not able to satisfactorily resolve this crisis. The crisis spoils the previous identity within that tradition (Goffman 1963; Greil and Greil 1977). Griel argues people change religious commitments “when that perspective is perceived as not dealing with the problems that the individual encounters in everyday life” (Ibid 119). The new religious identity allows for practical problem solving and resolves the personal crisis (Davidman 1991; Gartrell and Shannon 1985; Heirich 1977). As we shall see in chapter six, many advocates encountered victims of structural violence earlier in their life that were troubling to them and made them question their previous assumptions and beliefs. A new religious identity allowed them to make sense of the suffering of victims and address the root causes of it in policy decisions policy decisions of the United States. This religious conversion allowed advocates against the war particularly to create significant lives from their experiences in their own biographies (for more on the importance of
biography for advocates see Jasper 1997; for insight into the importance of biography on Central American religious activists particularly see Nepstad 2004b).

In accounting for why advocates in the prophetic vein on the issue of the war with Iraq came to the positions they took in the public sphere within America’s public sphere, I argue for a two-part theoretical account. First, using the Gramscian concept of organic intellectuals as a starting point, I elaborate how meaningful interactions with victims of structural violence and the resulting empathy advocates felt for them allow them to have particular concern for and awareness of the vulnerability of the victims of the proposed war with Iraq. These biographical experiences led these advocates to speak for these people whose interests and concerns would not otherwise be heard in the domestic public debate. Second, I look for the socialization and interaction which also support a conversion to—or for those raised within the counter-hegemonic tradition the sustaining of—a peace and justice identity. Advocates for the war, on the other hand, did not relate to me in our interviews these sorts of meaningful interactions with structural victims. For these advocates, religious and political socialization lead to a priestly position of advocacy and an identity as American Christian realists. These factors form the social foundation of the set of meanings that informed the different perspectives on war and peace that are detailed in the fourth chapter. These theoretical tools allow me to argue that the ideological commitments that were expressed in the debate before the war have social roots
Structure of the Dissertation

In chapter two of this dissertation, “The Context: Interpreting Threats to America at the Turn of the Millenium” I consider the historical-cultural context of the debate before the Iraq War. More specifically, I consider the lasting impact that the attacks of September 11 had on the interpretive frames and narration of events that followed, especially as it lead to the administration’s plans for a War on Terror. Taking a social constructionist point of view, I argue that the turn of the third millennium and the end of the Cold War had made American uncertain about its role and the world and its own nature. The attacks of 9/11 brought this uncertainty to a cultural and political head, the tensions of which were resolved by a new, expansive War on Terror. This war coded and narrated reality in such a way as to make a war with Iraq symbolically and narratively possible and probable.

Chapter three, “The Battle is Joined: Religious Advocacy on Iraq,” describes the various ways in which religious advocates were active in Iraq War advocacy. Christian advocates lobbied elected officials in both the halls of power of the United States and internationally. They were active in the public debate, both collectively and individually, by issuing statements, being featured in news coverage of the debate, and by being featured in a variety of advertisements. Finally, Christian advocates were part of the massive anti-war grassroots marches and electronic mobilizations.

Chapter four, “Competing Religious Moral Orders in the Debate over the Iraq War” investigates religion’s ambivalence towards the Iraq War. The prolonged debate in
the public sphere before the initiation of the conflict allowed for clear sides to be drawn on the debate. Analyzing my empirical documentary evidence, I answer the question: how and why did religious advocacy against the Iraq War differ from religious advocacy for the war? I find that religious actors on different sides of this debate engage articulate and inhabit distinct moral orders with respect to the use of violence by the state. These moral orders are of two parts. The first dimension examines religious identities varying understandings of its relations to the nation and the state. The second dimension analyzes the distinct set of meanings that tend to cohere around religious support or opposition to the war. These religious repertoires include the nature and constitution of political order, the nature of evil, the role of peace—particularly as it relates to the political order, the proper object of Christian love, and the value and practicality of nonviolence in the world.

In Chapter five, “Religion In the Public Sphere,” I examine how religion participates in the public sphere, with both religious and secular discourse. How can we understand both the high degree of religious discourse in the debate and the distinct pattern of mixed, religious and secular, discourse use by war opponents and nearly exclusive use of religious discourse by war supporters? I find that several contextual and cultural factors help explain the particularly religious tenor of these religious actors. First, the socio-historical context of the meaning of threats in a post-September 11 world made religious discourse legitimate terms for public debate. In this context, activists against the war believed that speaking in both religious and secular registers
offered them opportunities to gain rhetorical traction in a debate they were otherwise losing. Moreover, advocates’ sense of identity and their expertise influenced how they participated in the debate. Advocates’ perceived rhetorical strengths impacted what they brought to the debate with war opponents trying to bring new information, either secular or religious as a way to change the debate and war supporters claiming they were the real representatives of American Christianity on the issue of the war.

In Chapter six, “Intimate Knowledge of Victims: Empathy and its Consequences for Representation and Narration,” I examine the question, why did some Christian religious elites support the war and why did others not support it? I find my answer in the distinctive differences between the biographical accounts war opponents told me in interviews and compared to those told by war proponents. War opponents often told stories of encountering victims of structural violence in their lives that had a profound effect on them. These encounters made them acutely aware of the problems and peril of other victims of structural violence generally and of the vulnerabilities of those who might suffer in a war with Iraq. This concern for the victims of war is of consequence because it influences the narratives that these advocates used, leading them to arrange tragic narratives warning of the danger of a war.

Finally, in the dissertation’s concluding chapter, I consider the influence that the religious beliefs and understandings of elites described in this dissertation likely had on popular support for the war. Although this chapter is not a fully developed empirical investigation on the issue, I do argue that the extant survey strongly suggests that
religious meanings as described in this dissertation were an important factor in the political support for the war before it began. The chapter wraps up with a consideration of this dissertation’s contributions to sociology.

On Analyzing a Contentious Issue

The debate over the Iraq War was a wrenching period for many of us who lived through it. It was difficult to hear opposing arguments without resorting to rancor or deep suspicion towards one’s rhetorical adversary. The passage of time has allowed for cool-minded reflection on the issue on my part, but not necessarily so for the religious advocates I have interviewed. Frequently, they expressed disbelief that anyone could believe what their opponents believed, even as they discussed the fact that, indeed, their opponents apparently did believe it. On the one hand, this is quite good for my research as it is a strong testimony to the power of culture, that one’s religious opponents on the issue of war and peace could be seen as incomprehensible or even, as some hinted, “crazy.” Often, the closer these religious opponents were, in terms of either religious tradition or other theological beliefs, the greater the disbelief, frustration, and discomfort that they could see the world so differently, at least with respect to the issues of war and peace and Iraq.

On the other hand, this presents particular challenges to me, as cultural analyst and interpreter. I was an adult at the time of this public debate and had an understanding of the issue and position on the question. Accordingly, it is much easier to understand the arguments with which I agreed at the time. I make no apologies nor
excuses for having a position on the war, one could hardly have been a responsible and modestly engaged citizen without some opinion on the subject. It is certainly not reasonable nor fair to expect social scientists to not have opinions on important social and political issues that they investigate. But, they should be challenged to accurately and sympathetically describe, summarize, and analyze the discourse of those with whom they did not agree historically. Here, the often-aspired-to “critical empathy,” whereby one attempts to understand the perspective of one’s subjects and critically and fairly engage these perspectives, is the usual goal and it is mine as well. I hope that I am successful in this regard, so successful that my readers may not discern what my particular historical position on the issue was. Here my guide is the trenchant work of the sociologist, Kristin Luker, whose 1984 book Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood, so sympathetically engages the lifeworld of abortion activists, both pro and con, that at the end of the book, one is seriously uncertain as to which position Luker is committed. That is a stunning achievement of social and cultural analysis and, unfortunately as well, a thankless one. As Luker describes it in her introduction,

If I have done my job well, both sides will soon conclude that I have been unduly generous with the opposition and unfairly critical of themselves. They will become annoyed and perhaps outraged as they read things that they know to be simply and completely wrong. (Luker 1984)

Aiming to satisfy no one and (potentially) annoy all, I too aim to be unduly generous and unfairly critical of all in the service of the goal of a clearer understanding of the variety of religious positions on the issue of war and peace, how those religious
voices speak in the United States, and a better understanding of the social origins of the variety of these religious positions.
CHAPTER 2:

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISCOURSE IN INTERPRETING THREATS TO AMERICA

On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars, but for the past 136 years they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war, but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks, but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day, and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.

President Bush’s Address to the Nation, September 20, 2001

The tragic and traumatic events of 9/11 gave the American people a chance to reconsider who they were and what their place in the world was in the face of such an awesome and awful event. The president’s words thereafter helped lead the nation through a process of making sense of who we were. His comments helped establish the dominant discursive narrative in the country. The terrorists attacked us because we are freedom—both political and religious—loving people. We must fight back to defend this freedom. And this freedom has both political and religious implications. The United States values and embodies both religious and political freedom.

In this chapter we examine American discourse after September 11, 2001 in order to better understand the discursive battles that followed over whether or not we should go to war with Iraq. Throughout, I argue that cultural processes of meaning-
making in narration in the wake of the symbolic (as well as real) chaos after 9/11 placed religion and religious themes at the center of discourse concerning America’s role going forward. The attacks of 9/11 were initially devoid of clear import for the country and in need of interpretation and narration. In this chapter, we will see the ways in which those non-state attacks were given religious meaning and placed in a meaningful story that set the stage for a state military action in Iraq. The dominant discourse that allows for this is the War on Terror. In his major speeches after 9/11 and before the war in Iraq began, President Bush religiously constructed the identity of the United States in ways that shaped and gave meaning to the policy of the War on Terror and which, ultimately lead to the decision to invade Iraq. Much of the public response and contestation to the president’s interpretation to 9/11 and its implications were also conveyed in a particularly religious key. Religious discourse structured and informed the nation’s understanding of the terrorist attacks, the War on Terror, and eventually the debate over the War in Iraq.

This chapter starts with an understanding of 9/11 interpreted sociologically as setting the context for the War on Terror. In the context of the uncertainties of American identity and its role in the world at the turn of the third millennium, the Bush administration encoded and narrated the terrorist attacks on the nation as the first battle that began a new War on Terror. Despite being the dominant narrative, the War on Terror was contested by some social actors using the power of discourse the challenge the hegemonic interpretative power of this new war. The chapter ends with
an analysis of how the War on Terror was symbolically expanded to make Iraq the next battle front to establish a public debate over Iraq as the next big discursive battle front as well.

9/11 as Discursive Context for Understanding the Debate Over Iraq

Tuesday morning began like nearly any other work day in America, people heading to work, sleepy-headed, shaking off the night’s slumber and making their peace with the coming labor of the day. There was little awareness that soon, a new generation of Americans would experience a collective memory flashpoint, a collective experience and memory of violence similar to those experienced by earlier generations with Pearl Harbor or the assassination of John F. Kennedy. For those most intimately connected to the devastation of that day, the start of their day was similarly mundane. Four early, westbound flights headed out of gates in the morning light with 246 crew and passengers on board. Those working or arriving for work in the twin towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, or in the sleepy town of Shanksville, PA similarly engaged in daily routines with little clue that this day would be unlike any other and for many, tragically, also their last.

When American Airlines flight #11 out of Boston hit the north tower of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan at 8:45 a.m. and the nation’s largely New York-based media began to report a troubling accident, the rest of the nation barely noticed. But, when United Airlines flight #175 careened into the south tower of the Trade Center, the normalcy of that day quickly disappeared. Something was happening, something
scary and horrible and life-threatening, but what? The crash of the second plane into the south tower gave some coherence to an emerging understanding, but what precisely was going on was an ongoing and difficult question. The military and state command structures scrambled to try to make sense of what was occurring. Other questions began to arise even as the towers began to fall: How did such a complex, coordinated attack happen? What went wrong with airport security? Who hijacked the planes? And, most poignantly and succinctly: why?

It is difficult to remember, these many years later the original bafflement and confusion that these attacks engendered. These momentous events, now fully cloaked in significance, were originally, in and of themselves, largely devoid of meaning. In those early moments they were free floating, awe and fear-inspiring, but mostly incomprehensible in and of themselves. The faces and verbal infacility of those nearest what came to be called “Ground Zero” perhaps revealed best the incomprehensibility of these events. Shock, incredulity, and fear etched the faces of the dusty, lucky thousands who escaped personal annihilation in the wreckage of those two planes and those two towers. News commentators commented on the eerie silence of these lucky ones. To describe what had happened, so soon afterwards seemed an impossible task. What was immediate to them was to seek comfort, relief, and somehow, find a way home. Thousands walked home across the boroughs’ bridges and up its quiet streets towards refuge.
These events did not speak for themselves, at least in any meaningful manner. True, they spoke a horrific, inchoate visceral horror, the likes of which most Americans were comfortably ignorant, but any broader, deeper meaning eluded the events in and of themselves. They needed to be interpreted, to be given meaning, to be connected with meaningful codes and symbols and to be placed in a narrative or story, which gave an order and moral trajectory to these horrible events (Alexander 2004; Smith 2003). This is what humans do. They put their experiences—however “earth shattering” or quotidian into meaningful narratives that make a certain degree of sense, even those events first understood as chaotic and devoid of meaning.

These events particularly needed to be explained because of the threat they posed to the established order. Airplanes are not supposed to strike into tall buildings, much less two buildings in close proximity. White collar workers are not supposed to be incinerated or jump to their deaths in order to avoid incineration. America was supposed to be free from the threat of violence, either because of its basic goodness or its geographical position, protected by two oceans and benign neighbors. No one expected this on their way into work, they expected a day like other days, small or large problems of the working day, but not death and destruction. But not just the physical targets of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and woods outside of Shankhill, Pennsylvania were threatened that day. The social and cultural structure of America came under attack too. The stability and order of the social world was revealed to be suspect, not nearly as sturdy as we had once thought. Where we once thought of
America as a safe place, Americans suddenly felt existential fear. Why were the innocents of 9/11 killed? Who thought Americans were worthy of such terrible extermination? Surely some did and their threat to us was no longer so distant as the capital of Kenya or a sea port in Yemen. Our sense of security and right place in the world were suddenly undermined and shown for what they were, fragile.

How are we to understand this? Sociology offers several analytic tools that are useful to more fully understand the events and the cultural aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001. Let us first consider the most fundamental and perhaps most challenging of these. A cultural sociology starts with the premise that the human world, social and cultural, is largely the product of human creation. This process is called the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Berger 1967c). Through collective, though largely unconscious effort, we all create the social worlds that we inhabit. The norms, values, and cultural schema that offer us shelter from the impending chaos of the raw, culturally unfiltered sensory experience are all created by us and only seem to be existing objectively apart from us. We do this because we are inherently meaning seeking creatures, who impose human order on the world, forget that we did so, and then experience that order as uniquely real and imposing. Consequently, our normal processes of socialization lead us to internalize that order and accept its presumed autonomy. The order or nomos is comforting, familiar, stabilizing.

When this constructed order is threatened, we experience a “marginal situation” in which people are “driven close to or beyond the boundaries of the order that
determines his [sic] routine, everyday experience (Berger 1967b). This situation which causes 
*anomy*, or the lack of order into consciousness, must be both lived through and 
explained. These explanations, called theodices are often religious, or quasi-religious in
nature in so far that they offer empirically unverifiable explanations for the
phenomenon, whether or not they refer to explicitly religious elements in their
explaining. Wuthnow, too comments on the foundational cultural work elicited by
marginal situations, saying that encountering serious peril causes us to engage
“metaphysical conundrums” (Wuthnow 2010) that need to be solved. Generally,
theodices offer a meaningful explanation of how the troublesome situation came about
and, perhaps, most importantly, how the problems present by it can be resolved or
redeemed. September 11th was clearly a marginal situation for the United States of
America. We shall see how it was understood as such and how this interpretation had
consequences for a vision of America on its way to redemption.

In the early days of the third millennium, the theodicies of western culture tend
to take on familiar forms based on the relative strength of cultural forms and tropes.
One of the most powerful cultural forms is that of therapeutic culture (Rieff 1987). The
central symbol for therapeutic culture in dealing with harm or damage is that of trauma.
The cultural sociologist Jeffrey Alexander describes these sorts of events and their
consequences as a cultural trauma. Events are not traumatic in and of themselves, they
are seen as damaging because we label them as such. There is no meaning without us
giving it through process of symbolic encoding. As Alexander writes about trauma
“events are one thing, representations of these events quite another” (Alexander 2003). Most of us did not experience the events of September 11, 2001 directly, we only knew them through representation, through the product of cultural production, a process occurring through the process of meaning-making (Ritzer 2007; Spillman 2007).

Given that the attacks of 9/11 were coded as an attack against America, this damage had to be interpreted as a trauma to the nation. It is particularly important to consolidate national identities in the aftermath of crises (Anderson 1983) because it interrupts the meaningful stories the nation tells each itself. These stories are important for culturally unifying the diverse people and experiences that constitute modern nations. If identity provides crucial answers to questions like “who are we?” and “how do we do things?” (Becker 1999) (Becker discusses identity in religious congregations, but they are no less relevant in other collectivities), then a threatened identity is unsure about its own answers to these key questions social solidarity can be problematic. In the face of potentially devastating threats to the solidity of collective life, responses to trauma provide tremendous new potential for either social incorporation or social splintering. National identity “work” establishes new meanings for collective representations of what it means to be part of a large collective and weaves them into new narratives so that social collectivities may persist. Successful identity work helps both establish a keen shared sense of identity and possible future paths of action.
Because identity work is ongoing and continual, it is both retrospective and prospective. We make sense of our national traumas in order to solve problems going forward in time. It helps make sense of both history and the future and providing answers to those important questions of identity across time. Delving into the collected cultural resources of the past, it appropriates useful symbols for current purposes.

Current challenges are interpreted through these and when they are lacking, meanings are tweaked and other symbols appropriated to help the theodicy understandable. This process of linking the past and the present also helps establish the range of possible action in the future.

Finally, sociology gives us significant insight into the role of religion in meaning making generally and in American collective identity particularly. By providing transcendent and thereby relatively empirically untestable foundations for collective life (Snow and Machalek 1982)\(^9\), religion is implicated in many processes of both the social construction of reality and the response to theodicies (Berger 1967a).\(^{10}\) When something happens outside of our control, often times supernatural explanations are elicited. More specifically, American history is often told in varying degrees of religious terms. Many of America’s original colonists were religious and saw their role in forming a new country in specifically religious terms (Mahaffey 2007; Winship 2005; Winthrop et

---

\(^9\) Snow and Machalek primarily discuss unconventional belief, but to a degree, many religious beliefs remain empirically unverifiable, regardless of their conventionality.

\(^{10}\) In theology, theodicy specifically refers to the problem of evil, as in “How could an omnipotent, omnipresent, and benevolent God allow bad things to happen?”

71
Throughout United States’ history, God is continually imagined as being on our side (Chaplin and Joustra 2010; Gunn 2009; Hatch and Stout 1988; Inboden 2008a; Miller, Stout, and Wilson 1998). As we shall see, the religious casting of the events of September 11, 2001 was an important aspect of continuity with this persistent theme of American collective life.

In this chapter, all of these sociological tools will help us understand how the horrific attacks of Tuesday the 11th day of September set the historical, interpretive context for the argument over whether the United States should go to war against Iraq a year and a half later. Often described as a day upon which “everything changed,” 9/11 indeed became an interpretive fulcrum upon which the meaning of the threats facing America and America’s meaning in the face of those threats turned and eventually crystallized. Those meanings were (and to a degree still are) contested and fluid, even as some meanings achieved hegemonic dominance within the United States, a dominance which, as we shall see, allowed the argument for the war in Iraq to ultimately triumph over the argument against the war. I have argued in the introduction to this dissertation that you cannot understand the debate over the Iraq War unless you understand religion’s role in it, similarly in this chapter, I argue that you cannot understand the meaning of the religious debate over the Iraq War without understanding how the interpretive battles over 9/11 established the discursive field informing the discursive battle to come over the war. But, before we embark upon that argument in detail, we need first to understand that historical moment.
America at the Turn of the Third Millenium

The United States at the end of the second millennium and the turn of the third was at a place of great uncertainty in the world. For the latter half of the 20th century, the Cold War had provided America with a strong sense of identity both internally and with respect to its place in the larger world. America was the defender of freedom in the face of the opportunistic and ambitious threat of totalitarian communism. It had to lead the fight for freedom in a global order starkly divided between the Soviet-lead East and the American-lead West.

But, with the abrupt end of the Cold War in the last decade of the century, that certainty of America’s identity and its role in the world became far less clear. In many ways the Cold War was a sacralized war, with American understanding of the long conflict deeply marked by an understanding that the United States, with God on its side, faced off-against godless communism (see Gunn 2009 for a fully developed treatment of the Cold War as sacralized). Consequently, the end of the Cold War, was a de-sacralization, a disenchantment, if you will, of the United States’ special purpose in the world. It, like 9/11, was a marginal situation, in need of a new interpretation that would resolve this crisis of American identity. This proved quite difficult. In the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the demise of Soviet-style communism, President George H. W. Bush, tried to argue for a New World Order, with multilateralism as its operating principle, but he only managed to inflame both the left and the right with, at
times, outrageous fears of loss of American sovereignty (Barkun 2003)\textsuperscript{11} and persuade practically none that the New World Order was something in which the United States should participate. His successor, President Clinton’s faltering attempts at engaging some of the worst disorder in the post-Cold War era in such nations as Somalia and the Balkans did not reassure the country either. The raw, dangerous chaos of these situations suggested that any American solution to these problems was not going to be easily accomplished. The public spectacle of apparent American waffling and weakness in the face of disorder also provoked considerable anxiety and concern. What kind of nation would America be in this new era and what would our role be in the world?

In contrast to the clear identity and boundaries of the Cold War, the new era of globalization seemed to promise only confusion as to what America would be. Globalization, the diffuse process of decentralized commercial, legal, and cultural interchange threatened the seeming solidity of the world political and economic structure and with it, America’s predominance as the sole remaining super power (McMichael 2008; Sassen 1998). Rather than being state-centered, the new order appeared to center on “global cities” linked together in networks (Sassen 2002). The apparent triumph of neocapitalism, facilitated by the coming down of many trade barriers marked, on the one hand, a triumph for America, in so far that its market-based democracy gained greater dominance around the globe. But this American triumph,

\textsuperscript{11} The forty first president’s use of the term “New World Order” was unfortunate in that it also tapped into a deep cultural and literary well of apocalyptic fear of collective mind control that sprang from any number of different sources (see Barkun 2003 for a discussion of the variety of these concerns).
however, was attenuated by a marked diminishment of American power, both
economic and political. Once the forces of global capital were unleashed, jobs followed
low labor costs, often straight from America into the nether regions of the developing
world. Politically emboldened by their new found economic strength new powers began
to emerge such as China and India. In this new, globalized world, America’s identity and
role in the world were far from clear.

Academics vigorously debated the new structure of the world as well as
America’s role in it. Fukuyama boldly declared “The End of History” in arguing that the
end of the Cold War marked the end of battles between ideologies with American-style
free markets and democracy emerging the sole victor (Fukuyama 1992). Fukuyama’s
vision of a dominant America would be challenged when the relative stability of the
post-Cold War period did not last long as various ethnic conflicts erupted in the middle
90s. These unfortunate developments presaged Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations”
thesis, in which conflict in the twenty-first century would occur primarily along
civilizational fault lines, particularly that between the Christian West and the Muslim
East (Huntington 1996). Juergensmeyer saw a similar future of global conflict. In his
“New Cold War” Juergensmeyer saw the battle lines being drawn primarily between
religious nationalists (from a variety of religious traditions, but predominantly Muslim)
in rebellion against what they saw as the encroaching power and illegitimacy of the
secular state (Juergensmeyer 1993; Juergensmeyer 2008).
These academic debates had policy implications with respect to America’s role in the world and tended to focus on a policy choice between multi-lateralism and uni-lateralism prescriptions for America’s role. The most noted advocate for a uni-lateral position was probably the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), which was dedicated to extending American global power in the coming twenty-first century via “military strength, diplomatic energy, and commitment to moral principle” (PNAC 2011). The PNAC expressly argued that America’s leadership in the world would be both good for the world and good for the United States. While it was debatable whether this leadership would be a new form of imperialism or mere American dominance of the world order, it is clear that the PNAC articulated and advocated for a vision of a unipolar world, with the United States being the over-riding dominant power. The PNAC has always clearly seen Saddam Hussein’s rule in Iraq as problematic for American dominance and since the mid-90s has called for regime change in Iraq in the face of Iraq’s noncompliance with United Nations’ weapons inspectors. Indeed in 1997, Iraqi regime change became the official foreign policy of the United States. Supporters of the PNAC were influential in the George W. Bush administration and were clearly some of the most adamant supporters of the War in Iraq within the administration. The intellectual roots of the idea of regime change within the administration clearly arise from the neoconservatives in the PNAC.12

12 It should be noted, however, that the source of ideas does not necessarily explain success in convincing policy makers and the American public that those ideas are good and worthy. That is the aim
In sum, the end of the Cold War brought on a period of unsettled times (Swidler 2001). Usually, during settled times, culture is implicit, seldom explicitly contested or worked through. Unsettled times, however, make the use of cultural repertoires, those familiar and practiced habits, skills, and styles that constitute culture, problematic and therefore more explicit than usual. In unsettled times, culture does not appear to work as well as it used to and people perform culture work, explicitly trying out a broader range of possible cultural repertoires and uses of those repertoires. We can understand the post-Cold War period as a time of unsettled times and the various understandings of the structure of the world system as attempts to make sense of America’s situation and make sense of possible future action for the country.

These unsettled times continued at a low level of both intensity and public interest. For the most part, these were the sorts of things politicians and policy wonks paid attention to, they did not raise too much concern for the general public, even the well-informed ones. This was an issue that could wait to be resolved and time would tell the precise nature of the world order in the third millennium. The stakes were not too high, so the general public also did not perceive this debate as a pressing one. It was an important issue, but so were a number of important other ones. It was only the shock of September 11 that turned this low level, relatively esoteric debate into an issue of immediate and broad concern. This shock from outside the country, but occurring of the thesis of this dissertation, that religious discourse and its meaning explains how this policy was successful in terms of political support for the war.
within it brought about a significant surge in the urgency of the questions of America’s identity and role in the world. The president used his considerable power and cultural power to press for an interpretation that would resolve these questions. But, first the nation had to make sense of the attacks. Important questions needed to be answered.

Encoding and Narrating Erstwhile Chaos: the War on Terror

It is easy to forget the initial shock and mystery of the September 11th attacks. Whether mediated by the television or radio or experienced first-hand, the destruction of that Tuesday morning was, simply stated, difficult to make sense of. An oral history project of Columbia University noted the remarkable “ambiguity, uncertainty, and contradiction” of their initial respondents in trying to make sense of the attacks (Clark 2002). These oral historians noted the degree of a lack of historic referent in “living memory” and consequently, the struggle with which their respondents tried to create meaning out of the odd intersection of urban disaster, national mourning, and newly perceived importance of global tensions. Those interviewed agreed that the events of 9/11 marked a new beginning in American history, but they were not sure entirely what that new history would mean.

Similarly, a printed collection of newspaper headlines (Poynter Institute for 2001) covering the attacks demonstrates the variety of symbolic codes describing the attacks. What is most noticeable when reading the headlines is the relative scarcity of the term “war.” It appears periodically, but not nearly as frequently as “evil,” “terror,” “attack,” and “unthinkable” (or their variants). Most of these headlines aimed at
expressing the shock and horror of the day for both the eyewitnesses and those who viewed the spectacle via media. It is not that war was not mentioned in this coverage; it was just not the predominant characterization of the day. When it was mentioned, it took three forms: clear editorial choices to frame the attacks as attacks of war, quotations from the president's later speech on the attacks, in which he referred to the “war against terrorism,” and allusions to the attacks on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese in 1941.

Social life abhors an interpretive vacuum no less than the physical world does a literal one, so the uncertainty of the meaning of the physical and cultural destruction and chaos of the attacks of 9/11 did not last long, however, the rush to interpret to represent and to narrate, compelled quick attempts to fix the meaning and representation of these events. Given its enormous agenda setting, crisis management power, and its ability to control the means of symbolic production (Alexander 2003), the administration, vigorously engaged in cultural work to offer a theodicy, an account of how this happened, to repair the symbolic disorder enacted on the American people. As Wuthnow wrote of the crisis, “Any serious shock to a society necessitates reflection about the strength of its values, what it means to defend those values, and why they are under attack” (2010).

The “War on Terror” took a bit of time to come to shape and active promotion by the Bush administration. Initially, in Sarasota, Florida Bush characterized the attacks as a “national tragedy” and promised to “to conduct a full-scale investigation to hunt
down and to find those folks who committed this act." Later, that same day, speaking outside of Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, he characterized the day’s tragic events as a test. “The resolve of our great Nation is being tested. But make no mistake: We will show the world that we will pass this test . . . God bless.” At the end of the day (as was mentioned above) he referenced a “war against terrorism.” By the president’s first formal address to the nation, on September 20, 2001, the president was clearly characterizing our response to 9/11 as a War on Terror. “On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country,” the president declared. Specifically he identified Al Quaeda as the offending parties and threw down an ultimatum to the Taliban, the regime in Afghanistan giving them safe harbor. “Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.” Clearly this was a significant and long-term undertaking on a worldwide scale. Truly no war had ever been fought on such a grand scale.

In these initial days, the administration had labeled the attacks a tragedy, a test, and a war. The War on Terror was the code that stuck and was elaborated on and, in part, helped set the agenda for future action (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). These changes in codes is evidence that both culture work was occurring, because different meanings were assigned and that meaning itself is not fixed, but variable and dependent on the work of social actors. With time and effort it became more accepted,
solid, presumed. It, like all of human social life, was made significant through the dual cultural processes of encoding, giving meaning to symbols, and narrating, putting those symbols into a recognizable sequence. Encoding and narrating is the way we make sense of social life (Alexander 2003; Smith 2003). Better understanding how this was done will tell us quite a bit about America’s identity and role in the world as it engages in the War on Terror. In what follows we see how the War on Terror was coded and narrated in ways that solved some of the cultural tensions of the end of the Cold War and the attacks of 9/11 and presaged the debate to come over Iraq.

One of the first important acts of encoding involved identifying the victims of the attacks. The president extended the object of attack using that most potent and polysemic of American civic and religious symbols—freedom—to characterize what was targeted. The rhetorical identification of the country and freedom began in the president’s comments on September 11, 2001. In the evening of that day, he began his brief comments with this assertion, “Freedom, itself, was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and freedom will be defended.” By the president’s address to the nation on September 20th, Bush made the equivalence between freedom and the country more explicit. “On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country.” In explaining why the attackers hate the United States, the president went on to explain:

They hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.
In Bush’s formulation, freedom is both who we are and one of our most precious possessions, and the object of scorn of our enemies. In this Bush suggests a ressentiment approach (Weber 1963) to understanding Islamic extremism, that is, that Islamic extremists in their frustration over their lack of access to our freedoms, invert our natural high moral evaluation of freedom. In an awkward sort of reaction formation of desire, the extremists come to hate our freedom and us as bearers of freedom.

In identifying the country and the actual targets of the September attacks with the signifier of freedom, the president was tapping into one of America’s richest and evocative symbols, with different meanings and uses as America struggled with new problems, both internal and external (Foner 1998; Lakoff 2006; Spillman 1997). Freedom has always resonated especially with the various discourses of American power: the political, economic, and religious. As such a polyvalent signifier, it has proven useful in appealing to a wide variety of concerns in the nation and its openness with respect to its particular meaning helps it resonate consistently with a large proportion of the public. Freedom is so ubiquitous and powerful that Alexander and Smith argue that competing democratic and counter democratic codes combine to form master discourses of liberty or freedom versus a discourse of repression (1993). They argue that political actors in the United States must participate in the assignations of these codes in order to gain their desired political outcomes. Winning positions in American discourse must persuasively associate the discourse of liberty with their desired policies. The Bush Administration was wise in choosing freedom as such a key code in its encoding of
attacks of September 11. It would prove to be a powerful and central code in the narration of the War on Terror.

The president’s close identification of America and freedom helped answer the basic challenges to American identity post-9/11: Did we deserve this? Or, are these attacks somehow an understandable response to who we are and how we have been behaving ourselves? Bush’s affirmation that we are defenders of liberty quieted these perturbing questions by connecting the country to its past, ranging from the defense of liberty fought during the Cold War to the fight for liberty in the American Revolution. As nearly identical with freedom, the most natural and valued of qualities, America could be put beyond reproach with respect to the origin of this brutality. We were the victims here. Going forward it was our charge or as the president liked to say our “calling” to be the protectors of freedom in this challenging period. In this way, the encoding of freedom so closely associated with America also gave us the first glimpses of our role in the new world order—we are to defend freedom. Near the climax of his address to the nation on September 20, 2001 President Bush put it this way.

Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom, the great achievement of our time and the great hope of every time, now depends on us. Our nation, this generation, will lift the dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter and we will not fail.

The Bush administration left a clear choice between supporting our mission to mission or that of supporting our enemies. In that same address, Bush put it rather bluntly, “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”
In coding America as victims and defenders of freedom, the Bush administration also needed to code our enemies. Cultural codes rely on a simple dichotomizing between the sacred and the profane (Durkheim 1965), the pure and the impure (Douglas 1976), or in more colloquial terms, the very good and the very bad. Using these basic binary codes, social actors may improvise to create their own particular discourses of persuasion. Bush's rhetoric sets up a clear distinctive boundary between the United States and its uncivilized Barbarian attackers, “This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom” (Lincoln 2006). In Bush's language, America is coded as virtuous, as a defender of not just freedom, but as civilization itself. The forces of tyranny are evil barbarians, in the ancient Greek symbolic coding, uncivilized and threats to not just our buildings and institutions, but us, our very way of life (Lincoln, Bruce. 2006).

To come to their true potential as meaning expressing devices, cultural codes need to be assembled into meaningful sequences, that is they need to be narrated (Ricœur and Wallace 1995). As the structure of cultural codes proves to be remarkably simple, a series of basic binaries, narratives too come in a rather short list of possible types. Literary theorists describe these as narrative genres, each with their various set pieces of protagonists, antagonists, and stakes at play in their conflicts. Smith (2005) argues that these literary forms can be applied to the ways we narrate current affairs. Following in the work of the literary theorist Frye, Smith argues that the forms of narrative genre are structured along dimensions of the moral polarization between
protagonist and antagonist and the stakes involved in the struggle in the plot of the story. As polarization and stakes increase across different genres, narrative “inflation” (Smith 2005) occurs. In a largely mimetic (to real life) narrative genre, characters’ powers are relatively limited (as in real life) and the stakes are rather trivial and mundane. The genres of tragedy and romance occur in the midrange of polarization and stakes and relatively negative and positive outcomes (respectively) for the story’s protagonist. The most inflated genre, according to Smith is the apocalyptic, the prerequisite narrative genre for going to war. Here the forces of good battle radical evil in an existential battle for survival.

In this apocalyptic narration, there can be “no compromise, no negotiated solution, no prudent efforts to effect sanctions” (Smith 2005), because the moral distance between protagonists and antagonists is so profound. Protagonists act with the noblest of intentions and motivations, while antagonists act with the basest. To compromise with these enemies is to necessarily be corrupted or symbolically polluted in the same way they are. Even though engaging these enemies will require significant sacrifice, it is necessary and good sacrifice, necessary for the very continuity of the world as we know it. As Bush described it

This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom. We ask every nation to join us. We will ask and we will need the help of police forces, intelligence service and banking systems around the world. The

Smith analyzes the differences between narrative genres on a number of other dimensions as well.
United States is grateful that many nations and many international organizations have already responded with sympathy and with support—nations from Latin America to Asia to Africa to Europe to the Islamic world.

In Bush’s characterization, this is all of the civilized world’s struggle and we are fighting to defend our very civilization as we know it. The defenders of progress and pluralism will engage the forces of regressive totalitarianism. The forces of tolerance and freedom will defeat the forces of intolerance and repression. The forces of evil terror will not be victorious argued Bush, “As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror. This will be an age of liberty here and across the world.” In his September 20th address to the nation, Bush managed to both characterize the War on Terror as a desperate, though necessary fight and assure us that the United States would emerge victorious as we so often did in the 20th Century. America had engaged vicious enemies intent on destroying us, in Bush’s words “all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century” and America emerged victorious. America will push our new enemies—as we did to our old ones—down “that path all the way to where it ends in history’s unmarked grave of discarded lies.”

Yet, it is important to observe that narration, just like encoding, is highly contingent. The narration of America’s response to 9/11 could have gone in a different direction and been expressed in an alternate narrative genre. In Smith’s terms, events can be narrated in various genres across time and can be inflated or deflated. This is a large part of what political struggles over narration are about. Actors contest story lines in “genre wars” (Smith 2005) and real wars can result if an apocalyptic genre dominates.
Alternatively, in less inflated genres, it is possible to contemplate other means of resolving conflicts and possibly do them. For example, rather than as apocalypse, Bush could have used a mimetic narration in which the problems of 9/11 are resolved through ordinary means of interstate cooperation and policy, rather than a brave new war with expanded legal powers for the federal government and new practices like extraordinary rendition of persons of interest from foreign lands. According to Smith, victory in a genre war is of great import. An apocalyptic narration is the only cultural form that can persuade the public to engage in war. Other narrations simply do not provide enough legitimacy to embark upon the messy and costly endeavor of state sponsored violence (Smith 2005).

Narration is also highly conjectural. Life is replete with incomplete information, yet we must make sense of it nonetheless. When states decide whether or not to use their military power, imperfect intelligence is gathered into a coherent and recognizable form, a narrative genre. We must make a “genre guess” (Smith 2005) as to which narrative form best matches the “facts.” All the while we do not know all the facts and they are highly dependent on processes of encoding as to their meaning. The case of the war in Iraq reveals the conjectural nature of narration in both its difficulty to ascertain the basic facts (particularly whether or not Iraq had the capacity to make or use any variety of weapons of mass destruction) and its great importance for policy. Nearly all advocates falsely believed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction or at least had an active program developing them. Often this is understood as a result of faulty
intelligence and intelligence—both in its limitations and manipulations certainly played a part in this wrong assumption. Yet it is useful to see how fear and the necessity of making a genre guess in the context of an apocalyptically narrated War on Terror contributed to this costly assumption. It is also useful to imagine a counter factual where this assumption was not made. If that were true, it is difficult to imagine the Iraq War beginning. Guessing genres is a weighty cultural activity, even if it is seldom acknowledged as such.

The War on Terror proclaimed an all-out war against non-state “terrorists” and eventually, as we shall see, their state supporters. A fight against such a protean enemy would require new tactics and absolute commitment. It would require contentious new legal categories to deal with the problems of nonstate fights, who quickly became “enemy combatants” and whose legal status remains hotly contested. Yet, despite public debate over it, the War on Terror served very well as theodicy, a way to make sense of the murky, unsettled times of the turn of the millennium and the chaotic, marginal situation of 9/11. It provided a narrative frame in which to understand the recent history and to see our way forward in assertive action. It offered a degree of ontological security in its more heroic moments, despite its generally apocalyptic reading. The promise of ultimate American victory in the war was comforting, appealing. For a good portion of our history we never lost a war, perhaps those days of glory could be captured again.
Like a lens that allows some objects of vision to fall into focus, while others remain out of the field of vision, the cultural construction of the War on Terror both resolved some of the questions facing the nation and left others unanswered. It gave America a clear identity as a defender of liberty, a liberty consistent with major themes dominant through American history. This was familiar to Americans and comfortable, providing some degree of collective ontological security in this familiar role to the nation. America emerged victorious out of the grand victories over tyranny in the twentieth century and it too could overcome these new challenges of the twenty-first as well. What was new and still somewhat scary was the shadowy nature of the threat in this new era. Terror moved with little respect for traditional battlefields nor for the traditional machinations of state-centered war. Accordingly, we were entering a world order that pitted the awesome organized power of the state versus the disorganized, cell-based power of world-wide terror. The high stakes of the struggle demanded yielding large power and authority to the state, particularly the America one. After all they were the experts in the capacities necessary to win the war. America would look for allies in this fight, but if need be, it would go alone. The policy implications were clear. It would be nice to convince our allies of the challenges and sacrifices ahead, but in the face of a lack of resolve and moral clarity abroad, America must be willing to lead this fight, with or without friends. Defining a crisis affords the opportunity of suggesting appropriate resolutions to it (Hart 1993); it gives us something productive to do (Wuthnow 2010). What was necessary was to engage our enemies in the most
aggressive manners possible, be that with the military, intelligence operations and surveillance, law enforcement, and increase cooperation with foreign governments.

It is a long standing and well supported sociological insight that conflict can help achieve unity for those engaging an enemy (Coser 1964) and it was certainly helpful to American President George W. Bush. The American public rallied around the president. His overall support numbers jumped from 51% in early September to 80% in the days after 9/11, while support for his handling of the terrorist attacks went to 85%. (Pew Research Center 2011). In the same poll, 82% of Americans supported the use of military action to retaliate against those responsible for these terrorist attacks. Even when the question mentioned the possibility of “thousands of American casualties” support only fell to 77%. Given this wide support to the president and a theoretical willingness to suffer high casualties—should it come to that, it is not surprising that his war on terror gained such popular support.

Dominant Yet Contested

The War on Terror became the dominant narrative in telling the story of American identity and its role in the world at the beginning of the third millennium. It was articulated by the president, “the most powerful man in America” and echoed throughout the powerful institution of the nation’s media (Domke 2004). And, as we shall shortly see, it crowded out other encoding and narrations of what America was about and how we should act in the world. Culture that reproduces power inequalities in society is hegemonic (Gramsci 1991; Williams 1982) and in this sense the War on
Terror was hegemonic. Most basically, power can be defined as the ability to enact one’s will or desires even in the face of competing wills or desires. The narration of the War on Terror helped the administration make the case for increasing their capacity to act. It helped buoy the executive power of the American state’s legal and political authority to gather intelligence and detain “enemy combatants” in its efforts to lead the nation after 9/11 achieved via the legal means of the USA Patriot Act. Yet even though power often is enacted through the relatively blunt legal or political force or the threat thereof, power can also operate more subtly. Power can be achieved via the communication of knowledge, which sets the parameters of what is possible to think and do (Foucault and Gordon 1980) and the power of collective symbols used by power holders that are difficult to challenge or critique and thereby maintain the powerful’s dominance (Eley 1994).

Another reason that the War on Terror was hegemonic was that in tough times, people tend to like tough rulers or at least those who talked tough. Given a climate of fear, people want a leader they can trust to lead them to less threatening times. A trustworthy war-time president is strong and has a clear vision that he can articulate to the nation to guide the way forward. Though some have criticized President Bush for his Manichean vision of evil terrorists versus virtuous Americans, there is reason to believe this is a strength in terms of acquiring political support from the public at large. We can see this in the public’s support of President George W. Bush. After 9/11 Bush came to be seen as very competent, trustworthy, and strong. This was a substantial recasting of his
public image. Previously Bush suffered from an image of being disengaged from America’s problems but his leadership came to be seen as strong afterwards.

Another important factor in Bush’s trustworthiness in the eye of the public was his religiosity. To be trusted with power, one must be a collective representation “a symbolic vessel filled with what citizens hold most dear” (Alexander 2010) and one of the things Americans hold most dear is religion and believing in God (Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006; HADAWAY, MARLER, and CHAVES 1993; Olson 2008). Both personally and publicly Bush convinced those concerned with a religious litmus test for leaders. Personally, Bush sincerely described himself as a devout believer and spoke the language of an evangelical Christian in describing his own life (see Bush 1999). His use of religious language also did much to convince that he was “one of us” to those believers wanting a Christian leader for the putatively Christian nation. This ranged from the obvious and explicit use of religious language, such as during a Republican Iowa Caucus debate when Bush named Jesus Christ as his favorite political thinker, to a more implicit use of language that could be read with both secular and religious undertones. Michael Gerson, one of Bush’s principal speechwriters, was quite explicit in a Washington Post interview in the fall of 2002.

We have tried to employ religious language in a way that unites people," he said. "Martin Luther King did it all the time during the civil rights movement. He was in this long tradition, going back to Old Testament prophets, that says God is active in history and, eventually, he's on the side of justice. (quoted in Allen 2002)
And Bush’s use of religious language was successful in uniting people, particularly his supporters and those who might be otherwise concerned about trusting to be president. His successful political use of religious coded language earlier in his national political career most certainly encouraged it later, under the tremendous stress of leadership after 9/11.

Bush could drop subtle cultural references that were obvious and meaningful to conservative Christian Americans while secular folks remained oblivious to the reference. This double coding of language was a sotto voce acknowledgment of the political debt he owed conservative Christians and reassuring them that he was still one of them and, indeed, he could still be trusted even if he could not be as clear about his Christian leadership after his election (Lincoln 2006). Bush’s rhetoric throughout his presidency is replete with this sort of language. The title of Bush’s pre-election autobiography A Charge to Keep is an allusion to one of Bush’s favorite hymns. He frequently used the deeply religiously resonant language of “calls” and “missions” in articulating the nation’s response to 9/11. Perhaps one of the best known examples of this double coding occurred in the president’s 2003 State of the Union, as the country was gearing up for war in Iraq. Speaking about the many troubling issues facing America, he said, “The need is great. Yet there's power, wonder-working power, in the goodness and idealism and faith of the American people.” The phrase “power, wonder-working power” is a key part of the refrain of an old hymn There is Power in the Blood. In the hymn, however, the real source of the power is the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ,
rather than in the American people. Further, the first verse of the song asked “Would you over evil a victory win?” only to answer in the next line “There’s wonderful power in the blood.” Bush’s language use clearly sends subtly coded messages to those in the know that he is a Christian leader and that he can be trusted to engage evil in the War on Terror.

Bush was also liberal in his use of the code “freedom,” which resonates with clear religious overtones as well. This has been a consistent theme through American history. Tocqueville commented in his observations of the country in the early part of the 19th century, “The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other” (Tocqueville and Goldhammer 2004). In other terms, it is a deep part of the American Civil Religion, the set of religiously infused symbols that help sacralize the nation and the state (Bellah 1967; Rousseau et al. 1993). Indeed, this link is so immediate and so quick, that it is not often explicitly made explicit in discourse. But the exception to this general trend is very helpful in making this implicit linkage explicit. Rarely is the link between freedom so closely linked with religious freedom as in this quote from President Bush:

We face a continuing threat of terrorist networks that hate the very thought of people being able to live in freedom, that hate the thought of the fact that in this great country we can worship the almighty God the way we see fit.

Though freedom has many connotations, one of the most important, in Bush’s understanding of terrorist networks, is religious freedom. Americans clearly love their
freedoms and as a generally religious people, they particularly abhor the idea of someone else telling them how to worship.

Yet the War on Terror left serious questions about other more troubling implications of what this war meant for America. Though the War on Terror gave us a starkly defined enemy, what about the possible consequences of such a Manichean division of the world into radical evil and (apparently) radical good (Lincoln 2006), which allows the nation to not see its own potential to do evil in response? Such polarized binaries may obscure as much as they reveal about the subtleties of America’s identity and the complicated global situation. With respect to identity, the war seemed to be a way to stop self-critical reflection on our own behavior. For example, the War on Terror identified terrorists as malicious perpetrators of violence, while obscuring the violence, both structural and military, that states (and particularly the American one) commit as both a normal course of business and in the course of war itself.

The narrative of the War on Terror featured us as innocents, in the face of desperate threats by despicable men. Our collective innocence, however, is complicated. Clearly on an individual basis, the victims of 9/11 were innocent. They had done nothing to deserve their terrible, painful death. Collectively, as a nation, however, there is a risk of that “blowback,” or unanticipated resistance (Johnson 2000) should be expected from those that resent our global presence. The asymmetrical exercise of power tends to result in guerrilla or terrorist resistance and we have certainly—the academic debates described above about the post-Cold War notwithstanding—acted as
a global hegemon in recent decades, so resistance (even violent, morally repugnant resistance) is not entirely surprising. Critics of the War on Terror expressed concern that in our haste to act to counter terrorism, we might be betraying some of the most valued elements of American identity, particularly our own moral standards.

Additionally, there were other questions about whether the narration of the War on Terror was adequate to the task of combatting Al Qaeda on a global scale. First and foremost was the question of war itself. Was 9/11 an act of war or a crime? A war response would be very different than a criminal justice response. Perhaps a war response was the precisely what the attackers wanted. It could reinforce and confirm the narrative that Al Qaeda used—that they were involved in a global struggle with the United States—to rationalize its own struggle. Perhaps a better response would have been to treat Al Qaeda as criminals—breaking international human rights laws—and be engaged forcibly with the intent of apprehending them for criminal trial. Against such international criminals the most crucial element in would be intelligence, rather than battlefield victories, and intelligence depends on winning hearts and minds and convincing support networks to regard terrorists “as criminals rather than heroes” (Howard 2002). A real struggle against terrorists is hidden from view and occurs over the lang duree. In the face of the political and cultural pressure to do something now and the limitations of the cultural lens of the War on Terror, neither of these concerns were seriously debated.
The legal ambiguities of the war only fueled greater concern that in global public perception, we might be seen as betraying our deepest values. In the War on Terror the legal status of the enemy changed. The administration (with the support of the Justice Department and the White House Counsel and the protests of the state department) declared they would be illegal enemy combatants, effectively shielding them from the protection of international humanitarian law generally and the Geneva Conventions specifically. While some protest this categorization of terrorists at enemies (Roth 2004) on both practical and principled grounds, others (Wedgwood and Roth 2004) support it. We built a new holding facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to hold the allegedly most dangerous enemy combatants amid great fears that we were effectively greatly helping Al Qaeda recruitment efforts by our circumvention of our own standards of lawful detention.

But raising questions about the War on Terror was a risky endeavor. The few voices of dissent were subject to intense criticism and censure. Consider just two examples of the dangers of publicly disagreeing with the dominant interpretation of 9/11. Susan Sontag, author, critic, and social commentator, writing in the September 24, 2001 edition of the New Yorker’s “The Talk of the Town” inflamed many with these words.

The voices licensed to follow the event seem to have joined together in a campaign to infantilize the public. Where is the acknowledgment that this was not a "cowardly" attack on "civilization" or "liberty" or "humanity" or "the free world" but an attack on the world's self-proclaimed superpower, undertaken as a consequence of specific American alliances and actions?
Her early criticism of the encoding and narrating of 9/11 earned much public
disdain by public commentators. Conservative pundit Andrew Sullivan still gives out
“Sontag Awards” for “egregious anti-Americanism in the war on terror.” (Sullivan 2002).
Bill Maher, host of a television talk show, *Politically Incorrect* got in serious hot water for
his politically incorrect questioning of the coding of the signifier “cowardly” often
assigned to the 19 hijackers of the planes on September 11.

We have been the cowards. Lobbing cruise missiles from two thousand
miles away. That’s cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the

In response to these comments, his show lost major sponsors and ABC
eventually decided to cancel the show. These are but two brief examples of the power
of the dominant coding and narration of the war on terror. If you contest these
narratives there are serious social (and economic in Maher’s case) costs. The
seriousness of the situation demanded that we all draw together. Any deviation from
this was seen as disrespectful and dangerous. It did not honor our dead and it
challenged our ability to engage in the new war effort. It was offensive to challenge the
dominant narrative. To do so intimated that perhaps one was not sufficiently supportive
of the president, not sufficiently patriotic and supportive of the struggle upon which the
nation had just entered. The stark symbolic lines in the War on Terror demarcating
those with us versus those against us did not allow for such luxury as debating the terms
of the war or its narration. They also illustrate the ways in which the narrative of war—
which legitimates the bloody battles of physical war, is contested.
Discourse and the War on Terror

The War on Terror was contested via discourse that challenged its dominant codings and narration of events. Discourse is a source of real and considerable power in politics (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Edelman 1988; Naples 2003) and control of discourse allows for the control of language and explanations, which allows for more control of events and politics (van Dijk 1993). But the War on Terror did more than provide the principle encoding and narration for the immediate response to 9/11, it also provided the discursive terrain for pitched battles over American foreign policy that were to be fiercely fought in the years to come. This discursive terrain is referred to as a discursive field in sociology. A discursive field contains “the fundamental categories in which thinking can take place. It establishes the limits of discussion and defines the range of problems which can be addressed” (Wuthnow 1989). I follow Spillman (1995) in understanding discursive fields as intermediaries between social structure and culture. Discursive fields are expressions of structural relations and are presupposed in regular cultural action. A discursive field “consists of the categories which make things mean, and not the meanings themselves” (Spillman 1995). It provides the terms for discussion, sets the parameters of what is possible to say. Meanings and values are contingent and relatively autonomous from the limits of the discursive field. Relative cultural autonomy is possible within the limits established by the discursive field. Indeed, it is this relative cultural autonomy which allows for contestation in public policy debates.
Policy debates are important because they prepare a state for action, both proposing a variety of actions permitted and proscribed. This level of activity begins at the level of the discursive field, but only reaches specific potential through processes of contested meanings. First, discursive fields “form limits within which cultural action occurs, and tools for that cultural action” (ibid.). Secondly, cultural repertoires—highly dependent on specific meanings of important codes, are publicly debated and vie for broader resonance and acceptance by the public. For example, as we have seen, an apocalyptic narration is necessary to convince a war wary nation that the circumstances demand a war reaction.

The discursive field of war is highly structured by the social relations necessary to support war. This includes a massive state mobilization of resources aimed at the defeat of an enemy. Typically, this enemy is also a state, but this is not necessarily so and certainly was not the case in the War on Terror. Much of the productive capacity of a country will be harnessed in the effort to win the war. Industry, finance, military, and the contributions of many individual Americans and their families will be necessary for the success of the war. The overall pattern of social relations in a time of war is necessarily that of great unity and solidarity. Accordingly, the discursive field will consist of categories that orient significant identities (most particularly nation, but other significant identities as well) toward supporting the state in its war-making activities. It begins, as we have seen, when a head of state declares an apocalyptic narrative. We are in a state of emergency because we face an existential threat by a radically evil
antagonist (Smith 2005). We must trust leaders, we must encounter the enemy, and we must be united to win. Given war’s need to annihilate enemies, we delegate much responsibility and decision making to the proper authorities, the experts in war, the state and do what they tell us.

Discursive fields are important because they set the parameters of communication. To speak outside the limits of a discursive field is to risk incomprehensibility and failed communication. The discursive field of war presents symbolic boundaries very regimented and very serious in their implication for social control. What is set by the limits of a war discursive field is nothing short of the constraints of patriotism and a potential slide into treason should one venture beyond those limits. As we have seen above, those who are accused of a lack of patriotism are subject to severe social sanctioning and symbolic pollution as possible traitors. War generates strong emotional responses, eliciting animosity toward the enemy and affection towards one’s nation and state and deep shame to those who may betray it.

Despite the limitations of the discursive field, discourse is nevertheless polysemic and variable so that contestation of the narrative is still possible, it is just difficult. Challenging war involves rejecting militarism and nationalism that supports it (Hackett and Zhao 1994). Because discourse is Janus-faced, it can be used to both

_________________________

14 Woehrle, Coy, and Maney similarly describe what they call the dominant symbolic repertoire, outside of which it is difficult to challenge powerholders and their war plans (2008).
support power and to challenge it. As Foucault writes “discourse can be both an instrument and effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy” (1980). Challenging the hegemonic discourse both uses and helps to create oppositional knowledge, which can be used to argue against the state’s war plans (Woehrle, Coy, and Maney 2008). It is this ambivalent role of religion that we next turn.

The War on Terror Seeks New Targets: the Turn toward Iraq

With the War on Terror achieving hegemony in American discourse as the proper response to the attacks by Al Quaeda on the United States and the quick initial victory over the Taliban in Afghanistan, the year 2002 was a transitional year for the War on Terror. A new target came into focus. Throughout the year, the administration laid the intellectual ground work for a justification for a possible military engagement with Iraq.

The first rhetorical move by the administration on the road to war with Iraq was the identification of the “Axis of Evil” in the January 2002 State of the Union address. The speech put national security at the center of ongoing efforts in the War on Terror. Bush asserted that the events of 9/11 reminded us all of the serious evil in the world, as Bush put it simply, “Evil is real, and it must be opposed.” Specifically, it must be opposed by us. Again, using religiously resonant language Bush asserted, “History has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to
fight freedom's fight.” He gives notice to all nations: “America will do what is necessary
to ensure our nation's security.”

We'll be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events
while dangers gather. I will not stand by as peril draws closer and closer.
The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous
regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons.

Here Bush symbolically extends the enemy in the War on Terror. What had
previously been concern about weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the hands of
transnational terrorists, now came to a focus on WMD in the possession of states that
we could not trust. Later in the speech he associates the terrorists with states by arguing
that we cannot leave “terror camps intact, and terror states unchecked.” Specifically,
he identified an “Axis of Evil,” North Korea, Iran, and Iraq that threaten “America or our
friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction.” These states and their terrorist
allies “threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these
regimes pose a grave and growing danger.” The Axis of Evil is rich new code, reliant and
deeply resonant with the Second World War’s totalitarian enemy, the Axis Powers as
well as Ronald Reagan’s confrontation with the evil empire of Soviet Communism. In
these historical associations, Bush both portrays these contemporary threats as
abhorrent evil and casts the United States in the role of the only nation up to the task of
defeating such an enemy—as it has throughout the second half of the twentieth
century.
Despite the Axis of Evil, the real focus of the speech is on Iraq. Iraq is given the most elaboration in the speech, with Bush describing it this way.

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax and nerve gas and nuclear weapons for over a decade.

This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens, leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

The Iraqi regime is uncivilized and a threat to those that are. It kills its own children when it is politically expedient to do so. Like the dangers of the totalitarian threat of World War II, Iraq, as one of the contemporary world’s “Axis Powers,” posed a threat to our life that was worthy of being joined. The logic of the War on Terror is now fully extended to the one state that threatens the United States via its connections to developing WMD and terrorist network, Iraq.

But in order to fully extend the War on Terror to Iraq, the administration also needed to change the rules of engagement of enemies from a reactive standard—long captured in both religious and secular just war thinking as restrictions against either preemptive or preventative war—to a proactive one. Iraq posed a threat, but it was not yet realized. How are we to countenance it? The discursive claim for this change was outlined in the June 2002 commencement address at West Point delivered by President

15 There is suggestive evidence that the primary extension of the War on Terror was only to Iraq, North Korea and Iran were added to the speech only to deflect attention from White House war planning for Iraq (Woodward 2004 see especially 87-89).
Bush. In that speech, Bush argued that the old, Cold War policies of containment and deterrence are inadequate to the new threats of technology and radicalism that gives non-state and rogue state actors the upper hand in threatening the civilized world. Deterrence is useless against stateless terrorist networks with no citizens to defend, while containment is no longer effective against “unbalanced dictators.” No, Bush argued,

the war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action, and this Nation will act.

Yet despite announcing a new policy of pre-emptive war, the administration did not fully elaborate this as policy until the publication of the new National Security Strategy in September 2002. The new policy articulated a fully realized dream of advocates for a unilateral vision of America’s role in the world generally and more specifically for prominent neoconservatives affiliated with the Project for a New American Century both within and outside of the administration. America would lead the world in not just defeating the terrorist threats, we would defend human dignity by championing democracy and free markets around the world.

By the fall of 2002, the administration was explicitly making their case for the war, both to the nation and to the world at large. On September 12, 2002, a year and a day after the attacks on America, President Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly and made the case that the regime of Saddam Hussein is “a grave and gathering danger.” The timing of the speech served to link the events of 2001 with the
perceived threat from Iraq. He grounded his case in the both the mission of the United Nations to protect justice and peace and defend human dignity.

On the day after the one-year anniversary of September 11, Bush spoke to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York and made a case that all the threats realized by the U.S. and the world in the September 11 attacks were now gathering in Iraq and that the UN should act to guarantee security, especially as its multiple Security Council Resolutions on Iraq were not currently being enforced. Weapons inspectors had been kicked out of the country four years earlier and presumably, in their absence, Saddam Hussein restarted banned Iraqi weapons projects.

Summing up his argument, Bush proclaimed,

The history, the logic, and the facts lead to one conclusion: Saddam Hussein’s regime is a grave and gathering danger. To suggest otherwise is to hope against the evidence. To assume this regime's good faith is to bet the lives of millions and the peace of the world in a reckless gamble. And this is a risk we must not take.

First, the president claimed that UN resolutions need to be reinforced. Barring that, the world must hold Iraq to account and action will be taken, the “regime that has lost its legitimacy will also lose its power.”

In the coming months, a complicated dance between the United States, the United Nations, and Iraq ensued in which the U.S. successfully lobbied for Security Council Resolution 1441 which gave a final opportunity for Iraq to comply with the previous Security Council Resolutions asking Iraq to disarm. These dated back to the end of the Gulf War in 1991 and called for unfettered access for weapons inspectors
throughout Iraq, including access to formerly restricted presidential palaces. Failure of Iraq to comply with Resolution 1441 will result in “serious consequences” (United Nations 2002). Between November 2002 and up to just a few days before the beginning of the actual conflict, United Nations (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors made over 900 inspections at over 500 sites throughout Iraq. Though UNMOVIC’s Hans Blix and the IAEA’s Mohamed El Baradei consistently reported no evidence of further weapons programs, the U.S. administration persistently argued that the best available evidence pointed to Iraq’s threat potential because of manipulation and outright deception of the inspectors.

In the domestic context, the administration and its Republican allies in Congress began work on an authorization for the use of military force that would give the president the ability to “defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq” and “enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq”(LOC 2003a). In the context of an election season, in which voting against authorization put you at risk for being tainted with the charge of being weak on national security, the debate proceeded quickly and despite several failed attempts to limit the authorization, a joint resolution giving the President the authority to begin military operations against Iraq passed both houses of congress on October 11. The president could act legally without the United Nations’ approval, though politically such approval was certainly valuable. The argument for the war focused institutionally on the United Nations.
The broader public debate, however, continued in the media and in the streets, both in the United States and around the world. In the United States, there was a time for an extensive (if imperfect) public debate over the prospect of going to war with Iraq. The nation’s media were near-obsessed with the Iraq question. The nation’s news coverage of the issue reached high degrees of saturation. Many have criticized the media’s coverage of the debate as too sympathetic to the administration’s claims and regard the whole affair as a failure of the fourth estate to do its job (Artz and Kamalipour 2005a; Dimaggio 2009a), and that seems to be a fair characterization, especially from the vantage of hindsight. The debate, nevertheless, was extensive and true to form to the media’s predilection for presenting two vantage points on a problem, often did include war opponents. The war plans also elicited significant grassroots mobilization (both domestically and internationally) aimed at turning people out in the streets for major protests and applying political pressure to their representatives in government via personal lobbying and communications as well as sophisticated media and public relations campaigns (Bennis 2006; Cortright 2004; Gillan, Pickerill, and Webster 2008; Rutherford 2004a).

The debate reached its climax in February of 2003. The apex of the United Nations debate came when Secretary of State Colin Powell testified before the Security Council on February 5th, 2003 that "Saddam Hussein and his regime have made no effort... no effort... to disarm" and weapons inspectors were continually being duped by the Iraqis. But the Security Council’s Germany and France were unpersuaded and
weapons inspections continued and debate over a further resolution to authorize
military force dragged on into spring. The grassroots mobilization efforts hit their peak
on February 15, with internationally coordinated marches with as many as 15 million
worldwide turned out in the streets to protest the war. The New York Times columnist
Patrick Tyler dubbed the global anti-war sentiment a second superpower that competed
with the United States (2003). But the movement towards war continued unabated.

As winter turned into spring, quickly soaring temperatures in Iraq created a
narrowing window of opportunity for combat at reasonable local temperatures. The
United States attempted to get a further Security Council Resolution authorizing military
force as the consequence of Iraq’s noncompliance with Resolution 1441, but on March
17—two days before the start of combat operations—lacking the votes for passage
declined to seek a vote on the matter. That same day Bush gave Saddam Hussein and his
sons 48 hours to leave the country. On March 18 the weapons inspectors were
evacuated from Iraq. On March 19th, Operation Iraqi Freedom began.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored the discursive context of the Iraqi debate. The
unsettled times of the America at the turn of the third millennia came to be severely
exacerbated by the real and symbolic destruction of the terrorist attacks of September
11, 2001. Important questions about America’s identity and its role in the world were
largely answered by the presidential administration’s narration of the War on Terror.
Although, at first, the enemies in this war were nebulous networks of global terrorists,
the administration fairly quickly symbolically extended the war to states that were alleged to support terror with a principal focus on Iraq. Once symbolically extended the administration focused great attention on preparations for the war with Iraq and the battle was joined by a variety of advocates both in support and in critique of the effort. This vigorous public debate is the most immediate context for the subject matter of this dissertation: religion’s role in it.

In the next chapter, I detail the activity of religious advocates in the public debate over Iraq. We will see that they had active roles in disparate aspects of the public discussion and particularly key players in some of them.
CHAPTER 3:
THE BATTLE IS JOINED: RELIGIOUS ADVOCACY ON IRAQ

. . . in Vietnam, the church opposition to the war in Vietnam came rather late. I mean, there was initially just traditional support for an American war. . . and then there was this sort of the prophetic edge of the church. . . On Iraq, from the beginning, from the very beginning, there was serious opposition to the war in Iraq by church leaders, denominational leaders, pastors, Christian lay people and lots of young people.

--Jim Wallis, Sojourners

. . . now let me tell you the story behind this. This was in 1991, this is my argument for the intervention in the first Gulf War. I got a phone call from Lynn Metzger who was working at that time as liaison to evangelicals to the Bush administration about another matter and when we'd finished talking about that, she said what about the Persian Gulf situation and I said, well if you go in there without a joint declaration of Congress I’ll protest against you. She said, “what?” And I said, “I will.” I said, “look, I think we need to intervene,” but I said, “there are a lot of us who didn’t have the power to stop our country from putting a lot of our friends at the long ends of uncertain tethers without sufficient support at home to do the job and we’ve, a lot of us took an oath that we would never allow that to happen again. So, unless you can get a joint resolution of the Congress to support it, you can’t do it.” And she said, “if you can get that argument to me in a memo by 4 o’clock this afternoon I promise you I will put it on the plane, on the helicopter, with the President to Camp David.” . . . Now, I can’t swear that made the difference but I know that when he went up there, to Camp David, he was talking about oil and when he came back, he was talking about appeasement and about Churchill and about Mussolini and about St. Thomas “Aqueenas,” which was sort of embarrassing for a Phi Beta Kappa from Yale. I guess I should
have put phonetic spelling with it. This is Bush 41. And she believes, when she left the White House, she said that it was her most important contribution to his administration was getting that memo to him and of course, it was that argument, resisting aggression in Kuwait, which would stop larger aggression that, and I talked the other day about what would have happened, had the League of Nations stopped Mussolini in Ethiopia, or Abyssinia. What would have happened? Well we now know, for instance, that the German general staff was prepared to act against Hitler if the allies had resisted the occupation of the Rhineland. So, that was what got them over the hump with the Senate and the joint resolution.

--Richard Land, Southern Baptist Convention

These comments of these two prominent evangelical leaders—made during my extended interviews with each of them—reveal their understandings of what they, as religious advocates, have accomplished in engaging the war-making powers of the United States. They also belie different understandings of religion’s relationship to political power, with distinct ways of communicating their positions to power. For Wallis, the church has matured since its quiescent, slow-to-speak period during the Vietnam conflict. He sees progress in the quick mobilization of the church to the war plans for Iraq. Religion, in Wallis’ view can be a moral voice by standing up to the power of the state and offering a moral critique of it. For Land, the church has served the state by giving it rationales for the war that would be convincing to church members. The lessons of Vietnam are different. The church has learned to exercise its power to have full political legitimacy for the conflict and to offer distinctly convincing rhetoric to help arrive at that legitimacy. In this anecdote, Land convinces the 41st President of the United States to make his argument in religious and historically apocalyptic terms.
Appeasement, similar to what happened in the Second World War, and the moral reasoning of Saint Thomas Aquinas help cast the war debate in convincing moral terms.

Both men agree religion is a force to be reckoned with in American politics at the highest levels. For Wallis, religious leaders had an important and early voice in the war protest movement, having learned collectively from their Vietnam experiences. This time, Wallis believed that their moral vision was clear in seeing the proposed war as problematic before it happened. This moral and political insight was progress and signs of a mature and secure religious presence in America. For Land, the Gulf War was a time of welcomed reception at the highest levels of power, when Christianity could both flex its political muscles and inform the nation’s politically powerful of the lessons of the religious tradition of the just war criteria for a morally justified military intervention in the Middle East.

While Jim Wallis and Richard Land are but two of the better known public faces of Christianity in America, they do give us some insight into a much broader array of religious voices in the pre-war debate. In this chapter we begin to better understand the breadth and depth of religious advocacy at that time. Who provided these religious voices in this debate? What did they do or say? In this chapter, we will answer these questions as I describe the efforts of religious war opponents and proponents as they engage in promoting their very different positions and understanding of the world. The chapter argues that in 2002 and 2003 religious advocates played an active, varied, and important role in the public political discussion that preceded the invasion of Iraq.
In what follows, I detail the religious advocacy before the Iraq War dating from approximately January 2002 until the beginning of the conflict in 2003. I begin by describing the general shape of the debate. Next, I consider the variety of types of advocacy in which religious actors participated. These include direct contact with the presidential administration, lobbying of the United States Congress and the United Nations, public statements on the war—both collective and individual, speaking in the nation’s secular and religious media, the use of religious voices in advertising, protest mobilization, and international efforts at lobbying foreign governments on the war.

The Discursive Contours of the Debate

In this dissertation I describe and analyze the activities and speech of elite, national Christian religious advocates who advocated on the issue of Iraq. I focus on Christian advocates for a number of reasons. First, although American Civil Religion—the unofficial religious language that informs much public rhetoric in the United States—draws on a mixed Judeo-Christian heritage for many of its codes and narratives (Bellah 1967), contemporary American religious rhetoric, particularly that of the 43rd President, definitely struck more of a Christian tone. Consequently (as we have already seen in the second chapter), religious responses to the President’s interpretation tended to engage the argument in a specifically Christian register. Second, given the religious makeup of the country (with 76% of Americans identifying as Christian) (American Religious Identification Survey 2009), Christian advocates represent (at least as far as religious tradition) far larger sections of the American populace than other
religions (which as an aggregate consist of a mere 3.95% of the American population [Ibid]). Accordingly this dissertation focuses on the religious arguments that are done in the language and tradition of most Americans (Though as we shall see in chapter 7, patterns of popular religious support for the war are more or less direct inversions of patterns of elite support.). Third, Christian advocates were clearly more engaged on the issue, at least publicly. Jewish and Muslim elites participated far less frequently in the debate. Finally, in trying to interview religious advocates for this research Christian elites, in general, were much more willing to talk to me. My institutional affiliation as a graduate student at the University of Notre Dame, while arguably helping me with access for Catholics and I would guess with most Protestants as well, may have been an impediment to access for some Jewish and Muslim advocates. (For more on my decision to focus on Christian advocates, please see the Methodological Appendix.)

Christian (often, for the sake of linguistic variety, in this dissertation labeled simply “religious”) voices played an important role in the public debate over Iraq. This debate took place in the public sphere, what Putnam defines as “a common space in which the members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media: print, electronic, and also face-to-face encounters; to discuss matters of common interest” (Putnam 1995). This common space is not literally a space, a geographical location, it is an opportunity, a virtual space (even so before the internet) where ideas are exchanged and considered on issues of shared concern. Additionally, there are multiple publics, each of which tend to have its own sphere of discussion and debate, often overlapping
and interpenetrating, but distinct nonetheless (Fraser 1990). The Christian advocates I analyze here, for example, participate in multiple spheres addressing distinct public, sometimes separately and sometimes simultaneously. Most narrowly, they may address groups of coreligionists with whom they may share many commonalities. They may also address a broader ecumenical audiences, with whom they may share some commitments in common, but differ on other important understandings as well. More broadly, they may participate in what may be considered the secular (or better, putatively secular) American nation as a whole, where the admixture of shared versus distinct discourses are particularly baroque, despite the shared and powerful vocabulary of American Civil Religion described above.

This public debate drew on several deep repertoires of religious discourse. First among these was the discourse of just war thinking on the morality of war. This is a deep tradition of Christian thought dating back to Saint Augustine and having a broad influence on both religious and legal thoughts on the permissibility of war. Briefly, just war thought has two parts: *Jus ad bellum* criteria, which address the right conditions for going to war, and *Jus in bello* criteria, which address the proper conduct of war once begun. *Jus ad bellum* criteria address such issues as just cause, the proper authorities to declare war, an accounting for a probable success, an accounting that the dangers of war are proportional to the probable good outcomes and that war must be a last resort, used only after all other reasonable alternatives have been tried. *Jus in bello* criteria (which were not as relevant to the pre-war discussion analyzed in this investigation)
include distinguishing between soldiers and noncombatants, consideration of civilian casualties in any military offensive, and fair treatment of prisoners of war (among others). (For more on just war thought see Walzer 2000) Competing with this discourse was a broader set of religious repertoires of ethical responsibilities toward the nation, state, and “others”, as well as more secular repertoires addressing international security concerns, international politics, and the rights of sovereign states. This dissertation will address these competing discourses throughout almost all of its chapters.

Many religious groups took positions of being for or against the war. Most of these religious voices in this public debate were opposed to the war, while considerably fewer religious voices spoke out publicly in favor of it. What is perhaps most interesting in considering the variety of religious voices in the discussion is the particular absence of clear denominational or tradition-based differences between war supporters. Even where there are some denominational or tradition-based differences in religious advocacy on the war there were notable dissenters within each tradition. The official Catholic and mainline Protestant voices tended to be against the war and conservative evangelical Protestants tended to voice support for it. Meanwhile, significant voices of support for the war were also expressed by dissident Catholics and mainliners, while some evangelicals worked stridently against the movement to war. In short, positions on the war both align themselves along and cross-cut traditional denominational cleavages. As Wuthnow (1988) has described the restructuring of American religion among the general public along conservative and progressive lines rather than along
denominational ones, the debate on the Iraq War appears to demonstrate a restructuring of public American Christianity at the elite and organizational level, at least with respect to the public issue of war and peace.

Christian advocates participated in many different manners in the public discussion of the war issue. All of these activities are forms of religious advocacy, ways of articulating and promoting an understanding a matter of public importance with the aim of influencing a particular policy outcome. Religious elites and groups (including those who speak or work for denominational, lobbying, parachurch, academic, media, and policy or think tank institutions) participated in a variety of types of activities with respect to the public debate over the war. Internally, the churches had some level of debate in their pews. Many of the statements of elites and the leaders of religious groups were addressed to their own members, attempting to persuade their own members of the leadership’s positions on the war. This advocacy was often connected with explicit appeals to express one’s opinion to the president or the congress, but not always.

Externally, they spoke to many different audiences, trying to convince others—often powerful others—that their position on the war was the morally correct one. The single most powerful person religious advocates addressed and tried to convince was the President of the United States. But they were not exclusively interested in addressing the president. Going to war necessitates legal authorization to do so and, in the case of the Iraq War of 2003, there were intense lobbying efforts of both the United
States’ Congress and the United Nations Security Council (though, of course, the United Nations authorization of war is nonbinding on the United States). Religious organizations and independent religious actors conveyed their understandings of the potential of war to these decision-making bodies and attempted to mobilize their grassroots supporters to petition decision makers on the question of the war. Beyond these centers of political power and legitimacy, religious advocates also addressed the broader body politic with their own messages that were sometimes disseminated by the nation’s media both secular and religious. They participated in the social movements aimed at rallying the grassroots to protest war plans. Finally, some church leaders ventured abroad to directly lobby foreign leaders to try to influence the outcome of the debate. In what follows I detail these various forms of public advocacy.

Tables 1 and 2 summarize the activities of the principal Christian advocates in the Iraq War debate; Table 1 lists those who opposed the war and Table 2 lists those who supported it. It is clear that advocates varied in the variety of activities in which they engaged. Some simply signed on to group statements, while others were involved in the entire range of advocacy efforts. The denominational constitution of active groups included in this table are listed in this chapter as the groups are discussed.
### TABLE 3.1

**ADVOCATES OPPOSED TO THE WAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocates Opposed to the War</th>
<th>Denomination/organization</th>
<th>Signed Collective Statement</th>
<th>Individual Statement</th>
<th>Lobbying</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>International Effort</th>
<th>Grassroots Organizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Board of Church and Society</td>
<td>United Methodist</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends Committee on National Legislation</td>
<td>Quaker</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network, a social justice lobby</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sojourners</td>
<td>nondenominational,</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Council of Churches</td>
<td>ecumenical</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pax Christi, USA</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Friends Service Committee</td>
<td>Quaker</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal Bishops (various)</td>
<td>Episcopal Church USA</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Advocacy (UUA)</td>
<td>Unitarian Universalist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quaker Office at the United Nations</td>
<td>Quaker</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian Church USA</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches Center on Theology and Public Policy</td>
<td>ecumenical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches for Middle East Peace</td>
<td>ecumenical</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mennonite Central Committee</td>
<td>Mennonite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 3.1 (CONTINUED)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocates Opposed to the War</th>
<th>Denomination/organization</th>
<th>Signed Collective Statement</th>
<th>Individual Statement</th>
<th>Lobbying</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>International Effort</th>
<th>Grassroots Organizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Conference of Women Religious</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church in America FOR</td>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Methodists Bishops (various) Christian ethicists President Jimmy Carter</td>
<td>United Methodist</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean Casey, ethics prof, UM seminary Bishop Chane</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal Washington Office Global Ministries</td>
<td>Episcopal Church USA</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United Church of Christ</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocates Supporting the War</td>
<td>Denomination/organization</td>
<td>Signed Collective Statement</td>
<td>Individual Statement</td>
<td>Lobbying</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>International Effort</td>
<td>Grassroots Organizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Bright</td>
<td>Campus Crusade for Christ</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl D. Herbster</td>
<td>American Association of Christian Schools</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deal Hudson</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics and Religious Liberty Commissioin</td>
<td>Southern Baptist</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Weigel</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute on Religion and Democracy</td>
<td>multidenominational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Kennedy</td>
<td>Coral Ridge Ministries</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Novak, American Enterprise Institute</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Fellowship</td>
<td>evangelical, non-denominational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert P. George</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Direct Discussions with the Presidential Administration

In supporting or criticizing the administration’s war plans, some religious advocates were able to engage directly with senior levels of the Bush administration, while others were frustrated by a lack of success in their efforts to do so. For those who were able to access the administration, the White House was eager to lobby them as much as they wished to lobby the White House. These high level conversations and points of contact illustrate both the administration’s dependence on important groups of religious conservatives for ongoing political support as well as religious advocates’ desire to influence the administration’s policies. In short, they are part of the institutionalized push and pull of domestic politics in a country where religion matters.

Conservative Protestants, evangelicals most notably of them, have been prominently supporting Republican presidential candidates, informing them of their electoral preferences and being actively wooed by the candidates, since the rise of the New Religious Right in the late 1970s (Martin 1996; Skaggs et al. 2004; Wilcox and Robinson 2006). George W. Bush’s narrowest of electoral college victories (of course aided by a favorable Supreme Court Ruling) in the contested 2000 election was also heavily supported by white evangelicals, 68% of whom cast their votes for him (Pew Research Center 2011). As we have seen in the first chapter, conservative Protestants provided crucial elements of public support for the administration’s plans in Iraq. One of the most visible advocates in favor of the war during the public debate was the
Southern Baptist Convention’s Richard Land. In our interview in his broadcast studio in
Nashville I asked him about the origins of that public support.

There was a bond between him and Southern Baptists that his father
didn’t forge. Reagan didn’t forge. And I really doubt that anybody else
will forge in my lifetime. I mean, they really felt like he was one of them.
That he was in sync with them. And they trusted him.

I met him first in 1988 when he came to my office in Dallas to talk to me
about supporting his Dad. He was the liaison person for evangelicals in
the 88 campaign. And we hit it off. I mean, sometimes you just hit it off.
We’re the same age. We both love baseball. He went to an Ivy League
school, I went to an Ivy League school. I have one Yankee parent, he has
two Yankee parents. I mean, my mother’s from Boston, so. We just hit it
off. And so we’ve stayed in contact with each other and that was
facilitated some by Karl [Rove]. I’ve known Karl a long time.

Throughout the pre-war debate, Land was one of the most visible religious
supporters of the war and in communication with the administration throughout the
period.

Chuck Colson, the convicted and converted Special Counsel for Richard Nixon
and a well-known evangelical especially for his Prison Fellowship ministry, has a daily
radio broadcast, Breakpoint syndicated on over 1800 outlets and claiming a listening
audience of over 8 million. On that program on January 7, 2003 he related his meeting
with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

Two weeks ago, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld called eight
religious leaders in to discuss just such questions [relating to just war]. At
the meeting, I told the secretary that preemption can be justified. Just
war doesn’t require us to wait until we have been attacked to respond. In
the case of Iraq, we know that Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of
mass destruction.
Colson’s confidence in this matter is remarkable. Both in terms of his certainty that Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, which we came to find out definitively that he did not, and his certainty on the issue of preemption. Unlike Weigel, who took a rather nuanced, though still affirmative view on preemption (and with which many Catholic and Protestants war opponents disagreed), for Colson this is a straightforward moral analysis and he answers in the affirmative to the Secretary of Defense. During the debate Colson demonstrated a rather broad understanding of just war criteria including a December 16, 2002 Breakpoint commentary in which he argued that the United States’ use of nuclear weapons as a legitimate precedent for a preemptory attack. In the same Breakpoint article cited above, Colson does retract this point, citing criticism that this position came “too close to justifying evil” in the form of intentional civilian attacks. “I stand corrected,” Colson wrote, “Nagasaki and Hiroshima are not good precedents. But any such use of weapons on our part now would have to be aimed only at military targets.” What he means precisely by the phrase “any such use of weapons” is far from clear, but the import is clear, Colson was ready to give the green light to the American military at the highest levels.

The election of George W. Bush also marked a new pattern of support and cooperation with Catholic Voters (Hudson 2008). In the late 1990s a number of conservative Catholics had been increasingly concerned about Catholic political support of church teachings, particularly with respect to, but not limited to, life issues. Karl Rove, Bush’s principal political strategist, helped bring many of these Catholic leaders in to
support the Bush election campaign. His principal contact for doing this was Deal Hudson, the editor of a conservative Catholic magazine, Crisis. For the first time ever, there was a Catholic Outreach program—of which Hudson was chairman—operating out of the Republican National Committee. At the time, Hudson argued there was a crucial Catholic “swing vote” (40% of the total Catholic population in America or up to 40 million people in 2000) (2000) that can switch parties in any given presidential election. A key part of Bush’s campaign strategy was to reach out to these Catholic voters and to convince them to vote Republican. Once Bush was elected, the Catholic Working Group (CWG), again lead by Hudson, had weekly phone calls with the White House, as an alternative to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which Hudson said sent letters in protest to the White House about the CWG functioning as a point of contact with Catholics in addition to the USCCB (Hudson 2008).

The Catholic Working Group included a number of prominent Catholics: Robert George, a professor at Princeton University and influential public intellectual deemed America’s “most influential conservative Christian thinker” by the New York Times (Kirkpatrick 2009), John Klink, Advisor to the Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations for 16 years and the White House-Appointed Special Senior Private Sector Advisor on US State Department Delegations, and Father Robert Sirico of the Acton Institute—a conservative think tank dedicated to “Integrating Judeo-Christian Truths with Free Market Principles” (Acton Institute 2011), Senator Rick Santorum,
Mother Angelica—Catholic nun and founder of the Eternal Word Television Network, and George Weigel, among others (for a full list see Hudson 2008page 190).

In our interview, Hudson was very concerned that I understand that he was more being lobbied by the White House “to get behind the Iraq War” than lobbying the White House. The White House was telling the CWG why the conflict would be considered a just war, listing the different criteria and covering them on the weekly phone calls. At one point, Hudson was invited to the Pentagon to speak with Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld, Hudson was not the only religious advocate at the meeting.

Here’s his account of that meeting which Colson described above.

Cardinal Bevilacqua was with me. And at the table were Chuck Colson, Frank Graham, myself and Bevilacqua. And we discussed just war and Saint Augustine with Rumsfeld. Who’s perfectly comfortable and aware of talking. And Colson was of the opinion that it fit the criteria. . .

The biggest issue was whether there was an immediate threat. The rest seemed more or less satisfied. I say more or less, I mean we argued more about, a little bit more about some than others, but where it really came down to was there an immediate threat? And of course the White House maintained there was, that big dramatic scene at the U.N. and you know, we had a healthy skepticism through the whole thing because we knew this was a political. We were being treated as political people and they wanted us to turn around and lobby hard. Now none of us did. Robbie didn’t, I didn’t, Rico didn’t, I mean we wrote a peace-like ad, which was kind of, hey-remember it’s a decision of the Commander and Chief to make the decision, they don’t have to salute the nuncio [the Vatican title for an ambassador].

On the one hand, Hudson is correct. He did not lobby hard. On the other hand, it is hard to understand his advocacy as neutral or pro-peace. Just about two weeks before the war started, the Washington Post quoted Hudson comments on the Pope’s recent
assertion that U.N. authorization of a military intervention would be necessary for the war to be just. That, he said, would be

. . . a significant departure from the traditional understanding of just war principles. Up to now, this has not been an accepted part of Catholic social teaching. And if it's being proposed as one, there are a great many Catholics who will argue it is a mistake (Cooperman 2003b).

His two commentaries in Crisis from the pre-war debate focus on this freedom of conscience for individual Catholics. And in those articles he does argue that the issue of just war, given all the factors and unknowns is a matter of prudential judgment for Catholics and that, “In the affairs of public policy, the bishops are operating with no more authority than the average lay Catholic, and oftentimes with less understanding of the situation.” A prudential judgment essentially means that this is a moral question about which faithful Catholics may disagree.16 Given that there were many unknowns about the on-the-ground threat in Iraq, the moral path forward was not clear argued Hudson.17 As he explained in our interview

I was clarifying because I’ve read stories in the paper that said the Vatican said this war is unjustified, not just one [person]- the Vatican said.18 And I

16 By way of comparative illustration, the church’s teaching on the sanctity of life does not permit prudential judgments about abortion. Abortion is always morally wrong according to the church. All of this, of course, is according to official church teaching. In the view of the church any support of Abortion by Catholics is always wrong. There is no room for prudential judgment on the matter.

17 Here Hudson is following the lead of Catholic intellectual George Weigel, whom Hudson refers to multiple times in the articles.

18 This is actually an odd complaint about how people understand how the Roman hierarchy speaks, given that Hudson himself said this precisely in an article in his magazine Crisis, October 10, 2002. Specifically he wrote, “The Vatican has come out against war in the Middle East, and their UN observer, Archbishop Renato Martino, has called an attack on Iraq "unilateralism, pure and simple;” a move that raises serious moral and legal problems” (Hudson 2002).
then I would go back and look that Martino\textsuperscript{19} said it or somebody like that and I know Martino. John Klink worked for Martino and just because Martino says it as a member of the Curia, doesn’t mean that all Catholics have to believe it’s unjust. I wanted people to realize that it was up to them to be informed by whatever argument he brought to the table, not just assertion and realize that everybody had the obligation to think through the issues for themselves.

In the context of the debate over Iraq it is difficult to see Hudson’s advocacy as somehow neutral or in his words “peace-like.” Rather, we see a type of religious advocacy that is distinct from a clear position of support or criticism of the war plans. It is an \textit{implicit position of support} attained by critiquing the position of those advocates against the war. The critique in this position is a religious critique, particularly here engaging specifics of the just war criteria. Hudson argues that individual Catholics have freedom of conscience, but given that he is simultaneously criticizing the moral reasoning of important Catholic voices against the war, it is difficult to read his comments as anything other than an implicit statement of support especially contra the religious voices opposed to the war that he criticizes. As we shall see below, Hudson was not alone in this sort of support for the war via criticism of religious voices opposed to it.

In addition to the lobbying between religious supporters and the administration, there were other lobbying efforts by those religious groups clearly opposed to the war. Rather than the push and pull of mutual lobbying between the White House and its

\textsuperscript{19} Archbishop Renato Martino was the Vatican’s representative to the United Nations until October 1, 2002 when he was named President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. In 2006 he became a Cardinal.
religious war supporters, here the lobbying was much more unidirectional in nature. The religious opponents of the war tried to persuade the administration away from their war plans. Some were successful in getting meetings with the administration, while others were not.

Religious opponents had at least two formal meetings with the administration to articulate their reservations about the upcoming war policy. The Catholic Bishops (USCCB) had a meeting with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice in the spring of 2002 and an ecumenical group met again with Rice on September 16, of that year, just a few short days after the President’s address to the United Nations. Along with the Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, the President of the USCCB, the second meeting included Bishops Mark Hanson of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (actually more of a mainline denomination than an evangelical one, and Bishop Frank Griswold, of the Episcopal Church in America. They met with then National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice at the White House to express their reservations. At these meetings, the religious leaders raised their concerns to Rice and she assured them that the administration took the insights and precautions of just war seriously and that the administration was moving forward with all due precaution.

It does not appear that the White House met with a mixed group of religious supporters and opponents of the war until just before the war began. Episcopalian Bishop Frank T. Griswold told me in our interview how the White House had told him
the meeting was to address the topic of Iraq and that he substantially changed his
traveling schedule so he could make the meeting.

So I went to Washington, to the White House, and there were probably
about I’d say 20, 25 people gathered in the conference room and before
the President entered a staffer came in and said there are to be no
questions of U.S. policy, the President has called you together because
you are people of faith and he wants to talk about prayer. It was a
complete contradiction to what my office had been told was the purpose
of the meeting. So in, and around the table, I mean there were a number
of people who were both what I would call progressive and very
conservative and the meeting started and indeed people talked about the
president’s spirituality and he talked about the importance of prayer and
at one point a woman said, “Mr. President, I write a Bible study, I’m
writing a Bible study about David, Mr. President, you are David—you are
the Lord’s anointed.” And about half of the people in the room said,
“Amen.” And the rest of us sort of looked at the ceiling and wondered
what have we stumbled into? I mean it was—so there was no mention of
the topic that some of us at least had been told was the reason for this
urgent gathering.

It is hard to know for certain what the purpose of this particular meeting was
with the president and why the purported subject of the meeting. Perhaps, so close to
the initiation of conflict, the President wanted to make sure that the Christian leaders
were ready to pray for the nation’s young people soon to be put in harm’s way or,
perhaps, the White House reconsidered the possible conflict in the room if they were to
have a conversation about Iraq. To Griswold, the meeting underscored the incredible
gulf between his critique of the President’s Iraq plans and other church leaders’
religiously sanctioned support for it.

Other groups of religious advocates opposed to the war continually and publicly
asked for meetings with the President to discuss their concerns about the morality of
the proposed war, but they were continually ignored by the White House. The president is a United Methodist, so a group of United Methodists, including prominent United Methodist bishops, Jim Winkler, General Secretary of the denomination’s General Board of Church and Society, and the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, Robert Edgar asked unsuccessfully for a meeting with the president. As the war debate dragged on, a broader list of 46 religious leaders representing 11 denominations and four religiously based organizations (including 20 United Methodists Bishops), claiming to represent “tens of millions of Protestant and Orthodox Christians across the United States,” asked on January 30, 2003 for a “pastoral opportunity” to convey their “continuing uneasiness about the moral justification for war on Iraq.” They were ignored as well.

To these religious advocates, access to the president was a valued thing and they were extremely frustrated by their inability to realize a meeting with him. As we have seen, the decision to go to war in Iraq originated and was argued by representatives of the administrative branch of government. To bolster or counter these arguments directly gave advocates access to, at least potentially, tremendous power. To be certain, those who disagreed with the White House may never have had a substantial chance at changing the administration’s war plans. Yet, nevertheless religious advocates wanted to make their claims in person to the people, and the person—the president—who most clearly were important in the decision making process. In my interviews, respondents successful in getting to the White House and those unsuccessful, affirmed to me the
potential value of access to the White House. However, as many of these respondents also reminded me, access does not equal influence. For influence, religious advocates also turned to other audiences and venues to make their case either against or for the war.

Lobbying

The United States Congress.

Immediately after the United Nations speech, the President started pressing Congress for authorization to use the military to force Iraq to comply with previous United Nations resolutions that required Iraq to disarm and allow for inspectors to confirm their disarmament. There was a midterm election coming in November and given the nation’s concerns about security and politicians’ fears about possibly being seen as weak on terror, the administration had the upper hand as the legislation wended its way through Congress. Nevertheless, opponents fired up their fax machines, internet appeals, and representative visits in the halls of the congressional office buildings.

Policy work in Washington is often done in coalitions and working groups help diverse groups with similar concerns coordinate their efforts to influence national level policy making. The Iraq Policy Working Group, a coalition of groups—secular and religious, was the group working together to critique the administration’s plans to push for the war against Iraq. The working group was co-chaired by Bridget Moix of the
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and Sister Mary Elizabeth Clark of Network, “A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby” run by Catholic nuns. FCNL and Network are the only two faith-based registered lobbying organizations in the nation’s capital. The Iraq Policy Working Group was the principal lobbying opponent of the administration’s war planning and coordinated lobbying during the rather brief fall debate.

This is how Sister Mary Elizabeth Clark, the Network lobbyist for global issues and a co-chair of the working group described their understanding of the Iraq situation.

We were clear that we should NOT be going to war. And we were one of the only people up on the Hill, the day that the war was, well, the day that Congress was allowing it to happen. . . We were up there that day to try to persuade Congress people as they were coming into the buildings, we were up there with the Quakers and trying to influence them to vote against it.

Their efforts were to no avail, however, because in early October 2002, just a month before midterm elections, the Congress overwhelmingly passed Bush’s sought for authorization to militarily engage Iraq. The House passed the bill by a margin of 269-133, with 81 of 207 House Democrats voting against the bill, and 215 of 221 House

---

20 Being a registered lobby implies that most of your organization’s work is lobbying. Other advocates may lobby, as long as only a portion of their budget is used for lobbying.

21 The Iraq Policy Working Group included Americans for Democratic Action, the World Policy Institute, the British American Security Information Council, the Campaign for United Nations Reform, the Center for Conscience and War (NISBCO), The Churches’ Center for Theology and Public Policy, the Education for Peace in Iraq Center, the Fourth Freedom Forum, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the Institute for Policy Studies, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, MoveOn.org, the National Advocacy Center of the Sister of the Good Shepherd, the National Priorities Project, NETWORK—A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, Pax Christi USA: National Catholic Peace Movement, the Peace Action Educational Fund, Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Washington Office for Advocacy of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, Women’s Action for New Directions, and Saferworld.
Republicans supporting it. In the Senate it passed 77-23, with 48 of 49 Republicans and 29 of 50 Democrats supporting it (the lone independent, Jim Jeffords of Vermont, opposed it). The Congressional debate and support for the authorization to use military force—though not entirely a foregone conclusion—was certainly not a political surprise. The one-year anniversary of the September 11th attacks was recently commemorated and used as the occasion for President Bush to chasten the U.N. for its lack of enforcement of previous Iraq resolutions. The November midterms were fast approaching and very few legislators wished to face the midterm elections while possibly being labeled as soft on terror or security. This is how Sister Mary Elizabeth Clark recalled their uphill battle.

At that time it was like a vote for or against the President. I mean, it was not so much about the war as the country seemed to be under siege and we have to show loyalty to the President. There was a huge wave of that feeling. So, immediately it became kind of a patriotic thing and Congress was really covered with that tone of you’ve got to get behind the President if this is what he wants.

The relatively quick passing of the legislation did not stop completely the battle for political support for the resolution in the legislative branch of government. The Iraq Policy Working Group, still led by NETWORK and FCNL, tried to promote alternatives to the war by providing new members of Congress in 2003 with briefing materials assembled from the expertise of the various groups. There were additional attempts in Congress to limit the president’s authorization to go to war, but they had it tough going politically. For example, Senate Resolution 32 introduced by Democrats Ted Kennedy (MA) and Robert Byrd (WV) asking that the president fully support the work of weapons
inspectors and that he ask Congress again for authorization to go to war (Civic Impulse LLC 2011). Given that the administration already had that legal authorization, the bill went nowhere fast.

Though obviously unsuccessful in their lobbying in the short term with respect to the authorization to use military force, FCNL’s Moix, argued that there were other lobbying success that grew out of that work.

So having the lobbying and the work, like specific things like a packet that goes to new members or individual lobby visits, helped us build the core in congress who would begin voting against, speaking out against. . . eventually Barbara Lee became our champion for what was later on, after the war unraveled, was the permanent, no permanent bases legislation, which passed, and had, and then helped lay the groundwork for absolute full withdrawal. And so we failed at preventing the war but that work, you know, it’s a long-term process—you don’t lobby, you don’t send one packet and suddenly twenty members vote no. You don’t do one visit and suddenly you’ve changed someone’s mind but slowly you lay out the position and the reasons behind it and the moral implications for the religious community, the moral voice is important.

For Moix, avoiding long term military presence (as has occurred in many other foreign conflicts in U.S. history) is a significant legislative victory. Convincing lawmakers that long term involvement in the internal process was not just a strategic decision counter to the United States’ interests, but also a moral one. Religious voices can speak to this and lawmakers are persuaded by it as well.

For the Iraq Policy Working Group, the primary organ of registered lobbies who worked against the war, both secular and religious, on Capitol Hill, religious leadership was central to political efforts to stop congressional authorization of the war. In the working group women were at the very front of religious leadership, instrumental in
organizing the most active coalition against the war. Given the relatively quick decision in the halls of Congress, the debate quickly moved to other venues, the United Nations, the mediated space of the public sphere, and directly into the streets. Let us examine these in turn.

The United Nations.

In the fall of 2002, the Bush Administration revived efforts to have Iraq submit to United Nations weapons inspections as a prerequisite for avoiding threatened military action by the United States. Failure to satisfactorily disarm could lead the Security Council to authorize the use of military force. Such a Security Council resolution would offer additional legitimacy to any war effort by the United States and would provide additional international legal sanction of the war. After the relatively quick passing of the authorization to use force by the United States Congress in the fall of 2002, public attention became increasingly focused on the debate at the United Nations. This debate was punctuated by important speeches and reports and claims and counter-claims about the progress (or lack thereof) of the re-admitted weapons inspectors. Meanwhile, the United States attempted to get the necessary nine members of the Security Council to support a resolution to authorize the use of military force. The United States was certain of the support of four of the fifteen members of the Security Council: itself, Britain, Spain, and Bulgaria, while significant opponents included France, Russia, China, and Germany.
While this drama played out in public, the machinations of diplomacy and power politics occurred more quietly behind the scenes. Building on the networks and institutional channels and support that they had built over the many years of working on the Iraq embargo, a small number of religious actors kept the pressure at the United Nations and were active participants in the Security Council debate over whether to authorize force in Iraq. John Rempel, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Liaison to the United Nations, Jack Patterson, Director of the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), and Jim Paul, Executive Director at the Global Policy Forum (a secular advocacy group) lead these efforts among nongovernmental groups. Similar to the United States Congress, NGOs collaborate in working groups to maximize their collective power on issues of mutual concern. Patterson of QUNO chaired the NGO Security Council Working Group at the time of the Iraq War debate.

Patterson describes the working group as “one of the venues where we could know and be known to members of the Security Council at that time.” Meeting with members allowed opportunities to discuss areas of mutual concern as well as make policy differences clear and an opportunity to try to persuade others of your position. According to Patterson, these meetings also offered chances to recognize potential allies. In the course of a year the working group would meet with all the members of the Security Council and in some cases two or three times. QUNO offered the use of its brownstone house just across the street from the UN Headquarters. There the NGO Security Council Working Group would meet for luncheons and day-long workshops on
Iraq. These workshops offered the opportunity for off-the-record conversations and exchanges of information between a wide range of people working at the UN including weapons inspectors, people from the Department of Political Affairs, and representatives from the missions of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and Iraq. Central to the process was food during their working breaks.

The food is always good. And that was part of our, you could say our strategy in providing these things. It’s going to be between one and three, which is their break. It’s going to be easy for you to get to, there’s going to be good food, there’s not going to be a lot of pressure on you but it will provide an opportunity for you to discuss some of these issues and in a frank way and off the record.

I asked Patterson what it is different about what they offer in these sessions that is different from how the rest of the UN operates.

We do three things: it’s grease, heat and light. And so what is the grease? The grease is sort of like providing these opportunities, luncheons and various things at Quaker House; that just make it easier, grease the way for something to happen. It doesn’t ensure that something it will happen, but it sort of encourages the possibility that it will happen. Grease. Heat—people know that even when they say, “we like you because you’re neutral,” they often know that we’re not. But what they mean is you’re fair. Our experience of you is that you’re fair, but you’re also bringing what really matters to you and we like that because we’re surrounded constantly by people for whom none of this really matters, you know? So that heat is important. And the third, light. That sometimes through this engagement, which is an act of faith really, new information evolves, new ideas emerge, new possibilities.

Through “grease” the leadership of the NGO Security Council Working Group attempts to try to help the cumbersome deliberative process of the Security Council work better. Through heat, they try to convey their concern and passion for the issues to those responsible for actually resolving them. Through light, they hope, as an “act of
faith” that these personal encounters can be transformative in such a way as to influence the global politics played out at the level of the Security Council. It should be noted that Patterson’s use of the word light has both religious and secular connotations. For Friends (Quakers) the “Light” is a deeply resonant and long-standing symbol for God and people’s encounter of God working in the world, even more so than for most Christians. So when Patterson says this is engagement is an act of faith and is in the service of light, he is alluding to his religious faith that this kind of interaction could help bring about a greater encounter of God and God’s work towards peace in the world.

These meetings in a nondescript brownstone across the street from the UN complex were religiously motivated attempts to transform the power politics at play there.

While on the eastern side of First Avenue across from the UN the NGO Security Council Working Group was trying to establish a qualitatively different interaction among the Security Council Members, the power politics continued across the street. The working group tried to work both sides of the street. In their advocacy, the working group particularly cultivated a relationship with France. This is how, in our interview, John Rempel of the Mennonite Central Committee described their relationship.

So, all of a sudden, more than anybody else, the people from the French mission, sometimes two of them would come. It was tough enough to get the U.S. or other countries to send one person. So, and they start taking an interest. . . And we notice that the French are more interested in what we’re doing than anybody else. Well, they probably had, well I would say, 97, 98% of any [of our] information. I mean, we had these little details that we could occasionally feed in.

And why were the French interested in the working group?
France welcomed the research and the advocacy points of this cluster of NGOs because it made them look good. And I discovered that there is a kind of collective ego there. And they want to look receptive, etcetera, you know. . . I think there was some sense that even great powers like to appear moral in what they’re doing? I might be totally deluded. But that was the way I interpreted it. And I mean, [with] France certainly there was blatant self-interest involved. But I think even this Villepin, that speech had something of a crusade element to it. I mean, a moral crusade. I would say.

Dominique de Villepin, France’s Foreign Minister gave a rousing speech to the United Nations Security Council on Valentine’s Day 2003. In that speech he argued that “the option of inspections has not been taken to the end” and that “the use of force, so fraught with risks for people, for the region, and for international stability that it should only be envisioned as a last resort” (Villepin 2011b). And he provided perhaps the strongest public criticism of the Colin Powel’s presentation of evidence of links between Al-Qaeda and Iraq, stating blankly, “Given the present state of our research and intelligence, in liaison with our allies, nothing allows us to establish such links” [Ibid]. In the rhetorical climax of the speech he implores

In this temple of the United Nations, we are the guardians of an ideal, the guardians of a conscience. The onerous responsibility and immense honor we have must lead us to give priority to disarmament in peace.

From this speech (as well as a similar one on March 19, 2003—right before the beginning of the conflict) as well as his interaction with the French mission, Rempel inferred a desire to do the right thing, a moral concern of the state at what Villepin described in the later, March 19 speech as “a moral and political obligation to restore the threads of hope and unity” (Villepin 2011a).
France’s role and motives in the United Nations debate is complicated. On the one hand, their vocal opposition to the U.S. push for Security Council authorization was, at least in part, motivated by material interests. A major French oil company, Total S.A., had negotiated preliminary agreements to develop Iraqi oil fields once U.N. sanctions were lifted (Marcel 2003). On the other hand, as Rempel points out, the French position against the U.S. was articulated—in part—as a moral opposition (in addition to practical concerns of security and unintended political and social consequences).

The value of talk or communication at the United Nations is very much contested. Critics of the UN claim that is all it can accomplish and that what is needed is more effective action. But, for a deliberative body, these advocates believe that the quality of communication can, at least at times, impact what actions are taken. Further, these NGO advocates understand their relative lack of political power as a surprising asset in trying to influence communications. When I asked Jack Patterson of the Quaker United Nations Office what advantage they brought to their work at the institution, this is what they said.

. . . at the end of the day we don’t count. You know? And everybody knows it. we’re not going to be raising our hands to vote either informally or formally and that’s an advantage in the sense that we can say and do some things, if we’re willing to, that are helpful to the process . . . in other words the diplomats don’t need to sway us. They might like to, want to, but at the end of the day we don’t count in the sense that it’s important for them to somehow bring us along with them, yeah. so and the other thing is there’s a certain invisibility to what happens in the NGO world that other diplomats are not paying much attention to what missions are doing vis-à-vis NGOs . . . as a consequence they can be somewhat more forward and frank with us.
And Patterson argued, getting beyond the normal strictures of diplomatic interaction and communication allowed for, at least sometimes, the emergence of new possibilities for negotiated compromise. In other words, changing the terms of debate could sometimes change the outcomes of it too.

In the case of the Iraq War debate, the Security Council did not authorize the United States or its partners to use military force against Iraq and, of course, this did not stop the U.S. from doing precisely that. It would be hard to argue that religious advocates were particularly efficacious in bringing about either outcome. What we have demonstrated is that religious advocates were involved in the discussion amongst the principal players of the Security Council debate. They helped structure some of the discussions and were active in information sharing and lobbying on behalf of many NGOs with important members of the Security Council. The degree to which their participation was influential is difficult to say. The Security Council failed to pass the United States’ resolution, but the precise contribution of the work of religious advocates on that outcome remains unclear.

Public Sphere Debate

Although there had been public discussions of Iraq as the likely next front of the War on Terror dating back to the President’s State of the Union speech in January of 2002, the real rhetorical push toward war commenced in the fall of 2002. The one-year anniversary of 9/11 and the president’s decision to go to the United Nations increased the pressure against Iraq. Even as the administration did not begin its full rhetorical
push until the fall, through the late summer, other administration figures—Vice
President Dick Cheney most notably—took the lead in asserting aggressive discourse
about Iraq. In this context various religious advocates spoke out early. Most notable of
these was Jim Winkler, General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society of
the United Methodists, a mainline church denomination claiming about 8 million
American members. On August 30, he wrote

    The Bush administration has declared its intent to launch a war against
Iraq, ignoring the advice of its allies, many members of Congress, key
experts, and millions of U.S. citizens. With unprecedented disregard for
democratic ideals and with an astonishing lack of evidence justifying such
a preemptive attack, the President has all but given the order to fire.

    I ask United Methodists to oppose this reckless measure and urge the
President to immediately pursue other means to resolve the threat posed
by Iraq.

    Winkler’s letter marked the start of a busy season of religious leaders preparing
statements on the Iraq War, both for their own members and for the world at large.
There were two basic types of public statements from religious organizations. There
were joint statements written together or on behalf of the bodies that signed on to the
letter and there were also individual letters written and signed by a single organization.

Joint Public Letters in the Fall of 2002

    On September 12, the same day as the Presidential address at the United
Nations the coalition of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), a group of 24 Christian
denominations and organizations working “to encourage U.S. policies that actively promote a just, lasting, and comprehensive resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict” (Churches for Middle East Peace 2011), issued a public letter stating, “We oppose on moral grounds the United States taking further military action against Iraq now.” They signed the letter claiming

As Christian religious leaders responsible for millions of U.S. citizens we expect our government to reflect the morals and values we hold dear — pursuing peace, not war; working with the community of nations, not overthrowing governments by force; respecting international law and treaties while holding in high regard all human life.

Ten days later, 100 Christian ethicists—bridging old divisions between just war theorists and those inclined towards pacifism—signed the simple statement “As Christian ethicists we share a common moral presumption against a preemptive war on Iraq by the United States” and published it in the academic newspaper, The Chronicle of Higher Education.

In the midst of the Congressional debate over authorization for the use of force, the National Council of Churches, an ecumenical body consisting of 38 separate religious

22 The 24 members of the CMEP include: Alliance of Baptists, American Baptist Churches USA, American Friends Service Committee, the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, Armenian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Conference of Major Superiors of Men’s Institutes, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)/Common Global Ministries Board, Church of the Brethren, Church World Service, The Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Franciscan Friars, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, Mennonite Central Committee, Moravian Church in America, National Council of Churches, Presbyterian Church USA, Reformed Church in America, Christian Reformed Church, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ/Common Global Ministries Board, United Methodist Church/General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Church/General Board of Church Ministries, Women’s Division.
denominations or organizations,\textsuperscript{23} that claims to include over 100,000 congregations and 45 million people in the United States.\textsuperscript{24} The letter signed by the NCC’s General Secretary, The Reverend Robert Edgar, an United Methodist pastor and former Pennsylvanian United States’ Congressional Representative, addressed the president directly.

On many occasions, you have cited your reliance on principles of faith. It is just such principles that have motivated the letters from the many Christian leaders and their constituents who oppose such a strike. Millions of American Christians are members of the churches whose leaders have written to you in this moment of grave decision-making.

Meanwhile, the publication of these letters in opposition to a military engagement of Iraq prompted a response from religious elites who supported the war. Chuck Colson of the Prison Fellowship and Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention (the nation’s second largest denomination, with over 16 million members)

\textsuperscript{23} These 38 organizations include African Methodist Episcopal Church, The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Alliance of Baptists, American Baptist Churches in the USA, Apostolic Catholic Church, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Church of the Brethren, Community of Christ, The Coptic Orthodox Church in North America, The Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Friends United Meeting, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Hungarian Reformed Church in America, International Council of Community Churches, Korean Presbyterian Church in America, Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, Mar Thoma Church, Moravian Church in America Northern Province and Southern Province, National Baptist Convention of America, National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., National Missionary Baptist Convention of America, Orthodox Church in America, Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, Polish National Catholic Church of America, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc., Reformed Church in America, Serbian Orthodox Church in the U.S.A. and Canada, The Swedenborgian Church, Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America, United Church of Christ, and The United Methodist Church.

\textsuperscript{24} As is the case with all of these organizations, there are sometimes stark differences between support for policy positions at the organizational or official level compared to the members in the pews or the popular level. More on this will be discussed in chapter seven.
started circulating a draft of a letter to the President declaring their support for the war.

The final letter was sent and publicized October 3, 2002 and was signed by Land and Colson as well as Dr. Bill Bright, the Founder and Chairman of Campus Crusade for Christ International, a large evangelical mission organization, whose work extends around the globe, D. James Kennedy, the President of Coral Ridge Ministries Media, a popular “tele-evangelist,” and Dr. Carl D. Herbster, the President of the American Association of Christian Schools, an advocacy group for Christian schools, claiming to represent over 100,000 member students and teachers (AACS 2011). Collectively, these 5 men were important and influential representatives for conservative American evangelicals.

The letter expressed the opinion that the President’s policies in the War on Terror were both “right and just.” The letter primarily detailed their support, in just war terms, for the President’s policies to counter Saddam Hussein’s “headlong pursuit and development of biochemical and nuclear weapons of mass destruction.” It made an historical association with appeasement of Germany’s aggression before the Second World War and ends with a statement of commitment to prayers for the president and his family every day. The authors of that letter affirm that they are representing the majority of their co-religionists, writing

while we cannot speak for all of our constituents, we are supremely confident that we are voicing the convictions and concerns of the great preponderance of those we are privileged to serve.

Indeed, as we have seen in the first chapter, they were most certainly right in their confidence of support. Implicit in their claim, too, is the oft-repeated—and to
some extent true—criticism that many of the national denominational offices, especially of the so-called “Mainline” Protestant denominations are out-of-touch with their fellow church members throughout the country (Abrams 2001a; Tipton 2007). The truth about the relationship between national denominational advocates and the positions of those “in the pews” is that it probably varies by issue and by historical political context, but investigating this variation is beyond the scope of this dissertation. In the case of the Iraq War debate, it seems like religious war critics were, to some degree, out of step with respect to their members. But that does not make their positions sociologically irrelevant or uninteresting. Rather they are useful for helping us see the cultural structure of Christian support or critique of the proposed conflict.

Individual Statements from Religious Advocates.

Throughout the period of the pre-war debate, stretching from August of 2002 until the start of combat in March of 2003, religious leaders produced many statements and commentary on the war issue. These were intended for both internal and external audiences. Internally, they were meant to express the leadership’s position to their constituencies or members. As mentioned above and we shall see in chapter 7 in some detail, often the leadership’s position was at odds with their members and consequently, the leadership attempted to persuade their members. Externally, these statements often were addressed, implicitly or explicitly, to political leaders and opinion makers in the country. Other times, they were addressed to the nation at large, attempting to persuade those Americans participating in the public sphere debate of
their positions. As President Bush often used religiously inflected language to appeal to a broad American public, so too did Christian leaders modulate their messages so they spoke in varying degrees of religious and secular argumentation. Often they argued because they believed they could make a particular moral contribution to the debate, based in part on the particular strengths of religious moral insight as well as their reputations as providing an independent perspective on political issues. Next, we consider statements representing strong and weak arguments against the war, then strong and weak arguments in support of the war plans.

First, we consider strong arguments against the war, when Christian advocates voiced an unambiguous position against the war. Most of the institutional voices of the Roman Catholic Church (in the United States, Roman Catholics are the largest Christian denomination with over 68 million members) spoke out against the church. For example, two days after the President’s speech at the United Nations in September 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote the president two days after his address at the United Nations.

Given the precedents and risks involved, we find it difficult to justify extending the war on terrorism to Iraq, absent clear and adequate evidence of Iraqi involvement in the attacks of September 11th or of an imminent attack of a grave nature.

Throughout the debate over Iraq, the Catholic Bishops offered clear public doubt that the conflict was warranted, particularly from the vantage point of just war theory.

Other voices from the Catholic church also tended to be opposed clearly to the proposed war. The Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, the public policy office
representing the perspectives of the Roman Catholic Maryknoll Order of male and female, religious and lay missionaries described their opposition in this manner.

Maryknoll missioners live and work in communities around the world torn apart by conflict and war. We know too well the intense suffering and destruction that war brings. As followers of Jesus we are committed personally and institutionally to reverence and affirm the dignity of each person and the whole community of life of which we are a part. . . We believe that as a global community, particularly in the form of the United Nations, we must respond to tyranny and terrorism, injustice and repression with active, nonviolent resistance, not war.”

Rooting their opposition to the looming conflict in their on-the-ground experience and suffering of the world, many of whom had suffered greatly as a result of war, the Maryknolls largely rhetorically eschew just war concerns and, instead, ground their argument primarily on the example of Jesus and appeals to the global community and a commitment to nonviolent resistance. This is not to say that the Maryknoll office was hostile to just war theory, but rather that it was not the primary language of their advocacy. In short, various Catholic voices tended to demonstrate a variety of rhetorical approaches to making their case.

Protestant advocates tended to emphasize other religious criteria than just war ones. Jim Winkler, General Secretary of the United Methodists’ General Board of Church and Society commented on the special obligations that he believed that United Methodists (the nation’s third largest denomination at approximately 8 million members) had to speak up against the war.

United Methodists have a particular duty to speak out against an unprovoked attack. President Bush and Vice-President Cheney are members of our denomination. Our silence now could be interpreted as
tacit approval of war. Christ came to break old cycles of revenge and violence. Too often, we have said we worship and follow Jesus but have failed to change our ways. Jesus proved on the cross the failure of state-sponsored revenge. It is inconceivable that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior and the Prince of Peace, would support this proposed attack.

Winkler’s argument here is a good representation of what many of strong Protestant war critiques did. Winkler highlighted other religious rationales for being against the war, particularly the life and example of Jesus (while giving secondary emphasis to just war concerns). Winkler makes a strong argument that Jesus would not have supported the war plans, which is a particularly strong statement on the war.

The Episcopal Church in the United States (a denomination in the United States with just over 2 million members) offered similar rhetoric opposed to the war in a public letter addressed to Congress and dated October 2, 2002 (in the midst of Congressional debate and political posturing over the authorization to use force). The Most Reverend Frank T. Griswald, the presiding bishop and primate for the United States wrote this.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we abhor violence and war. Our faith requires us to strive always for justice and peace. We believe that restraint and the ongoing commitment to international cooperation are the means toward peace that we all desire.

With you, we recognize the possibility that war is sometimes unavoidable, but we do not believe that war with Iraq can be justified at this time.

He then went on to succinctly list other reasons that mixed just war concerns (for example, that war should be a last resort, “Our nation has not exhausted all possibilities for a peaceful solution”), political restraints (“Our nation has not sufficiently garnered world support.”), and unintended strategic and moral consequences (“It is highly likely that the consequences of a war with Iraq will not be contained within its
borders” and “We believe a pre-emptive strike against Iraq, . . . may have many unintended consequences, including unacceptable civilian casualties.”) In offering a variety of rationales against the war, Griswold is fairly typical of many war opponents who used both religious and nonreligious arguments in their attempts to be persuasive (We will see more about this in chapter five).

In a September 13, 2002 statement the United Church of Christ (with just over a million members) released a message that in part said

> With heavy hearts we hear once again the drumbeat of war against Iraq. As United Church of Christ leaders committed to God’s reign of justice and peace in the world and to the just conduct of our nation, we firmly oppose this advance to war.

The Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA—with just over 2 million members) referred to their own internal religious statements of faith in saying

> We are called by our Lord Jesus Christ to his ministry of reconciliation. Our *Confession of 1967* makes clear that this is not simply about relationships among individuals, but has practical meaning for relationships among nations.

The PCUSA reminds its members that Jesus’ injunctions to peacemaking apply to collectivities as well as to individuals. This is a common argument within Christianity, especially with respect to peacemaking, though it also extends to a range of Jesus’ teachings. Many of the so-called “hard” teachings of Jesus (particularly those in Sermon on the Mount) are argued to be for individuals, but a distinct set of obligation apply for collectivities like the church or state. For example, many Christians believe that Jesus’ obligations for being nonviolent are binding on individuals, but that the particular dilemmas and obligations faced by states allow for certain use of force to protect
innocent life and maintain collective order. In short, these are the context for the elaboration of just war thinking within the Christian tradition. While not denying the importance of the just war tradition, the PCUSA appeal above is attempting to push their members to remember that Jesus’ peacemaking message applies to nations (and the United States particularly) as well as to individuals.

Other advocates articulated a weak argument in opposing the war, expressing an ambivalent oblique or implicit position against the war rather than a clear and explicit one. The General Board of the American Baptist Churches, for example, released a more muted statement, calling for “For a Special Season of Prayer and Intercession in the Prospect of War With Iraq” in which they called “upon our churches and their members to enter into a time of prayer, intercession and witness in pursuit of peace.” And, in one of the more balanced pieces of religious witness of the pre-war period, they advocated.

Let us pray for the United Nations that it may continue to be a voice, a forum and instrument of peace in these days of terror and the prospect of war. We recommend that President Bush and Secretary of State Powell continue their efforts to work through the United Nations to resolve the issue of Iraqi disarmament through inspections and diplomacy.

Here we see a position against the war, but one not nearly so clearly opposed as a strong position. They advocate prayer for the United Nations, but not explicit commands to the body to be an instrument of peace. They do not clearly declare that the President and his administration are wrong, but “recommend” that they continue their efforts to work through the United Nations, even as these officials have indicated they will only do so to a restricted limit.
Perhaps the best way to illustrate the difference between a weak and a strong position against the war is by illustration. Consider the difference in tone from this January 30, 2003 letter from the National Council of Churches (NCC) asking the President for an in-person meeting.

It is with the utmost urgency that we seek a meeting with you to convey face-to-face the message of the religious community that we represent on the moral choices that confront this nation and your Administration. You are no doubt well aware of our activities to slow the rush to war and our continuing uneasiness about the moral justification for war on Iraq. What we ask now, as fellow believers and as the spiritual leaders of Americans in congregations in every community of our great nation, is a pastoral opportunity to bring this message to you in person.

The NCC here is quite comfortable seeking a pastoral moment, to try to “shepherd their wandering sheep” (if you will) towards a better understanding of the moral choices which he is apparently not understanding properly. The NCC speaks in a stronger voice than the deference demonstrated in the American Baptists’ statement. Interestingly, as the footnote above notes, American Baptists are members of the National Council of Churches. So, even as the ecumenical NCC lead by the outspoken Edgar as General Secretary speaks loudly and clearly against the war, one of its members advocates in a different register. This is most probably due to the relative independence of the NCC from trying to balance differing opinions in the pews, compared to the relative importance of doing so in a denominational office. My data do not allow me to take a firm position on the origin of variation in strong and weak statements of opposition to the war.
It is also important to understand that advocates often modulated their arguments and that while advocacy groups tended to be consistently opposed, supporting, or silent on the issue of the war, their advocacy could modulate between strong and weak varieties depending on internal and external factors. For example, consider the advocacy of the Unitarian-Universalist Association, a theologically liberal religious denomination. On the one hand, the denomination’s Washington Office for Advocacy was clearly opposed to the war. It wrote a public letter to Congressional representatives in early October of 2002. The letter began this way.

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the more than 1,050 congregations that make up the Unitarian Universalist Association, I urge you to oppose any resolution that would allow for the pre-emptive, unilateral use of military force against Iraq. The President should provide compelling evidence to Congress that peaceful, diplomatic methods for reducing Iraq’s threat to US security have been exhausted before the use of force is authorized. Even then, Congress should only authorize the use of US military forces as part of an international coalition.

Similarly, the president of the UUA William G. Sinkford similarly strongly advocated against the war, visiting the Capital in the days leading up to the Congressional vote for authorization and communicating to the denomination at large.

On the other hand, its Board of Trustees issued statements like this one on January 19, 2003, expressing some reticence about coming to a firm conviction on the issue of the war and expressing concern that this may be reflected in the local congregation.

Many Unitarian Universalist congregations are struggling to respond to the complex issues surrounding potential war with Iraq. There are feelings
of fear and powerlessness as well as a desire to speak from and take action grounded in our principles. Should war begin, these issues will become even more complex.

The UUA Board is struggling, too. UUA Board members are not of one mind about the appropriateness of military engagement. There may also be disagreement in your congregation.

As the war approached, the denomination issued this statement of opposition to the war on March 1, 2003.

The Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations is opposed to pre-emptive military action against Iraq that is done without the approval of the United Nations. This position is based on numerous statements approved by the General Assembly, the highest policy-making body of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, which support the United Nations as the appropriate body through which international conflicts are to be resolved.

In having gaps between the leadership of a denomination, its members, and the disparate organizational structures of the denomination, the UUA was far from unique. Many of the war’s most vocal critics faced similar dilemmas within their own denominations. What was distinct was that this uncertainty came through in the series of nationally released statements by the board. The various statements and activities of the Unitarian-Universalists demonstrate the internal debate within religious traditions that affect the relative strength or weakness that their advocacy took.

Now we turn to those Christian advocates who supported the war. Catholic public intellectual George Weigel, a Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a conservative think tank in Washington that was established in 1976 to “clarify and reinforce the bond between the Judeo-Christian moral tradition and the public debate over domestic and foreign policy issues” (EPPC 2011b), was the leading voice
articulating a Catholic voice in support of the war. Weigel made a strong argument for the conflict in just war terms. Weigel strongly argued against what many war critics (and those 100 Christian ethicists who got their short statement published in the Chronicle of Higher Education) claimed was a moral presumption against violence in just war thinking on war. As Weigel wrote in First Things, an ecumenical, generally conservative publication with the purpose of advancing “a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society” (First Things 2011) in January of 2003.

Thus the just war tradition is best understood as a sustained and disciplined intellectual attempt to relate the morally legitimate use of proportionate and discriminate military force to morally worthy political ends.

Weigel argued that the historical tradition of just war is about considering the appropriate means to an end of peaceful political order (more about this in chapter four). In other words, there is no presumption against war in the just war tradition. Further, he argued that individual Catholics had the moral authority and indeed the moral obligation to use their moral reasoning to come to a prudential judgment about the morality of the war and that their decision did not have to be identical to the voices heard against the war from the church hierarchy. Weigel also reminded his audience that the proper authority to determine whether or not a state should go to war was the state authority.

Additionally, Weigel argued the proposed conflict satisfied the *jus ad bellum* conditions including just cause (defined as a defense against aggression) and he
considered the possession of weapons of mass destruction as an adequate criterion for
the risk of aggression.

To take an obvious current example: it makes little moral sense to suggest
that the United States must wait until a North Korea or Iraq or Iran
actually launches a ballistic missile tipped with a nuclear, biological, or
chemical weapon of mass destruction before we can legitimately do
something about it. Can we not say that, in the hands of certain kinds of
states, the mere possession of weapons of mass destruction constitutes
an aggression—or, at the very least, an aggression waiting to happen?

Of course, in making this case, Weigel was presuming that which was very much
being contested and very much open for debate in the public discussion—whether Iraq
did still possess weapons of mass destruction. This was a significant issue in the public
debate and which much of the support for the war seemed to hinge. On the one hand, it
seemed reasonable to assume that Iraq still had weapons of mass destruction,
especially chemical agents (which he had infamously used against Kurdish civilians in the
1980s), which U. N. Weapons Inspectors had found and destroyed after the 1991
Persian Gulf War. Presumably, the weapons inspectors had not found all of those
chemical weapons. On the other hand, (as only became increasingly clear in the period
after the war) there really was no substantial, positive evidence of Weapons of Mass
Destruction.

Another Catholic intellectual, Michael Novak’s (who worked at the conservative
think tank, *The American Enterprise Institute* at the time of the public debate) written
advocacy for an American audience (we will see below that he also entreated the
Vatican staff to reconsider the pope’s opposition to the war) focused on reminding his
readers that the Catechism of the church puts fundamental responsibility for making
security decisions on public officials and “not clerics.” His is a clear repost to the many
other official Catholic voices against the war and in the just war elements of his
argument, he basically follows a similar logic to that of Weigel.

The most outspoken Protestant proponent of the war was Richard Land, of the
Southern Baptist Convention, who made his view available through the publications and
broadcasting of the Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (as well as we
shall see through media appearances). Generally Land made his case in just war terms,
though occasionally, he used other religious lines of argumentation. In one piece titled
“What Would King Have Said About Hussein?” Land argued following Martin Luther King
that “if your opponent has a conscience, then follow Gandhi. But if your enemy has no
conscience, like Hitler, then follow Bonhoeffer.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer is a well-known
German pastor and theologian who, in the face of the evil of National Socialism turned
away from his previous pacifist convictions and joined a plot to assassinate Hitler.) Here
Land argues that in the face of the evil of Saddam Hussein we too have the
responsibility to use force against that evil.

As we have already seen above, Chuck Colson of the Prison Fellowship was fond
of mentioning his discussions with Donald Rumsfeld on the finer points of just war
theory. Other than assuring his audience of the Secretary of Defense’s apparent grave

25 In addition to discussing Iraq with Rumsfeld as described above, Colson’s December 9, 2002
articles references meeting with Rumsfeld to brief him on just war doctrine relevant to the already begun
Afghanistan campaign.
concern for religious insights into the conduct of war, Colson’s arguments focused on
the new nature of the threat post-9/11, that made waiting for an attack irresponsible
and dangerous. Hussein’s presumed possession of WMD and connections to terrorists
made this so.

Unlike the Cold War, when early warning systems could detect missile
launches, terrorists give no warning. If Saddam Hussein were to prepare a
missile for launch, the U.S. would certainly be warranted in firing in self-
defense. Giving a terrorist a dirty bomb to be delivered in a suitcase is no
different—except for delivery time—from a missile launch.

These new security threats make the old deterrence strategy no longer viable.
They necessitate strong and decisive preemptive action, even against the preparing of a
missile—rather than its firing, to make an effective defense. This is a strong statement in
support of the United States’ power and right to make war to defend itself.

The Institute of Religion and Democracy (IRD), an advocacy group in DC that
describes itself as “Christians working to reaffirm the church’s biblical and historical
teachings, strengthen and reform its role in public life, protect religious freedom, and
renew democracy at home and abroad (Institute on Religion and Democracy 2011). The
IRD has staff members which specifically address Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans,
Evangelicals, and ecumenical audiences. A principle purpose of the IRD is to counter the
official voices of these religious groups national offices that speak to issues of public
policy. In our interview, Mark Tooley, then director of the IRD’s Methodist projects told
me the organization generally is a “watch dog of liberal religious groups” and that within
Methodism,
We’re an advocate of reform and renewal within Methodism by which we mean affirmation of orthodox theology and accountability by the churches agencies and leaders to the official teachings of and to the membership of the church, so we operate as part of a coalition of other evangelical groups within Methodism, also advocating renewal, with our niche being the political witness of the churches agencies and leaders.

The IRD spent most of its advocacy attacking the activities of church leaders of the various traditions for which it has programs. A brief listing of the titles of their postings during the time of the debate will give a taste of their criticisms: “Prophetic—Just Another Word for “Nothing Left to Lose,” “Episcopal Urban Caucus Meeting Marked by Political and Religious Extremism,” “Commentary: Griswold’s Latest Statement is Disrespectful of Christians who Support War,” “An Embarrassment: Methodist Bishop Arrested at White House” (As we will see below, this happened just after the start of the conflict.), “United Methodist Lobby Official Lambastes United States,” “Church Council Opposes War, Struggles With Finances,” “‘Irresponsible’ Methodist Bishop Appears in Anti-War TV Commercial,” “UM Bishop Seem to Liken Bush to Saddam and Bin Laden,” “United Methodist Bishops Wrong About Iraq.” As these list of titles suggest, the IRD criticized religious officials opposed to the war as being out of touch with their co-religionists, the realities of the danger of Iraq, and—to a lesser degree—the traditional stance of the church in supporting American.

Similar to Deal Hudson’s advocacy as a Catholic in Crisis, I consider the Institute of Religion and Democracy as offering implicit or weak support of the war campaign, though a stronger support than Hudson offered. While it is true (as Mark Tooley—the then the director of United Methodist Action at the IRD and by the time I interviewed
him, president of the organization—claimed) that the organization never officially supported the war. It certainly seemed to suggest that a war was a reasonable position to take. The severe tenor of their attacks on church officials opposing the war, some suggestive titles of articles that actually backed away from a clear war-supporting position, and a signed article by Princeton legal and religious scholar Robert P. George titled “Just War in Iraq” all indicated some degree of support for the war. Addressing the war’s critics, George wrote, “In my judgment, the critics are mistaken.”

Other prominent Christians were similarly implicit by their general silence on the issue, even as they sent strong messages of political support to the President. It is clearly a difficult hermeneutic task to discern the meaning of silence in a public debate. But given the President’s use of religious discourse in support of the war, it seems reasonable, at least some of the time, to interpret Christian silence on the war issue as an implicit support of the administration’s war policy. To suggest the way this silent support might work I will detail the public advocacy of Focus on the Family. Focus on the Family is a conservative Christian ministry, dedicated to “helping families thrive” (Focus on the Family 2011) that features a daily syndicated radio broadcast [broadcast on 2,000 radio stations in the United States and claiming over 8 million daily listeners (Focus on the Family 2003a)] and Citizen, a periodical often addressing issues of public interest to

---

26 These misleading titles include “United Methodist Bishops Wrong About Iraq” for an article that only addressed how the church officials not representing the views of those in the pews and “UM Agency Endorses Neutral View on Homosexuality, Opposes War in Iraq, and Refers Issue of Sex Change Operations” for an article that just reported statements and actions of the United Methodists Board of Church and Society, but linked three hot button issues and for which its readers would most probably disapprove of.
families. James Dobson was the founder and longtime voice of the organization and was well known in conservative Christian circles for offering childrearing and other advice that parents could trust.

As its name suggests, Focus on the Family does tend to pay primary attention to family related issues and that is precisely what Dobson’s statements on political issues from the period of the debate over the war. Most of Dobson’s public comments during this time dealt with the variety of issues perhaps best summarized broadly as “life” or family issues. In November 2002, Dobson appeared on Fox News’ “Hannity and Colmes” to discuss abstinence and AIDS prevention in Africa, in January of 2003, he lamented the “Culture of Death” on the 30th anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion and published a full page in Austin, Texas’ newspaper, the American Statesman Sunday edition, as a prelude to their conference that day “to help concerned citizens understand the causes and prevention of homosexuality” (Focus on the Family 2003b). After the President’s 2003 State of the Union address, Dobson ignored the issue of war entirely, instead applauding the President’s continued support of the pro-life cause with proposed bans on partial birth abortions and human cloning.

It takes a man of strength and courage, to defend the sanctity of human life when his critics, including all six Democratic candidates for president, are promoting the killing of babies—even full-term healthy infants in the process of delivery. This president has done more to protect ‘the weakest among us’ than any chief executive in U.S. history.

From examining the press releases put out by Focus on the Family before the war, it would seem that Dobson did not have much of an opinion on
the war or at least not one which he was willing to share with his audience.

But immediately after the war began, Dobson let his opinion of the war be known. On his March 21, 2003 radio broadcast (Focus on the Family 2003b) he clarified his understanding of the situation.

America comes as a liberator — not as a conqueror. To my knowledge, the U.S. is the first country in history that had the world’s most dominant military power, and yet did not use that hegemony to conquer, enslave, and plunder weaker nations.

He went on to characterize Saddam Hussein as similar to both Stalin and Hitler and to warn Congress not to repeat the mistakes of the Vietnam conflict. “I hope our Congress will be careful about what they have to say about our troops in the field.”

Dobson is distinct from many other silent implicit religious voices in the conflict in that he revealed his opinion of the war soon after it started. Most other silent religious voices only offered prayers for our troops and occasionally for all the suffering in the war. I cannot claim that these other silent religious voices secretly held the same convictions that Dobson only revealed after the war began. But, in a context of a deeply religiously inflected public discussion, led by the President, silence does suggest an implicit acceptance of the religious terms and perspective that the President used to make the case for the conflict. Silence by acquiescence works in both the legal system as well as in the rhetorical space of the public sphere.

In addition to being circulated and promoted by the advocacy organizations themselves, these religious arguments were further distributed and amplified in the nation’s media, both religious and secular. Religious media unsurprisingly covered the
debate rather substantially. Some outlets clearly favored a position in both their news coverage and editorializing while others sponsored debates and forums on the issue, without taking a strong line on the issue. The secular media also paid attention to the religious dimensions in the public discussion, particularly the disagreement between religious supporters and opponents of the war. This debate was covered in stories or segments on ABC’s World News Tonight, NPR’s Talk of the Nation, PBS’ Newshour, CNN’s Sunday Morning and Larry King Live. Newspaper coverage was also extensive and included prominent editorials for the war by Catholic public intellectual and Princeton professor Robert P. George on December 6, 2002 in the Wall Street Journal and ones against the war on October 11, 2002 by Jim Winkler of the United Methodists’ General Board of Church and Society in the Wall Street Journal, on March 7, 2003 by former President Jimmy Carter in the New York Times, and on March 14, 2002 by Jim Wallis of Sojourners and Washington, DC Episcopalian Bishop Bryson Chane in the Washington Post.

Religious Voices in War Advertisements

Religious voices were not only spread through news and editorial coverage. They also were featured in a couple of prominent advertisements against the war. One of these was a full-page ad in The New York Times on December 4, 2002 and sponsored by “Religious Leaders for Sensible Priorities.” (see Figure 1 below) It was a full-page ad running in the New York Times, with the top third of the ad dominated by the following plea, “President Bush: Jesus Changed Your Heart. Now Let Him Change Your Mind.” The
center of the ad featured the bowed head of President George W. Bush, presumably in prayer. His furrowed brow suggested great concentration or effort, the wrinkles around his eyes suggesting the weight of the office and the decision before him.
President Bush,

We beseech you to turn back from the brink of war on Iraq. Your war would violate the teachings of Jesus Christ. It would violate the tenets, prayers and entreaties of your own United Methodist Church. It would ignore the pleas of Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders from every denomination. You’ve proclaimed the crucial role of your faith in your life, and you’ve said that people of faith are often “the nation’s voice of conscience.”

Listen to our voices now.

This is not a just war. We accept that there can be military actions which are justified. But this war will not be a just war. It will be an unprovoked, pre-emptive attack on a nation that threatens neither its neighbors nor the United States. It will violate the United Nations Charter and set a dangerous precedent for other nations. It will bring death and destruction to Baghdad, a huge city filled with innocent civilians. It will take the lives of too many of our own sons and daughters. And its huge cost will be gouged out of the already unmet needs of the poor, the underfed and the undereducated in our own country.

"It is inconceivable that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior and The Prince of Peace, would support this proposed attack."

Mr. President, these are the words of the General Board of the United Methodist Church. Your church leaders have sought private hearings with you to express their passionate objections: they’ve been denied. All of us who have signed this statement share their convictions. A strong faith-based revolt against war on Iraq is building. If Jesus Christ truly “changed your heart,” as you have said, let Him change your mind.

Religious leaders from every faith urge President Bush to stop the rush to war on Iraq.

Figure 3.1
New York Times Anti-War Religion Advertisement

167
The ad relied heavily on the words and authority of the prominent United
Methodists in the debate, Jim Winkler of the General Board of Church and Society for
the United Methodist Church and the Reverend Robert Edgar, General Secretary of the
National Council of Churches and an ordained United Methodist pastor. Trying to
distance their position from a pacifist one, opposed to all war, they acknowledged
“there can be military actions which are justified.” Despite that just war set-up, the ad
proceeded demurred from a substantial engagement of just war theory, simply stating
that it would be unprovoked and pre-empt against a non-threat. It twice asserted that
the war would be offensive to Jesus. In bold print, it reprinted Winkler’s perhaps
strongest indictment of the war “It is inconceivable that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior
and the Prince of Peace, would support this proposed attack.”

This advertisement was sponsored and signed by “Religious Leaders for Sensible
Priorities” a unit of Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, a nonprofit group organized
by (among others) Ben Cohen of Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream and dedicated to switching
some of the nation’s military spending to other domestic spending such as healthcare,
education, and the environment. I interviewed Gary Ferdman who was Executive
Director and Membership and Development Coordinator for the Business Leaders
during the debate over the war and asked him why they decided to use an ad that
specifically engaged the religious terms that the President had used and had religious
leaders sign off on it.

Well one of the sort of guiding principles was that we wanted to use the
business leaders and military leaders model and extend that to other high
profile groups and professions so you know we would have eventually probably you know if things were a little different, had Lawyers for Sensible Priorities, Doctors for Sensible Priorities or whatever, but the most obvious group to get engaged was religious leaders. So we had already started doing the outreach when the war hit, I guess is the best way to explain it.

Pardon me for being dense, but why was that obvious?

Because these are people who have influence every Saturday or Sunday they have a captive audience that they talk to and engage and hopefully motivate. And um, and some of them could be really effective spokespeople for our issue, so. Sort of natural.

Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities wanted other high status groups to endorse their cause and they started with religious leaders. They almost certainly overestimated how elite religious advocates’ messages filtered down to congregations, but they believed that they would be legitimate authorities to counter the President’s use of religious rhetoric to push the war.

Win Without War (WWW), a coalition that arose in conjunction with the principal grassroots mobilizing coalition, United for Peace and Justice (more about them below), worked on spreading the argument against the war with effective public relations in order to reach mainstream Americans (for more on WWW, see Cortright 2004). WWW also saw the value in using religious figures in making advertisements against the war. They made a three television ads against the war and in the third they paired, somewhat incongruously, the comedian and actress Janeane Garafalo with Bishop Melvin Talbert, the Chief Ecumenical Officer for the United Methodist Church. The thirty second television ad that ran on CNN and Fox News in local New York and
Washington DC markets and coincided with the letter (described above) from the National Council of Churches asking to meet with the President. The ad opens with Garofalo asking the question, “Does the United States have the right to invade a country that's done nothing to us?” The ad cuts to a close-cropped shot of Talbert, with purple shirt, black jacket, and white clerical collar, quite somber. He is identified on screen as “Bishop Melvin Talbert: President Bush’s Church.”

No nation under God has that right. It violates international law, it violates God’s law and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Iraq hasn't wronged us. War will only create more terrorists and a more dangerous world for our children.

Talbert’s strong statement against the war quickly invoked secular as well as religious discourse—though its brevity did not allow for much expansion on these reasons. Visually, his clergy’s clothes helped viewers identify him as a religious authority, even if they were not sure of what tradition he was from. The onscreen text made the most connection to religious tradition, whatever it was, it was a man of religious authority from the President’s own church who strongly disapproved of the war position.

---

27 CNN, Fox, and NBC declined to sell national airtime for the ad, so WWW bought airtime from local affiliates instead (Cooperman 2003a).
Protest Mobilization

Perhaps the best known aspect of resistance to the Iraq War was the hugely successful grassroots mobilization of millions of people to march against the Iraq War. Globally and domestically, huge masses of people took to the streets to protest the pending war. Religious groups and individuals were deeply involved in these efforts, both domestically and abroad, though it is difficult to tell precisely how or what percentage of the mobilizing they were. Large scale protest mobilization, like lobbying, is the work of coalitions of secular and religious groups and individuals, and discursively, as well as demographically, the contributions of the various constituent groups are often obscured by the relatively simple discursive claims and actions of the group as a whole. Nevertheless, religious voices in the coalition were understood, even by adamant secularists who otherwise seemed to demonstrate little enthusiasm for religious reasons against the war, to offer the movement generally greater legitimacy. Leslie Cagan, the National Coordinator of United for Peace and Justice, the principal coalition of grassroots mobilization against the war, expressed the coalition’s desire to do better outreach at the grassroots level, so that they could be part of the movement like Clergy and Laity Concerned was during the Vietnam conflict. If they could do that, the movement might “waken the sleeping giant of the religious community” and that that “could be a very, very powerful moral force” on the war, a moral legitimacy that Cagan was aware was lacking especially vis-à-vis mainstream Americans.
United for Peace and Justice arose out of deep and widespread dissatisfaction with what was seen as the radical and alienating tactics and message of the ANSWER Coalition (Cortright 2004) in October 2002. Starting as a volunteer organization, it hired its first full time staff in January of 2003 to be fully ready for the big mobilizations against the war as the public discussion hit its crescendo in the winter and spring of that year. It was an uphill battle, but one which organizers believed they had a chance to win. This is how Cagan explained their attitude toward the struggle.

We didn’t enter that project naively. We knew that it was an uphill battle, to put it mildly, but we were tremendously optimistic given the breadth of opposition and also just how patently insane it was to go to war! You know? that you kind of feel, at least I do, I find myself still holding onto some, maybe it’s a naive notion, that even the bad guys that can be convinced that when they’re totally wrong that either they could be convinced or at least enough pressure can be put on them that they have to behave better!

According to Cagan you needed to both convince people that the war plans were wrong and failing that, provide enough political leverage to make them do the right thing anyway.

The culmination of these efforts was the vast marches of February 15, 2003, when according to the BBC between 6 and 10 million people mobilized worldwide against the war. In London, the crowd was estimated at 750,000, in Barcelona 1.3 million, in Rome up to a million, 100, 000 in New York, 200,000 in San Francisco and numerous smaller protests on every continent (BBC 2003). The New York Times went so far as to dub the anti-war movement a second “global superpower.” The success of this turnout buoyed the hopes of those working against the war. The events of that day
were the most common answer to my interview question asking about the biggest success in their advocacy. Despite the disappointment, sometimes approaching bitterness many of the war opponents expressed during the interviews about the war debate, February 15 stood out as a shining moment of hope and empowerment.

It is somewhat difficult to assess just how involved religious groups were in the grassroots mobilizing. On the one hand, Leslie Cagan expressed disappointment in the number of religious groups in the UFPJ coalition

I had initially hoped and assumed that there would be greater involvement from, obviously not everybody in the religious community, we know that there are conservatives or less progressive elements of the religious community just like any community but certainly within the more progressive elements of the religious community. I had hoped for a greater involvement than I think there actually was. And I don’t know why, I don’t know exactly what happened there.

On the other hand, however, social movement scholar Barbara Epstein claimed (without any documentation, however) that faith-based groups were the core and largest component of the anti-war movement (Epstein July- August 2003).

Even as the second “global superpower” of mass public opinion and the UN security council did not authorize the war, the war seemed more and more inevitable, and even ostensibly secular organizations seemed to realize they were going to need some sort of miracle to avoid the war. As the administration’s weather-based deadlines for the onset of conflict approached, MoveOn.org and Win Without War seemed to turn to prayer and the value of spectacle in hoping, against all hope, to avert the conflict. They held a Global Candlelight Vigil for Peace on Sunday March 16, 2003. Beginning in
New Zealand and rolling across the rest of the globe, nearly 7,000 vigils in 142 countries were organized and the advertising for this solemn protest started with religious leaders. The MoveOn website enjoined “Archiepiscopal Desmond Tutu, Reverend Robert Edgar, and other religious leaders call for candlelight vigils around the world on march 16th to say yes to peace -- and no to war with Iraq.”

Once the war started, religious leaders took the lead in the few national level attempts at civil disobedience. Once the war started, religious activists revived an old tactic from the Central American anti-war movements in the 1980s the Pledge of Resistance. The religious groups The Americans Friends Service Committee, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Voices in the Wilderness, and Pax Christi supported the Iraq Pledge of Resistance in addition to other secular groups. The AFSC’s Peter Lems described to me how it worked once the war started.

I guess [it] really culminated with the actual attack against Iraq in 2003 and communities all over the country had agreed to have actions on that day. In Philadelphia, they were held at the Federal building where all the entrances were, the message was, it’s no business as usual today. The beginning of this war and closing down the building and other people had symbolic campaigns as well.

The Pledge reached its highest level of activity in the days after the war began. In Chicago large protests resulted in the arrest of more than 550 protestors and in San Francisco, over 1400 were detained by police. Across the nation, more than 50 cities had protests (Cortright 2004). Though the protests had some local disruptive effect (especially in Chicago and San Francisco), the war had begun with a ferocious attack on
Baghdad and, in general, the country united to support the President and the troops and these acts of civil disobedience diminished.

At the White House, on March 26, several religious advocates were arrested near the White House for demonstrating without a permit. Those arrested included United Methodist Bishop Joseph C. Sprague (Chicago), Jim Winkler of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, Roman Catholic Bishop Thomas Gumbleton (Detroit), and Rabbi Arthur Waskow (Philadelphia). In response to this protest, religious advocates supporting the war were quite critical. Mark Tooley of the Institute of Religion and Democracy’s Methodist Committee characterized it as “really embarrassing” and the result of radical elements at the top of the leadership of the United Methodist church (LOC 2003b). Tooley described them in this way.

Bishop Sprague and Jim Winkler represent the radical fringe of America’s religious community. Unfortunately, they also occupy senior and very visible positions of influence that will distort how the United Methodist Church is portrayed to the nation.

To the IRD, these upper level members of the church organization misrepresented the mainstream elements of the church, both in their outrageous behavior of getting arrested at the White House and in their position against the war. The sense of outrage was heightened because this was occurring after the war started, when our own troops’ lives were in danger. Tooley’s tone throughout this article oscillates between deeply sad and deeply scornful. The participation of religious leaders in social movements and especially in civil disobedience against the war was divisive in American Christianity. Some Christians supported this type of activism and others found
it profoundly inappropriate. We wrap up this chapter with considering another type of
Christian leadership in the Iraq debate: the decision of some advocates to participate in
high-level diplomacy to foreign states.

American Religion Goes International

In addition to their domestic efforts at stopping the push for war, American
religious leaders also embarked on foreign excursions to try and press their case. These
trips were of two types. The first, pastoral visits to willing members of the targeted
nation hoped to demonstrate the humanity and future potential suffering for our
would-be enemies. The second type, of Track II diplomacy—informal diplomacy
involving non-official representatives of the involved parties—tried to talk to foreign
leaders to solicit their assistance in solving the showdown with Iraq peaceably. These
trips to various international players in the international debate at the United Nations
hoped to affect a boomerang effect (see Keck and Sikkink 1998) on the domestic
American discussion, whereby international actors could influence domestic American
policy. In the realm of international religious relations, both of these tactics have a
controversial history, especially during the Cold War period when American religious
leaders were torn between whether these trips could prove a valuable witness toward
peacemaking or whether they conferred unintended and undeserved legitimacy to
(often questionably deserving of such) foreign leaders. The basic points of controversy
centers on whether or not the religious delegations are but pawns in repressive regimes’
attempts to manipulate the United States and maintain their iron-fisted grip on power

176
and whether the religious leaders have any real impact on diplomatic relations or indeed, if they interfere with the official process of diplomacy.

In a more pastoral mode, Robert Edgar, the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, lead a delegation of 13 United States church officials to Iraq over six days at the end of December 2002 and into early January 2003. This trip to the so-called enemy elicited strong criticism from other religious advocates. Then IRD President Diane Knippers called it “ill-considered and dangerous” in a December 24 letter to Edgar. In the letter she went on to say

Such a visit by senior U.S. church officials already on record as strongly opposed to any U.S. military action can only give encouragement to Saddam Hussein and his supporters.

But members of the delegation understood their trips very differently. The United Methodist Press described their trip as an attempt to “assess the effects of more than a decade of sanctions against Iraq and to connect with Christians in that country” (United Methodist News Service 2003). In the same article, Robert Edgar of the National Council of Churches explained the reason for the trip.

The images that we have seen on television have been those of Saddam Hussein holding up a rifle. We wanted to humanize Iraq by focusing on children and the most vulnerable who will be impacted by the war.

The religious advocates on this trip to shift focus to the present and future suffering of Iraqis. Many of the religious advocates I interviewed were insistent that I could only understand their position on the possible Iraq War in 2003 in the context of their work on Iraq throughout the 1990s. Many had been deeply involved in work to relieve the suffering of the Iraqi population under the United Nations sanctions regime.
dating back to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Many groups, both religious and secular were quite concerned about the humanitarian effects of the sanctions (Arnowe and Abunimah 2002; Gordon 2010). Churches were among those most involved in the efforts to highlight the plight of Iraqi innocents, women and children particularly, who suffered during the 1990s.

Previous concern for the suffering of Iraqis because of the sanctions became the rhetorical anchor point for arguing that the Iraqis had already suffered enough and that a war with Iraq would ultimately only make their lives worse, rather than better as the administration argued. A statement from the United Church of Christ made the connection in this manner.

The human cost of war would be enormous, both to the United States and to Iraq. The most severe impact of a military assault on Iraq would be on its already suffering civilian population. Over a decade of containment and isolation, of crippling comprehensive sanctions, and of routine U.S. and British bombing have created miserable conditions inside Iraq. The Sanctions have induced poverty, malnutrition, and starvation on the most vulnerable of the Iraqi people, including millions of children. These civilians, innocent of the atrocities Saddam Hussein has committed, should not bear the burden of deprivation and death such a war would surely exact on them.

Though reliant on the extreme upper end of the estimates of the casualties of the sanctions, this statement makes a plea against the war based on the human costs of war. Though acknowledging initially the human costs to the United States, the rest of

28 Estimates vary widely of the precise number of deaths caused by the sanctions and there is no agreement over who to blame for the damage done to Iraqi society and infrastructure, the sanctions or on the government of Saddam Hussein.
the paragraph focuses extensively on the threat of continued suffering of the Iraqis. Though perhaps consistent with Christian teaching on loving of neighbor and even one’s enemies, this was a hard sell in the context of fear and concern for American suffering should the purported threat of Saddam Hussein fail to be negated. Frustrated with a lack of influence in the American debate, some religious advocates ventured abroad to try to get some leverage against the momentum toward war.

Abroad, religious advocates attempted to rally important international leaders in an effort to exert greater pressure on the American administration. The National Council of Churches coordinated visits to meet with various state officials in Berlin, London, Paris, Rome, and Moscow. Here we consider what happened in the meetings in Britain and Rome particularly, as they are the advocates exercised the most influence. In Britain, they articulated and promoted an alternative to war that was discussed at the highest levels of the British government and, in Rome, they beseeched the Pope to do even more to stop the war.

The Religious Leaders’ Plan

With the assistance of a member of Blair’s cabinet, Claire Short, Secretary of State for International Affairs, Jim Wallis of Sojourners, Episcopalian Bishop John Bryson Chane, Bishop Melvin Talbert, Reverend Clifton Kirkpatrick of the Presbyterian Church USA, and Reverend Dan Weiss, past general secretary of the American Baptists Churches in the USA (along with a contingent of 11 other church leaders from Britain, the Middle East, and Africa) met with Prime Minister Tony Blair to discuss their concern about the
war and Britain’s support of it. Tony Blair was a practicing Christian and Wallis was impressed with their meeting in which they addressed serious issues, both religious and political. In our interview Wallis described it to me.

So, it was an hour meeting. The whole hour. And it was a serious moral, theological, philosophical, political discussion about the war and I said, “I agree with your two principle objectives. Not only to disarm Saddam Hussein of his weapons of mass destruction, I agree with that. But I’ll go so far as to agree with the goal of removing him from office.” Now, certain parts of the left anti-war movement didn’t, wouldn’t say that. I did. He deserves to be removed from office. Violate Iraqi sovereignty, if necessary, in national efforts. But, I said, “but not by bombing the children of Baghdad. And so, how do we accomplish these goals without bombing the children of Baghdad, without a war.” And we discussed that. And in the end, I was hoping he would agree with a series of alternative steps that could accomplish those two goals. But, without the resort to war. . . . And at the end I respected his engagement with a discussion, the time he took and it wasn’t a perfunctory discussion, but he clearly was going to go along with President Bush.

Coming out of the meeting with Blair, Wallis and the other religious leaders wanted to target an alternative to war (what they were describing to Blair as a “third way,” particularly appropriate for Blair who was known for characterizing himself as a third way politician) for the British Parliament, which had yet to vote to give authorization for the war. If they could have gotten parliament to vote it down, it could be of consequence for American willingness to engage in the war without its special partner. Wallis drafted his Six-Point Plan for alternatives to war in consultation with Claire Short and various ministers of the British Parliament and cabinet ministers.29 After the plan was drafted, an anonymous American donor came up with a quarter of a

29 In our interview, Wallis declined to name these ministers.
million dollars to place the ads in five British newspapers. See figure 2 for the full-page ad that ran in [list newspapers here]. The plan also was published in the Washington Post as an op-ed titled, “A Third Way is Possible” on March 14, 2003.
Prime Minister Blair, the world needs you to find a "third way" between war and inaction. It is two minutes before midnight, and the world's people are desperate for an alternative to war.

Yes, we must disarm Saddam Hussein.

Yes, we must remove him from power.

But, we need a better solution than war to accomplish our goals. The people of Iraq have already suffered greatly, and we must not inflict even more suffering upon them.

As Americans, we have a special relationship with the British people. We need you to be a true friend of America in this critical hour. We need you to help our government not make a terrible mistake.

American church leaders are offering an eleventh-hour initiative that proposes an effective response to the threat of Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction, but avoids the terrible dangers and suffering of war.

Mr. Prime Minister, we appeal to you as a man of moral and religious convictions to persuade our President not to take our countries into a war that could have terrible, bitter, and divisive consequences. Let us instead:

1. Indict Saddam Hussein for his crimes against humanity and send a clear signal that he has no future in Iraq, setting in motion the internal and external forces that could remove him from power and bring him to trial at the International Court in The Hague; History has shown, as with Mobutu Mbelinge, that this can help bring down a criminal regime.

2. Pursue coercive disarmament with greatly intensified inspections backed by a U.N. mandated multinational force.


4. Organize an effort through the U.N. and nongovernmental relief agencies for the people of Iraq now, rather than only after a war.

5. Commit to implement the "roadmap" to peace in the Middle East, with a clear timetable toward a two-state solution that guarantees a Palestinian state and a secure Israel by 2005.

6. Re-invigorate and sustain international cooperation in the campaign against terrorism, rather than having it disrupted by a divisive war against Iraq that intelligence officials believe will likely lead to further attacks.

Such a morally rooted and pragmatic initiative could help achieve an historic breakthrough and set a precedent for decisive and effective international action instead of war.

We urge you to provide the principled leadership and real friendship that could resolve this international crisis without war.

We are grateful for the recent meeting we had with you. You have our hopes and prayers.

Sincerely,

Jim Wallis
Executive Director and Editor-in-Chief of Sojourners

John Bryan Chane
Episcopal Bishop of Washington, D.C.

Cliffor Kirkpatrick
Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church

Melvin Talbert
Executive Officer of the United Methodist Council of Bishops

Daniel Andrez Minnihan Secretary of the American Baptist Churches in the USA

and millions of concerned Americans

Read the complete 6-Point Plan at www.sojo.net/action or call Sojourners at 1-202-328-8842 for more information.

Sponsored by Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities

Figure 3.2
The Church Leaders' Plan
The plan began with a call for a criminal indictment for Saddam Hussein for crimes against humanity. The hope was that this would set in motion a delegitimation process that would remove him from power similar to what happened with Slobodan Milosevic. Meanwhile, an aggressive disarmament could continue under the U.N. mandate. The United Nations would eventually help with a transition to a democratic Iraq after Hussein was no longer in power. A massive humanitarian effort would begin as soon as possible to relieve suffering and assure Iraqis of international good will. More broadly, to address issues of regional stability, the plan would seek to secure commitments to implement the “roadmap” to peace in the Middle East and recommit all nations to fight international terrorism.

It was an ambitious plan with many parts, but it was an alternative and one, which apparently garnered some attention at high levels. It was considered in both the British and American governments. Wallis reports that Short reported to him that in the cabinet meetings it was discussed at length and she said it was called the “American Church Leaders’ Plan,” and it was the, and she said the only alternative even considered to going to war with the U.S. was the American Church Leaders’ Plan. It was an active conversation at the cabinet level about this plan.

The so-called Church Leader’s Plan also got serious discussion at the American State Department. Here is Wallis’ account from our interview

Colin Powell at the State Department had this thing called the Secretary’s Forum, it was a private forum where he would, they’d get together key State Department actors and they have a private discussion about something. And they invited myself and John Chain to come and present
the 6 point plan to that. Now, as you remember, the State Department and Defense Department were in a battle over foreign policy and the State Department. . . but, I had a debate in that meeting with Pollack, Ken Pollack. Who wrote the book about we’re gonna have to fight a war with Saddam at some point, it was a book about war [The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq 2002]. But he said after we debated this plan in front of the Secretary, this is maybe 25 people, we debated it in front of that group and he said, “I think that war with Saddam Hussein is likely inevitable. But, something like this plan should be tried first.” This is Ken Pollock. Something like this plan, this is credible, and should be tried first. So, that, that, it was even at that level, where a Hawk was saying, this is credible. Whereas, if you’d had said we’re against the war, the Hawk would have said well we have different views of human nature and evil and I respect your point of view but please go be a Mennonite, you know?

Now, but that was, and then afterwards I literally had, and this is okay to all come out now, I have never actually talked about this before. I literally had State Department people take me aside and say the churches need to help us in our battle with the Pentagon. The State Department officials, at that level of the Secretary’s group, said the churches, we need the church’s help in our battle with the Pentagon over foreign policy. It was that level of response from those people.

Despite the interest and discussion, the Religious Leaders’ Plan remained just an idea, too late to stop the invasion.

Going to Rome and Beseeching the Pope

As the country rolled into spring and the Iraqi weather began to heat up, some religious actors became more emboldened. The National Council of Churches also arranged a meeting with Pope John Paul II, who had been quite vocal about his concern about the administration’s preparations for war. Father Joseph Nangle a veteran parish priest in northern Virginia and self-described guy in a roman collar for Pax Christi, was the sole Catholic in the delegation. Their goals in getting an audience with the pontiff
were twofold: get the Pope to speak out a bit more forcefully on the issue and to get him to change the venue for his advocacy. There was an effort among the more progressive elements of the Catholic peace advocacy to get the Pope to speak at the United Nations, the symbolism of which was hoped would be influential in the ongoing Security Council debate and as a rhetorical roadblock to the administration’s plans. They implored the Pontiff to repeat his “war is a defeat for humanity” claim at the United Nations and that the United States church was not repeating the Pope’s warnings against the war.30

Opponents of the war where not the only folks interested in trying to influence the Pope. The administration pushed back against the Pope’s warnings against the war by having the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See James Nicholson invite the conservative Catholic writer and public intellectual Michael Novak to the Vatican, where he met with various church officials and gave an invitation only lecture arguing that the current crisis satisfied just war criteria. In response 62 American Catholic lay and church leaders wrote a letter protesting the administration’s use of a theologian to rationalize its foreign policy agenda. In his introductions of Novak to the Vatican, Ambassador Nicholson claimed—a bit implausibly—that Novak represented neither the U.S. government (he was after all a guest of that government) nor (more plausibly) the American church.

30 Interestingly, in our interview Father Nangle related that some Vatican officials did not believe Father Nagle’s claim that the American church was not preaching the pope’s position from the pulpit. It was inconceivable to them.
Just a few short weeks later, the Vatican did send Padre Cardinal Pio Laghi, a personal friend of the Bush family, who delivered a personal letter to the President. The connection between the Father Nangle’s pleas and this action of the Vatican are far from clear, but they are suggestive that a variety of religious actors at various levels of Christendom thought it was important for the pope to try and exert extraordinary diplomatic pressure on the American President.

In his public statement after his visit with President Bush, Cardinal Laghi refused to detail the contents of the pope’s letter nor the president’s reaction to his visit, but did affirm this position of the Vatican.

The Holy See maintains that there are still peaceful avenues within the context of the vast patrimony of international law and institutions which exist for that purpose. A decision regarding the use of military force can only be taken within the framework of the United Nations, but always taking into account the grave consequences of such an armed conflict: the suffering of the people of Iraq and those involved in the military operation, a further instability in the region and a new gulf between Islam and Christianity (Vatican 2003).

The visit to the White House was widely covered in the press and seen as a legitimate part of the public debate. It, of course, too was unsuccessful in stopping the administration from beginning the conflict.

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that religious participation in the public debate over whether to go to war in Iraq was substantial and varied; religious voices both supported, opposed, and were silent on the proposed war with Iraq. Studying this range
of positions on Iraq affords us insight into religion’s diverse relationships to political authority, power, and the legitimate use of violence. In the next chapter we analyze the differences between religious advocates who supported the war and those who opposed it.
American national consciousness is based upon the conviction of being different from other nations—different not in representing a peculiar and unique development of human history but in realizing, as the first people, with the greatest possible approximation to perfection, the general trend of human development towards a better rational order, greater individual liberty, and basic equality.

--Kohn, Hans 1944

In the last chapter we saw the variety of manners that American Christian groups vigorously debated the appropriateness of an American military engagement of Iraq being developed and promoted by the George W. Bush administration. Although the Bush administration dominated the narration of events surrounding Iraq in 2002 and 2003, they were nonetheless contested in that interpretation. While a small number of elite religious advocates supported the administration, most religious advocates challenged the administration’s interpretation of the threat of Iraq and the necessity of a United States-led military engagement of Iraq.

In this chapter we turn our attention to an analysis of these disparate religious voices in this public debate, both those in favor of the administration’s push for a military confrontation with Iraq and those religious voices who opposed it. In analyzing
these distinct religious traditions I elaborate what Mannheim (Mannheim and Wolff 1971) called distinct styles of thought, that is, supra-individual (that is cultural), distinct ways of thinking about a particular problem confronted by societies. In this case, I wish to elaborate distinct styles of Christian thought on the problem of war. These styles may be understood as distinct traditions of Christian thought. (We shall see in chapter six some of the social foundations of these distinct Christian traditions.) I argue war-legitimating and war-challenging styles of Christian thought are binary in nature. First, they consist of a set of identity relations to the nation and the state. These relations help predict whether religious actors were priestly or prophetic on the Iraq issue. Second, accompanying these basic stances vis-à-vis Iraq War plans are constellations of symbolic codes that hang together to help construct religion’s narration of their support or opposition to the war. But, for respective traditions of styles of thought for Christians on war, these codes have divergent meanings. To understand these distinct styles of thought is to understand these differences. The important symbolic codes in these competing traditions include religious differences on the political order, their understanding of the evil inherent in the debate over the war, whether peace is more legitimately the ends or the means of political action in the world, different emphases on the objects of Christian love, and the relative worth of alternatives to war.

Understanding Religious Culture

To better understand religion’s sanctioning of violence and peace, we need to first better understand religious discourse as culture. I take a dialogic (Bakhtin and
Holquist 1981; Steinberg 1999) approach to understanding religious discourse in the public debate over the Iraq War. A dialogic approach pays particular attention to both the multivocality of discourse (Bakhtin and Holquist 1981) and its contested nature. Cultural symbols take on different meanings when used strategically to argue for diverse policy recommendations. Indeed, in the analysis that follows, we will see that the same symbols often mean distinctly different things, dependent on both who is making arguments and who is receiving them. Additionally, the differing meanings of these symbols are contested in the public sphere. These elite advocates must explain precisely what they mean when they use certain symbols as well as explain why what their opponents mean by those symbols is incorrect.

Religious advocates generate distinct religious cultural repertoires (Steinberg 1999; Swidler 2001) in their particular histories of conflict that are then utilized, mobilized, and institutionalized as ongoing cultural repertoires. Given the long history of Christianity, these cultural repertoires can originate and endure for upwards of two millennia. As I have argued earlier, competing cultural repertoires are grounded in a distinctive discursive field (Spillman 1995) that sets the limits for the range of possible meanings of distinct symbols. For the case at hand, we may say there is a Christian evaluation of state violence discursive field that parallels but is distinct from the discursive field of war generally. Operating within that discursive field, religious advocates can select and use meanings in creative manners, yet they are also constrained by the limits of that field. As with any discursive field, communication
outside of that field is deeply problematic. Within the Christian evaluation of state violence discursive field, we find the two distinct styles of thought that this chapter analyzes.

Opposing religious actors on this debate articulate and inhabit distinct constellations of repertoires with respect to the use of violence by the state. These repertoires provide cultural evaluation useful in making aesthetic and moral judgments. These provide both order, of some durability and structuredness, and a surprising degree of interpretive and cultural flexibility. Diverse components of a moral order can be assembled to provide novel interpretations of a tradition, even as established subtraditions, each with distinctive constellations of interpretations, persist. Christian religious traditions (as are most long-standing religious traditions (Appleby, Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, and Carnegie Corporation of 2000) with their long history and various interpreters over that history, for example, are internally diverse and provide a variety of meanings to a common set of symbols. Indeed, as MacIntyre (1981) persuasively argues, traditions are as much defined by the arguments they have over time as much as by their agreements. The differences in meaning for these symbols are important in shaping the interpretations within the tradition.

But, what determines which repertoires tend to be used? This, in large measure, depends on how religion chooses to differentiate itself from other spheres of collective life (Casanova 1994; Weber, Gerth, and Mills 1958). Differentiation of the religious and political spheres is both a hallmark of western modernity and one of the most useful ways of conceptualizing secularization (Casanova 1994). Modernity is defined in many
ways, but it is clear that central to it (in the history of the west particularly) is the relative eclipsing of the power of religion to organize and influence social life as the influence of the nation and state grew. Historically these are complicated processes (Casanova 1994; Chaves 1994; Gorski 2000; Martin 2005) and differentiation is far from complete, especially in countries like the United States, where religion plays an important role in public life (Bellah 1975; Casanova 1994; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wuthnow 1988). In the United States the relative independence of religion, the nation, and the state as independent spheres of value is highly contingent and variable. While a variety of factors help explain this variability, in this dissertation, I focus analytically on religion’s ability to define itself vis-à-vis the nation and the state.

A Two-part Religious Identity Model

In this chapter I describe an analytic model of religion’s ambivalence that accounts for both religious identity’s semi-autonomy vis-à-vis the nation and the state and religion’s polysemic cultural resources for both war and peace. As I have discussed in the first chapter, my theoretical desiderata is twofold. First I aim for an understanding of religion’s relationship to nation and state as a distinctly triadic relationship (see Zubrzycki 2006 for my model of this approach with respect to nationalism particularly), which analyzes each relationship within the triad independently in order to better understand state sponsored violence (in this dissertation) as well as non-state sponsored violence (the more developed line of inquiry in the field). Only by theorizing
various relations between nation and state will we be able to better understand religion’s ambivalent relationship to both state and nonstate violence. This is necessary for a more complete understanding of religion and violence and peace. Second, I aim for a *verstehen* approach, one that attempts to understand and elaborate the distinct meanings that actors bring in constructing their arguments in public debate.

Let us call the first part of my model the collective identity component. It elaborates the varying relations between the triad of religion, nation, and state. These relations help determine the religion’s stance towards war. Religion and nation are analytically distinct means of making claims about collective identity. Religion is older and more established as a collective identity, while the modern nation is a fairly recent historical invention. The state is the organ that does the collective work of the polity. It holds much real power both for and over the people in a country. Many modern states hold power over multiple nations and religious groups. The authority of a state to act is circumscribed by its support—either active or acquiescent—of the collective forces governed by it. The relationships between constitutive nations and religions of a state are important because they, in large measure, are the source of authority for the state. The stance of religion to the nation is the primary determinant of whether religion takes a supportive or critical position with respect to the use of violence by the state. Having taken such a stance, advocates varied in their degree of deference to state authority, some being quite deferential, while others were assertive of religion’s authority vis-à-vis the state.
The second part of my theory—the moral evaluation component—elaborates the basic sets of codes in these moral orders that either legitimize or criticize state violence. Here the rich cultural history of Christianity offers contrasting meanings for common codes, some of which legitimate war and some of which critique it. As I have described in the previous chapter, in my investigation of this debate it is clear that religious traditions called upon a wider variety of religious cultural resources than traditional just war criteria, though many engaged them as well. My elaboration of these codes attempts to catch the important variety of cultural resources religious advocates used across positions both for and against the war.

My model is intended to be an explanatory model, one that helps explain a significant degree of the variation in Christian advocacy on war and peace as exemplified in the debate over the Iraq War. It is intended to be a theoretical explanation of the basic religious cultural structure and logic of both support and criticism of the war planning. It is not intended to be a model of how religious advocates—of either the elite or mass variety—come to their positions of advocacy. I will address the social foundations of these positions in chapter six. But we should remember that in the dialogic push and pull of contentious debate, people’s sense of identity as well as their cultural understandings of important parts of their own culture, are constantly being negotiated. While these patterns of identification and cultural valuation are relatively stable, there is the possibility of change too. They can do this by renegotiating either identity or reconsidering the meaning of religious culture. While this model privileges religion’s identity relations with nation and state over the moral
evaluation component of the model, real people can change their use of culture at either the level of identity or cultural meaning. A change in identity or the selection of meaning of culture may lead to an overall change in position on war, with concurrent changes of identity and other meanings of culture.

Religious identities are not static; they are contextual and processual and it is always possible for them to change even if they only occasionally do so. Religious communities are also internally diverse and so different understandings may come to predominate over other ones. The meanings of religious symbols, the architecture of the moral orders with respect to the use of violence by the state, are sometimes available for contestation. Changing positions within the system can occur at either the level of religious identity with respect to nation and state or the level of moral order. One the one hand, religious groups or individuals can reimagine their identity vis-à-vis the nation and state as a way of changing positions, which would probably lead to them changing their understanding of the moral order. Or, on the other hand, they may be convinced culturally or theologically that the moral order of which they previously either assumed or accepted is, now unacceptable to them. These new understandings, can, in turn, lead to re-imagined religious identities and to changes in positions on war.

In what follows, I describe and analyze the religious identity relations and repertoires which opposing sides of the debate disagreed. First, with respect to the religious identity component of my model, I consider the basic orientations that religious identity tends to take relative to the nation and state. Second, I analyze the logic of the basic moral orders that inform those religious advocates that supported the
war from those that critiqued it. These moral orders include their understanding of the nature and constitution of political order, the nature of evil, the role of peace—particularly as it relates to the political order—the proper object of Christian love, and the value and practicality of nonviolence in the world.

Religious Identity vis-à-vis the Nation and State

Religion and Nation

Religion and the nation are both collective identities that significantly vary in their relations to one another, both through history and cross culturally. Religion consists of a number of distinct elements, including discourse and practices and most centrally identity. Religion grounds its members into a collective bond of sacred community and has done so for much of human history (Durkheim 1965). The modern nation, (from the Latin, natus, indicating to be born) refers to the understanding of collective meaning and origins of a group or people and only historically arises in the last several hundred years. The nation concerns politics, culture, and identity. Though the modern nation developed concurrently with the rise of the state as an important historical institution, the nation remains distinct from the state. In the west, the relations between the nation and religion as distinct modes of collective identification have varied tremendously. In the United States, they have tended to overlap
significantly, but with sufficient separation so as to leave the potential for significant
differences between religious and national identities.\footnote{I take a constructionist stance on the nation, seeing the nation continually being created and
recreated as circumstances and contexts change. This is particularly apt for my general theoretical
approach of understanding the importance of codes and narration in identity formation.}

I am particularly interested in the nation and religion as discursive formations
that can play both legitimating and critiquing roles vis-à-vis the societies they culturally
elaborate and enliven. More generally, discursive formations affects our consciousness,
but in ways that never fully resolve its own questions ((Foucault, Sheridan, and Foucault
1976; Foucault and Gordon 1980). Similarly, both nationalism and religion only
somewhat successfully answer the very questions of identity that they, in part, answer.
For America, in the context of a War on Terror, as we have seen in the first chapter,
these questions focus on what is the meaning of America as well as its role in the world.
As we shall soon see, religion contributes answers to the questions that the nation
cannot fully provide for itself. Religion can both support and challenge the nation; in this
case, it can challenge or support the vision of the American nation the Bush
administration promoted. In that uncertain discursive space between religion and
nation, the meaning of identity itself is contested.

Most religious advocates agreed that America was a \textit{special} nation and religion
had a role to play in it, though religious advocates disagreed on how it was special.
America is coded as unique, so unique that the term exceptionalism is the preferred
term for any number of dimensions of America’s specialness (see Lipset 1996).
Toqueville was the first to comment on America’s exceptionalism, referring to its fostering of democracy, its relative egalitarianism, and its religiosity (Tocqueville and Goldhammer 2004), though the term has come to be applied to several distinct aspects of America. American exceptionalism can refer to America being a new nation of immigrants (Behdad 2005), its resistance to communist revolution (Fried 1997), the singular effect of the frontier in forming American virility and endurance (Turner 1993), and, most significant to this dissertation, America’s relatively high degree of religiosity among industrialized, western countries. God is often particularly implicated in American identity. In part settled by religious refugees, America’s story is deeply intertwined with ideas of Christian Providence that inform a religiously inflected sense of American identity and role in the world.

Given the focus in this dissertation on questions of American identity, two prominent and analytically useful understandings of the relation between religion and the American nation are useful to my analysis, that of America as the Redeemer Nation and America as a City on a Hill. These portray very different understandings of American identity vis-à-vis its particular religious character. They are important in establishing a distinct type of relationship between religion and the nation.32

In the historian Tuveson’s evocative phrase, America is a Redeemer Nation (Tuveson 1968), which Gunn characterizes as a nation that surveys the global scene and

32 These serve as ideal types, by which we can make meaningful generalizations and distinctions about a variety of empirical relations between American religion and the America nation. Even if discourse does not always precisely match these ideal types, they are still analytically useful in so far that they help us understand general positions that are in opposition to each other.
then uses its power, both military and economic, to push for positive changes in the world (Gunn 2009). America is charged with a moral duty, a duty for action in redeeming the world. American identity is primarily founded on two important characteristics: clear moral vision and the ability to do what is necessary to bring about that vision in the world. America’s clear moral vision results from America’s close relationship to God, which brings the nation closer to God’s transcendent judgment on moral and ethical issues. Our moral vision often focuses on the key American symbols of freedom and democracy. Throughout the twentieth century, in some of the nation’s finest hours, we fought major wars for them. American power is similarly closely linked to America’s proximal relation to the divine. Our exceptional power is an endowment of the creator and the growing power of America in the 20th century is interpreted as concrete evidence of this special gift.

The rest of the world, comparatively, lacks this moral vision and power. The United States’ privileged position with the divine implies a degree of distance between the divine and the other, relatively fallen nations of the world. They lack both the moral clarity to see their problems as well as the capacity to work towards their solution. The need for this type of moral clarity and decisive action in the world is desperate and so, given the desperate situation, American action is particularly needed. Our role in the world is to give of our gifts to the world.

In the case of the argument before the Iraq War, the Redeemer Nation model of imagining American religion and nation to support for an American military engagement of Iraq. The line of argument that replacing the authoritarian and brutal regime led by
Saddam Hussein might start a revolution of democracies in the Middle East was particularly resonant with the Redeemer Nation model.\textsuperscript{33}

Often times, the Redeemer Nation model functioned as a presupposition in proponents of the war’s arguments. They were more visible in my interviews with them, where I could elicit some articulation of background assumptions. In my interview with Michael Novak of the American Enterprise Institute, Novak spoke glowingly of what president Bush had done for the young men in the Middle East, he had given them something to work for, democracy and freedom. In Novak’s estimation, the United States had given these two gifts to the Iraqis, sure it was messy, but struggles for freedom and democracy—like our own—always come with serious costs.

Religious supporters of the war tended to articulate a similar freedom agenda as argued for by the president, but with more religious sanctioning. I asked Richard Land in his broadcast studio in Nashville at the headquarters of the Southern Baptist Convention to explain to me, “What is the basic difference between the religious folks that supported the war and the religious folks, particularly at the elite level, talking about it in D.C.?”

“It’s real simple, he began. “I’m an American Exceptionalist.” We have been blessed, undeservedly so. “Now, we’re not Israel, we’re not God’s chosen people but we

\textsuperscript{33} In the larger public discourse, it should be noted, the Redeemer Nation can be made with varying degrees of overtly religious claims. Indeed, many advocates for the war who made purely secular arguments for the war shared an understanding of America as Redeemer Nation, just without the specific reference to God.
have been blessed.” But, with blessings come responsibilities. Land believed we had a responsibility to be a friend and supporter of liberty. And liberty is good for all people.

I see America as a force for good in the world. Most of my opponents do not. They see America as part of the problem, not part of the solution. They belong to a generation that was permanently poisoned by Vietnam. They see America as part of the problem, not part of the solution. They want to tie America down with all kinds of international restraints. Most of those international bodies, we put in place. But by God, we’re not gonna be tied down by them. We don’t, when it comes to exercising American military power in a cause that we believe is just and right, we do not have to pass some international test, as John Kerry said.

With America as a force for good in the world and our commitments to being a supporter and friend of liberty, it makes perfect sense for us to be bringing freedom and democracy to other countries. Invading a country may not be the ideal way to do it, but given the exigencies of the threat Hussein poses to both his own citizens and to the United States. It is also interesting to note Land’s characterization of America as a “force” for good. We will, as a Redeemer Nation, work and strive to make good results in the world. America’s role is active and involved, certainly not just exemplary. In a written piece Land sees this as part of America’s special role in the world.

If it has to be Britain and America alone defending civilization against a gangster masquerading as a government leader for the second time in a century, then so be it. It was the United Kingdom and America against Hitler.

The historical link between America and the fight against totalitarianism in the Second World War is a common and important trope of those who shared a Redeemer Nation understanding of the special character of America and its special role in the world.
To question this special character or America’s task in the world in bringing more freedom to the world was to risk being dismissed by war proponents as patently un-American. The Institute of Religion and Democracy was particularly adept at this strategy. While praising America’s efforts at ridding the world of the great evil of Saddam Hussein, they ridiculed those religious leaders opposed to the war. Mark Tooley, of the United Methodist Committee of the IRD labeled them “reflexively anti-American” and with typical verbal aplomb dismissed them.

Culturally, religiously, or politically there is little that connects these religious left activists to most American church members or to the current century for that matter. Their confusion of politics with theology, and insistence that Jesus shares the views of Daniel Ellsberg, remains annoying. But as relics of an increasingly distant era, they are best understood as perhaps entertaining antiquities.

Tooley here is hinting that most American church members better understand the special status of America and its role in the world. He tries to rhetorically link religious opponents of the war with Vietnam protestors who would hamstring the country in its fight against evil in the world.

Gunn’s contrasting model of relation of American religion and American nation is that of the City on a Hill, a biblical allusion is to a line in the Sermon on the Mount, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14—NIV version). The passage comes almost immediately after the Beatitudes, a collection of some of Jesus’ most challenging sayings calling for blessings on the meek, the mournful, the righteous, and peacemakers. This is an historically much older metaphor for America, dating back to John Winthrop’s use of it in his 1630 sermon “A Modell [sic] of
Christian Charity,” the title of which reveals the exemplary nature of this understanding of the religious nation. The United States should be humbly based in living according to God’s laws, particularly Jesus’ commandment to love God and neighbor. This would bring about its success as a nation. In this model the rest of the world was in need of such an example, having either forgotten or not heard the gospel message. America’s moral vision in this model is rooted in virtue, rather than freedom. Its job in the world is to demonstrate that a nation founded on gospel truth would prosper in the new world. Its power derives from its exemplary success as a nation following God’s commandments and therefore Providentially-blessed rather than the pragmatic power exemplified in the Redeemer Nation model.

The City on a Hill understanding of America’s role in the world informed those who critiqued America’s war plans. These advocates varied considerably in how they evaluated the option of American use of force, with some taking a more restrictive pacifist-type approach and others a more open, just-war one, in which violence could be legitimate in foreign policy (though not particularly in the Iraq case). But, they understood America’s leadership role in the world differently than as a redeemer nation. They recognized America’s power as the sole super power, but were very concerned about the potential of the wrong use of power and its consequences around

34 Later, Ronald Reagan would change the coding of the city on a hill metaphor by making America a beacon for democracy and freedom, shining its light against the darkness of Soviet-led communism, but Gunn (2009b) demonstrates that this is a new appropriation and the original meaning of Winthrop’s City on a Hill is still a relevant understanding of American religious and national identity.
the globe. They problematized America’s war plans, stressing the manifold ways that unintended consequences of American foreign policies could both hurt others in the world as well as ourselves. War is a messy business they insisted, despite the best of intentions and precautions many innocents get hurt. Additionally, the rest of the world often sees American action differently than we do and there are often serious unintended consequences of foreign resentment to our nation, including the potential exacerbation of the threat of Al Quaeda-like terror networks to us. Given these twin dangers, the best way forward is for America to be a role model of our best virtues and values.

Jim Wallis of the progressive evangelical group Sojourners spoke to a packed National Cathedral on January 20, 2003 (the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr.) for a march and service called “Pray and Act: A Service for Peace and Justice. He read from the Old Testament book of Micah, chapter four, “they shall beat their swords into plowshares” and “neither shall they learn war anymore.” Wallis set the context, “We gather as our nation moves closer to a decision about whether to go to war with Iraq. It will be a momentous choice, with great consequences for the life of the world.” He claimed American churches had never been so united on the issue of peace. He went on.

The churches have warned about the risk and cost of a potential war which could easily result in unpredictable and unintended consequences—high numbers of civilian casualties, the death of many American and British servicemen and women, more instability and violence in the already volatile Middle East, more anti-American sentiment around the world, and perhaps even more terrorism against our people. But at a deeper level, the churches are witnessing to the need
for a new "world perspective" of which Martin Luther King Jr. spoke.

Today we remember the birthday of our brother Martin Luther King Jr. We have heard words from his last Sunday sermon on earth, given from this pulpit, where he called for an alternative to war and bloodshed, for a refocusing of our attention on the most dangerous enemies of our age—poverty, racism, and hopelessness—and for the development of a new perspective.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a modern day Micah, who knew that we will not beat our swords into plowshares until everyone has their own vine and fig tree—their own little piece of the global economy, their own small stake in the world, their own share of security for themselves and their families. Because when you have a little patch upon which to build a life, nobody can make you afraid. And it is fear that leads to violence. We must learn, as both the 20th century Martin Luther King Jr. and the eighth century Micah understood, that there is no security apart from a common security—a global security. That spiritual reality is more true today than ever before. Our weapons cannot finally protect us; only a world where most people feel secure will truly be safe for us and our children.

America has a vital choice to make here, it can either embrace this new global perspective and lead the world in justice and security for all or it can create a more dangerous and less secure world.

The logic of the City on a Hill model of America as a special religious exemplar puts the special emphasis on the rest of the world having some degree of parity with the United States. We are not their benefactor so much as their partner in demonstrating American leadership. The Presbyterian Church (USA)’s Stewardship of Public Life newsletter discussed this in terms of a discussion between multilateralism versus unilateralism. Writing in the late fall of 2002 and clearly favoring multilateralism as the biblical means towards creating justice for all, Catherine Gordon at the PCUSA’s Washington office criticized America’s impulse toward unilateralism and militarism.
The starting point of the Church’s concern about the affairs of nations is not national interest but is justice for all people and preservation of God’s creation. But the U.S. appears to be heading down a dangerous path toward militarization, and encouraging it in the international community as well.

If the leaders of Iraq, the U.S. and every nations would allocate their resources to the well-being of their people and of the community of nations, rather than to instruments of war, and would refrain from the withholding of economic resources in ways that further damage those who are already poor, God’s vision of shalom/salaam/peace would be nearer to reality for all.

Gordon clearly disagrees with the notion that we can militarily bring democracy and freedom to Iraq (or any other people for that matter). These are clearly not the way to achieve God’s plan for humanity. Notice too, the universal impulse of the City on a Hill perspective. The standards of behavior are to be followed by all, the United States job is just to live up to them, ultimately with the expectations that others will live up to them as well. This is distinct from the universal impulse in the Redeemer Nation model, which posits a universal need and aspiration for freedom and democracy as the political manifestation of a full recognition human dignity, yet asserts a very particular role for the United States in bringing freedom and democracy to the rest of the world.

Religion and the State

Modern nations arose contemporaneously with the modern state (Calhoun 2007). They are dialectically related, both resulting from and informing each other, though they are empirically and analytically distinct. States have administrative and executive power for the enacting of political power. States are the organs of enacting the will of those in political power. In Weber’s terms, the modern state “controls the
total means of political organization, which actually come together under a single head” (Weber, Gerth, and Mills 1958). Effective states provide social and political stability through their ordering and organizational functions in society and their capacity to deliver services to needy citizens. The liabilities of states are most visible at the margins of state capacity, with either too much state power resulting in the abuse of its own constituencies’ rights or too little state power resulting in underserving large sections of the population, while only small slivers of society benefit from the state’s largess.

Considering the state at in an analysis of war is particularly apt because as Weber famously defined it, the state is “a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force [italics in original] within a given territory” (Weber, Gerth, and Mills 1958). In making religious claims about the rightness of war, advocates are necessarily making claims about this central power of the state, either contesting or legitimating it. Historically, the state and religion have competed for legitimacy in a variety of realms, including that of the use of violence. Though the state (obviously) maintains the strong capacity to both enact and legitimate violence, religion may still, at times, contest that power and ability. This is the basic difference in positions that religions took vis-à-vis the state, they either deferred to its moral authority to decide to go to war or they challenged it, claiming that they, the religious, had greater legitimacy than the state with respect to the morality of war.
Deference to the State’s Authority.

As we have seen already in chapter 1, much religious deference to the American state is based biblically on Saint Paul’s admonitions in the Biblical book of Romans. The thirteenth chapter of that book begins.

1 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. 4 For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.

Given that these injunctions were written during the time of the rule of the Roman Empire, the same empire that crucified Jesus, these words of the great church evangelizer Paul are often interpreted as strongly and unambiguously affirming the sovereignty of the state in worldly affairs.

This type of argument was frequently referenced by Christian supporters of the war. For instance, Alan Wisdom, writing for the “Presbyterian Action” arm of the IRD, wrote, “The U.S. government has a divinely-ordained duty to defend its citizens, by armed force if necessary.” This sort of reminder, based in either biblical arguments or just war-type arguments regarding the proper authority to make the prudential decision to go to war, among religious proponents of the conflict, facilitated a form of acquiescence and consent to the plans of the administration.
For war supporters with a Redeemer Nation orientation to the nation’s relation to religion, deference to state authority could generate strong support for the war. For these war advocates also had particular enthusiasm for supporting the state as led by President George W. Bush. President Bush (as we have also seen in chapter 1) was seen as a particularly trustworthy Christian leader. There may have been a general inclination to entrust the state with the powers and choice to defend its citizens amongst some Christian advocates, but the leadership of the state by this specific president garnered full support. Consider the opening sentences of the “Land Letter” written in support of George W. Bush’s fall 2002 push for confronting Iraq as part of the broader war on terror.

Dear Mr. President,

In this decisive hour of our nation’s history we are writing to express our deep appreciation for your bold, courageous, and visionary leadership. Americans everywhere have been inspired by your eloquent and clear articulation of our nation’s highest ideals of freedom and of our resolve to defend that freedom both here and across the globe. We believe that your policies concerning the ongoing international terrorist campaign against America are both right and just.

The praise here is nearly over-the-top and conveys a great level of trust and confidence in the president, and accordingly the American state which he leads as the chief executive, to lead us through these troublesome times. The president’s policies and

---

35 So-called for the letter’s primary author Richard Land, President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. The letter’s other signers included Chuck Colson of Prison Ministry Fellowship, Bill Bright, Chairman of Campus Crusade for Christ International, D. James Kennedy, President of Coral Ridge Ministries, and Carl Herbster, President of the American Association of Christian Schools.
given the timing of the letter, this puts Iraq as the principal policy area of concern are

given the approval of these religious leaders, but it is a secondary approval. They trusted

him in the first place and now are only adding their voice of agreement.

Sometimes, as we have seen above, in the course of public debate over the

possible war with Iraq, the issue of support for the war turned specifically on whether or

not George W. Bush was trustworthy. At other times, however, the discourse of the
debate hinted that something larger was at stake, trust in the institutions of state

themselves. For example, Chuck Colson, the former Nixon Special Counsel and the

founder of the evangelical ministry Prison Fellowship, wrote in Christianity Today, “I find

it hard to believe that any President, aware of the awesome consequences of his
decision and of the swiftness of second-guessing in a liberal democracy, would act
recklessly.” Colson’s comment was directed towards war critics who were concerned

that a conflict in Iraq might destabilize the region. It is interesting to note that Colson

made a claim that “any President” would not act recklessly. Colson trusted the

institution, the office of head of state generally to be responsible. In another

commentary for the Prison Fellowship’s website Colson considered the collateral
damages that inevitably occur in war.

This is one of the toughest issues our policy makers have to wrestle with.

We can be thankful that they are weighing the moral questions involved.

And Christians must weigh them as well.

Here, Colson is more nuanced in articulating that moral questions must be

weighed by both policy makers and Christians. But the expression of gratitude for policy
makers, their being mentioned first and more extensively than Christians, and the
general deference to policy makers makes it clear whom Colson trusts.

Given this general deference to the president particularly and the state more
generally, religious proponents of the war were particularly critical of opponents who
questioned the president’s motives or honesty. Challenging the president’s motives was
seen as a grave offense to the integrity of the leader of the nation and the head of state
and thereby deeply offensive itself. Other advocates in support of the war, were
persistent in their criticism of their own coreligionists active in protesting the war. The
Institute of Religion and Democracy (IRD) reported, with no small degree of horror, the
anti-war activities of church officials. Most shocking of all were the apparent lack of
respect and deference to the administration. The title of their missives include “George
McGovern Attacks Bush at UM Meeting,” An Embarrassment: Methodist Bishop
Arrested at White House,” and “United Methodist Lobby Official Lambastes United
States.” The IRD interpreted these activities as demonstrating a shameful lack of
patriotism and respect for the nation and its leaders.

A larger issue in the debate was the precise nature of warfare in the operations
of the state. Was war part of the normal tools of statecraft, albeit an extreme one? Or
was war to be understood as an extreme, difficult option, more the result of a failure of
statecraft rather than one of its normal options? Catholic public intellectual George
Weigel, a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a Washington, DC based
think tank “dedicated to applying the Judeo-Christian moral tradition to critical issues of
public policy” (EPPC 2011a), weighed in energetically on the war as statecraft side of the
argument. He repeatedly characterized the just war tradition as a “tradition of morally serious statecraft.” It is a matter for states because the just war tradition is “best understood as a sustained and disciplined intellectual attempt to relate the morally legitimate use of proportionate and discriminate military force to morally worthy political ends” (Ibid). It is, and here Weigel borrows Clausewitz’s maxim, an extension of politics through other means (Clausewitz 1993). As a political issue, war is the public responsibility of the state, which is the organ entrusted with politics. Also because it is an issue of politics, it is also amenable to moral scrutiny. In the just war tradition, war—though regrettable is sometimes necessary.36

But for war opponents, such an argument violated one of their basic starting assumptions: war was not morally equivalent to other actions of the state. It was categorically different and state authority had to be very serious with respect to its use. Though war opponents varied in how deferential to the state they were. Deferential religious opponents seemed more careful to not otherwise overstep their bounds as separate actors in the public sphere. Sure, they can have their religious opinions, but they should remember that the real authority belongs to the state. Deference to the state would most commonly be expressed in reserved statements of advice made to the state authorities. In a statement in mid-November, 2002, the General Board of American Baptist Churches USA issued a statement affirming that “the work for peace is integral to faithfulness to the Gospel and Jesus Christ.”

36 Other Catholics—most notably the pope did not necessarily share Weigel’s vision of war as a tool of statecraft and were much more critical of the state’s preparations for war in this case.
We recommend that President Bush and Secretary of State Powell continue their efforts to work through the United Nations to resolve the issue of Iraqi disarmament through inspections and diplomacy.

In this case, deference to the state took the form of recommendations or advice. It was not strident or overly demanding. This is how The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops elaborated its position on the war on the eve of the anniversary of 9/11.

We need to deepen the faith and hope that lifted us up and sustained us over the past year to continue to shape who we are and how we act in the days ahead. Firm resolve in defending innocent life and the common good against terrorism is still required of our nation. In this necessary task we must ensure restraint in the use of military force, insisting that traditional moral norms governing war and protecting the innocent must be observed. This "war on terrorism" should be fought with the support of the international community and primarily by nonmilitary means, denying terrorists resources, recruits and opportunities for their evil acts.

It is interesting to note that the bishops’ statement did not identity Iraq by name, nor did it address any of the particulars of the war planning, preferring to name only the War on Terror generically. To advise “restraint” is itself restrained vis-à-vis the war-making power of the state intending to use it. To speak generically of the War on Terror is to miss an opportunity to speak to the particular issue at hand, it is to be indirect and, intended or not, nonconfrontational. This advising tone was qualitatively different from the tone of prophetic challenge and protest made by war proponents who were not deferential to the states’ authority.

Perhaps the strongest tone of challenge to the United States’ state came from Jim Winkler of the United Methodists who claimed that “Jesus Christ would not support this war.” In making such a strong statement he was directly challenging the president’s
rationale for the war grounded in Christian terms. But other war opponents were no less challenging of the administration’s claims. Mark Hanson, the presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America followed Winkler in coming out with a strong letter against the administration’s plans even before the first anniversary of 9/11. On August 30, 2002 he wrote.

I believe it is wrong for the United States to seek to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein with military action. Morally, I oppose it because I know a war with Iraq will have great consequences for the people of Iraq, who have already suffered through years of war and economic sanctions.

In his addressing the state’s possible future action against Iraq, Bishop Hanson leaves no doubt about his moral and political positions. Bluntly, it is wrong and “will have” dire consequences for Iraqis. There is certainty here and it is directly counter to the administration’ argument that removing Hussein will help Iraqis. His is a statement against the state’s position, not just a call to affirm general principles. Finally, consider these words from the Pope, warning of the dangers of “sinking into the abyss” and so that humanity may still have a future, “the peoples of the earth and their leaders must sometimes have the courage to say “No.” The Pope then encourages his audience to say no to death, selfishness, and, finally, “NO TO WAR. [Capitalization in original Vatican transcription] War is not always inevitable. It is always a defeat for humanity.” While the Bishops cautioned restrained, the Pope was not nearly so deferential. These types of statements do not pull punches and do not make mere recommendations or give advice. They make demands and speak in a voice that clearly calls state authorities to account.
Asserting Religious Authority

Other opponents of the war were far more assertive in challenging the state’s moral authority to declare war. They tended especially to distrust the president, especially his use of religious discourse to ground his policy claims. Religious opponents to the Iraq War tended to use discourses that expounded a religious identity as less fused or overlapping with the state. They affirmed that this more separate relation between them is fundamentally good. They were more agnostic about the inherent moral goodness of the American nation and state, instead seeing it as capable of both good and evil. The distance between religion and the state for these advocates allowed them to use their traditions’ discursive resources to criticize and call to account the government. While being concerned about security threats to the nation and state, these traditions also were concerned about ethical threats posed by policies understood as compromising the country’s moral obligations, both internally and externally. These groups understood their duty toward the state as helping to maintain its moral ideals, even during a time of threat.

They understood religion to have a prophetic role as a check on state power and were more cautious in their enthusiasm towards the idea of freedom, being concerned about moral perils in its exercise. Yet, they were careful to not be seen as too critical of America, lest they be seen as disloyal and thereby lose their legitimacy in public debate. Those traditions opposed to the war were more critical towards the state’s plans, trying to nevertheless appear patriotic and realistic in the face of the threat of terrorism. This was a difficult maneuver in which they tried to appear as both loyal Americans, while
Rhetorically, they were very constrained by a concern about appearing unpatriotic, a potentially devastating problem for anti-war advocates.

Writing in his magazine Sojourners, Jim Wallis clarified that loyalty to Christian values supersedes loyalty toward the American state.

Whatever Christians decide about war with Iraq, they must do it on the basis of Christian theology. Liking and trusting President George W. Bush, as many conservatives do, or hating him, as many liberals do, is just not relevant here. Patriotism means loving your country and its best ideals, enough even to oppose it when it is grievously wrong. And Christian faithfulness always supersedes patriotism. U.S. Christians often need to be reminded that we are a worldwide church—the body of Christ; and what other Christians around the world think about what the United States does ought to be at least as important to us as the views of our fellow citizens.

In addition to loyalty to Christian theology, Wallis also made a quick move to remind his readers that their community of first allegiance is a global one, and that they should be taking some cues from the opinion of the worldwide body of Christ rather than their American neighbors. This is an interesting and telling move, as many opposed to the war were often clearly concerned with the world community as reference group much more than an American one, as most supporters of the war did. The world community as reference group took many forms, from a concern for UN authorization of the conflict, to a concern for destabilizing the Middle East region, to consideration of the various manifestations of the global church. As opponents of the war were more critical of the American state, they were simultaneously more sympathetic to global institutions.
Similarly, Jim Winkler, the Secretary General of the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church stated its support for international institutions, rather than domestic ones as a venue for resolving this conflict.

Believing that international justice requires the participation of all peoples, we endorse the United Nations and its related bodies and the International Court of Justice as the best instruments now in existence to achieve a world of justice and law.

Winkler was concerned about the United States’ power in the global system and that a purely internal political decision to go to war would not adequately consider the perspectives and interests of “all peoples” and so consequently, the United Nations would be a better forum in which to pursue a restrained world of justice and law. As we shall consider further see in chapter six, this interest in including more perspectives, especially those of the powerless and victimized turns out to be both a significant difference between both the articulated positions of Christian war supporter and critics and in the social foundations of these positions.

Elements of a Moral Order

Having described the central identity components of my model for explaining religious support and opposition to state-sponsored violence, we now turn to a consideration of the constellation of cultural codes that inform and sustain the basic positions of religious advocates vis-à-vis war. As constellations, these sets of meaning tend to cohere together, they function as sets of meanings. They form distinct Christian styles of thought on the use of force, one supporting war and the other criticizing it. I believe that historically they are probably at least somewhat coherent as cultural sets
across time and application to a particular foreign policy conundrum, though I cannot take a strong position on this. This study only investigates one particular case, further study across cases is necessary to take a strong position on the relative degree of coherence and change across time in these styles of thought. This sort of study could also investigate the degree to which there is variation across positions for or against state war making by religious organization across time and cases.

At the level of individual codes that constitute these constellations, we discover a dichotomous pairings of opposing meanings for the same code. Where Alexander and Smith describe and analyze the opposing codes of the civil sphere (1993), my analysis illuminates opposing meanings for the same code. Here we consider the key terms of debate upon which differing advocates on the war vigorously disagreed. These include their understanding of political order and the potential threats to it, their understanding of evil at stake in the world, whether they tended to understand peace as an end or a means in human affairs, the correct object of Christian love, the viability of alternatives to war, and the right authority for evaluating claims for war—either Jesus or the historic church.

Political Order

Those who supported the war tended to see the United States as the best empirical manifestation of political order in the world. As such, the political order maintained by the U.S. is a precious thing worthy of defense. To demonstrate the willingness of pro-war advocates to use force to defend the world order consider the
following from the conservative Catholic theologian George Weigel, who in February of 2003 wrote the following.

. . . the moral fact remains that there are moments when moral duty - not vulgar self-interest, but moral duty - requires the proportionate and discriminate use of armed force to sustain the minimum conditions of world order, redress great injustices, and defend freedom. These are all moral goods. To will these good ends without willing the means to achieve them is just not morally serious.

Weigel starts his just war argument for the conflict in this manner to rhetorically challenge those religious voices which claim that just war theory begins with a presupposition against war. Weigel rigorously grounds his just war thinking in an argument that war is a tool of statecraft and not just a system of its failure. Moral duty plays an important role in defending the political order, which is the end or goal of moral action. Weigel later describes this order as being “an order based on justice and freedom.” Saddam Hussein needs, according to Weigel to be held to account because he “holds the principles of international order in contempt.” This is strongly contrasted with the usual motivation in politics, “vulgar self-interest,” which most religious advocates were insistent was in need of restraint by the particular moral contribution of religion. But it is without zeal that Weigel reaches his consideration that war is necessary. Rather, it is with regret, serious moral deliberation, and a sense of grave duty, but it is support nonetheless that Weigel articulated.

37 Weigel, as a war plan supporter, seemed to view this presupposition as, in practice, a prohibition against the use of war. Just war critics of Iraq war plans, however seemed to view this presupposition as a particularly high threshold which any claims for war would have to clear. On this presupposition, as in many of these identical terms with different meanings, Christian war supporters and critics basically talked past each other.
What is the nature of this order? Weigel elaborates it as an order of justice and freedom and it is an international order. On the one hand, the order of which he writes is a broad order of proper relationship, while on the other hand, it is also the order as prescribed by the United Nations Security Council Resolutions dating back to the Persian Gulf War. Here, Weigel’s fellow Catholic, Michael Novak’s comments may be of use in helping us to understand the nature of this order and the nature of the threats against it. Speaking at the Vatican at the request of the United States Ambassador to the Vatican, Novak said,

Let us hope that Saddam Hussein as a last resort decides to obey his solemn obligations under the negotiated peace of 1991, and thus at last meets the minimum requirement of international order. In that case, there will be no war. In that case, the policy of the United States will have succeeded without the need for war.

Notice the “solemn” obligatory nature of the minimal requirements of international order. Perhaps this is a consequence of speaking at the Vatican, but it also reveals the sense of moral obligation that we all have to defend an international order that is at once political, legal, and moral.

The threat of Hussein is multi-faceted to this political, legal, and moral order. At the most basic he is a threat to the physical wellbeing of many: Americans, his neighbors in the Middle East, and many Iraqis. As the most significant threat to the order, he must be stopped from potentially doing devastation to that order, even if that meant changing our understanding of when a defensive reaction is justified. Religious advocates supported the Bush administration’s belief that the spread of WMD in an age of terrorism made old strategies of containment obsolete. Robert P. George, Princeton
professor of politics and public intellectual wrote in a piece circulated by the Institute of
Religion and Democracy (IRD).

Pre-emptive action is “defensive” when it is motivated by a reasonable belief that a proven aggressor is in the process of equipping himself with the military means to carry out further aggression with impunity. Few people doubt that Saddam is seeking to enhance his chemical and biological arsenal, and (even more ominously) to acquire nuclear weapons. Few deny that he will, if successful, use these weapons to terrorize other nations in the region and force them to bend to his will.

The issue of pre-emption or defensive start to war, of course, is the hinge upon which most of the just war arguing over the Iraq War turned. George, like many other religious advocates for the war (as well as secular ones) argued that the unpredictability of the threat of WMD in the hands of terrorists or the sponsors of terror, made the old understanding of defensive—as a reaction to a pre-existing attack—obsolete. The new standard should be a “reasonable belief” that such an attack is coming. If one waited, it would simply be too late. Many innocents and the world order itself would be greatly damaged.

But despite religious advocates concern for and fierce defense of this internationalized order, they were simultaneously generally quite uncertain of international institutions’ capacity to defend that order. They tended to share a criticism of the United Nations as weak and ineffectual in enforcing their own resolutions. Because they believed that God had given the United States a special, sacred mandate to be the Redeeming Nation, they believed that the United States would be the only country capable of countering these threats. The seemingly interminable debate at the Security Council only seems to affirm these beliefs. The internalized Babel of the U.N.
could fall behind U.S. leadership in this regard, or it could unnecessarily and morally
problematically restrain and pollute it. When urgent action was needed in the world to
defend order, the United States was who you could count on and it was, explicitly or
implicitly working on the same side as God. This is how Richard Land described it.

It was wise and prudent for President Bush to go before the U.N. General
Assembly and ask the U.N. Security Council to enforce its own
resolutions. However, as American citizens we believe that, however
helpful a U.N. Security Council vote might be, the legitimate authority to
authorize the use of U.S. military force is the government of the United
States and that the authorizing vehicle is a declaration of war or a joint
resolution of the Congress.

When the threat of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba presented a grave
threat to America’s security, President Kennedy asked for the support of
the U.N. and the Organization of American States, but made it clear, with
or without their support, those missiles would either be removed by the
Soviets, or we would neutralize them ourselves. The American people
expected no less from their president and their government.

They can certainly not expect much more from the United Nations. Given the perilous
security and moral threat to the world order, only we, the United States, could respond
responsibly and adequately. We were practically the most capable force to defend the
order and it is also biblically sanctioned. As Land further explained:

When all the diplomatic efforts to secure justice fail, the only way to
safeguard our nation is to strike at the source of this evil. The 13th
chapter of the Book of Romans tells us that government has the biblical
authority to use lethal force to exact justice.

To give too much credence to the United Nations was to simply not be morally and
practically responsible. In one of the IRD’s more caustic critiques, Steve Rempe ridiculed
war critics’ “faith” in the U.N.

To the religious left, the United Nations is a quasi-religious body, with a
divine anointment over all it says and does. U.N. resolutions are
sacrosanct, and its edicts infallible. That the Bush administration would even consider acting without the full consent and approval of the United Nations is enough to send some church officials into apoplexy. Anything short of the enthusiastic support of the U.N. would thus qualify as being “unilateral.”

Charging religious opponents of the war with in some fashion losing their religion—in this case with the charge of idolatry in practically worshiping the United Nations—was a fairly common strategy of the IRD (we shall see more of this shortly). Again, the point is, the United States can be trusted with defending the political and moral order, not the inept and corrupt (in comparison) United Nations.

Those opposed to the war, however, had different ideas about the nature of political order in the world. They were concerned about Hussein’s threat to order, but they were much more ambivalent about America’s ability to contribute to the desired political order in the world. Rather than primarily focus on America’s ability to buttress order, they were very concerned that the potential for a pre-emptive war made America a threat to the desired world order.

On the Catholic Church’s World Day of Peace in December 2002 Pope John Paul II rhetorically asked, “How do we restore the moral and social order subjected to such horrific violence? His answer explains his understanding of order itself.

My reasoned conviction, confirmed in turn by biblical revelation, is that the shattered order cannot be fully restored except by a response that combines justice with forgiveness. The pillars of true peace are justice and that form of love which is forgiveness.

But in the present circumstances, how can we speak of justice and forgiveness as the source and condition of peace? We can and we must, no matter how difficult this may be, a difficulty which often comes from thinking that justice and forgiveness are irreconcilable. But forgiveness is
the opposite of resentment and revenge, not of justice. In fact true peace is "the work of justice" (Is. 32:17).

The pope adds a new element to the components of political order, forgiveness, which functions to caution against efforts to establish or re-establish political order that are motivated by resentment or revenge, the opposites of forgiveness. Importantly, forgiveness problematizes war as a response to injustice or potential injustice. Using war to address injustice is based on a logic of retribution, those who have done wrong must pay a price for their misdeeds. The language of forgiveness in addressing wrongdoings suggests a different logic than mere retribution. Minimally, it suggests a more lenient punishment in a milder form of retribution. More radically, it suggests a logic of reconciliation or restoration to justice, neither of which support war as a means to justice. Forgiveness also functions in many opponents’ ethics toward a greater consideration of one’s own faults and may give one concern for either absolution or avoidance of the fault of unjust war making.

Though often accused of not taking the threat of Iraq seriously, my analysis suggests that discursively, religious war opponents did consider Iraq a problem. But, in addition to their concern over Iraq’s threat to order, they were also concerned about the United States as a threat to order. In a September 13, 2002 statement from the United Church of Christ (UCC), opposing a U.S. War against Iraq addressed these twin threats.

While we condemn Saddam Hussein’s repressive policies, we are alarmed that our nation’s leaders would consider taking unilateral military action to remove him. To do so without any support from our Arab friends,
without allied consensus, and without United Nations authorization puts U.S. leadership and credibility under international law at stake.

The UCC is concerned about both Hussein's policies and the United States' obligations under international law as threats to order. This selection is typical in that more discursive attention is paid to discussing the United States as a threat. While this may have helped prompt war proponents to accuse war opponents of moral confusion, that the focus should be on Hussein, it also is a reasonable outcome of war opponents assessment of with whom they arguing and trying to persuade. War opponents were primarily talking to Americans, trying to affect American policy. Given this strategic goal, it is not surprising that they tactically emphasized American threats in their discourse.

Because the United States was seen as a threat to the world's political and legal order, war opponents tended to have much more trust in international institutions, particularly the United Nations. In a letter to Congress (also distributed to supporters and posted on their website) FCNL's General Secretary Joe Volk argue for relying on the United Nations to defend world order, pointing out that if the United States wants to use Security Council Resolutions as pressure against Iraq, they should also let the mechanisms in those resolutions have a chance at working.

We are deeply concerned that the Administration is undermining the possibility for successful UN weapons inspections and a peaceful resolution of the conflict with Iraq. . . . Under Resolution 1441, Iraq's weapons report is to be reviewed and responded to through the UN Security Council. Some members of the Security Council have raised concerns at the U.S.'s high-pressure tactics in obtaining an early copy of the report and moving toward a unilateral response. UN weapons inspectors have also expressed frustration that U.S. officials continue to criticize the inspections process, without providing new intelligence or other evidence of problems. The U.S. continues to pressure inspectors to
interview Iraqi officials and their families outside of Iraq, although inspectors have said they are not yet prepared to do so. Meanwhile, U.S. war plans - which have already led to significant deployment of troops and planning for a post-war occupation government in Iraq - threaten to undermine the inspections process and fracture the hard-won international unity now behind Resolution 1441.

FCNL criticized the administration for undermining the very international mechanisms they were insisting be followed. In addition to the United Nations providing the legal and political order for leverage to compel Iraq to disarm under Resolution 1441 (and previous resolutions too), the United States was working against what FCNL claimed was international unity behind the inspections process. This was another threat to global order. We could endanger our foreign political support that we have heretofore labored to gain.

Again, in terms of just war theory, the disagreement over threats to political order hinged on the two sides’ take on defensive versus pre-emptive moves to counter threats. While as we have seen, war supporters argued for a new standard of defensive war, war critics were critical of this line of argument and tended to use the code “pre-emptive” as a means to differentiate their arguments from the changing meaning of defensive. In this selection, we see the United Methodists’ Jim Winkler, using just war categories to criticize the new standard for war making right as the conflict begins.

The war is unjust by the historic Roman Catholic ‘just war’ teaching standards. It is illegal under international law and it is a disastrous first step for the President’s new doctrine of preemptive war enshrined in the National Security Strategy. In the past, the US went to war when we were attacked, when our neighbors or allies were attacked, or with the support of the international community. None of those conditions obtain in this instance.
Winkler insists that this is a dangerous new precedent for the United States, the logic of which points towards pre-emptive attacks by other states should they feel threatened. Winkler, like most other war opponents were convinced that the old standards for starting a war were not in need of being changed.

Evil

Evil has a variety of cultural meanings and in contemplating war, characterizing your adversary as evil in your narration of events is of consequence (Smith 2005). The discourse of the War on Terror, coming both the United States and Al Quaeda used harsh symbolic binaries to portray one’s own social group as embodiments of pure good, while symbolizing your opponents as pure evil (Lincoln 2006). Supporters of the war were more likely to understand evil in absolute terms, to apply the label evil to those deemed as threats in the War on Terror, and to narrate their understanding of the threat of this evil in apocalyptic terms. Those advocating war portrayed Saddam Hussein and his threat to America as unambiguous embodiments of absolute evil, the singular threat of which necessitated a military response to contain. Some of those opposed to the war were similarly willing to label Hussein as evil, yet simultaneously concerned about the additional evil of fighting an unjust war. Others opposing the war either demurred from the use of the category of evil all together, being concerned about the potential polarizing consequences of the term or criticized those who, in their view too easily labeled Hussein evil and the U.S. as absolute good, being concerned about the
potential polarizing consequences of the term and its use by war supporters as a precursor to war.

As a result of these differing ideas of evil, religious advocates on opposing sides tended to have different understandings of the moral stakes in a possible military encounter with Iraq. Those opposed to the war were primarily concerned about the moral danger about the United States changing the long-standing terms of legitimate military engagement from a defensive to a preemptive standard. Those in favor of the war, however, saw the primary moral hazard as allowing Iraq to use a weapon of mass destruction and destroy many innocent lives, particularly American ones.

Proponents of the war were quite enthusiastic and unabashed about describing Saddam Hussein as evil. Richard Land makes a surprising historical association, bringing his argument close to home for peace activists by quoting Martin Luther King Jr. as part of his argument for the war.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the martyred World War II pastor, “If your opponent has a conscience, then follow Gandhi. But if your enemy has no conscience, like Hitler, then follow Bonhoeffer.”

Here, as was commonly done throughout the war debate, Hussein is symbolically linked to Hitler as an ultimate manifestation of evil, incapable of basic human moral contemplation, perhaps the ultimate form of contemporary symbolic pollution (see Douglas 1966). In this link, Hussein is made to look as menacing a threat as Hitler was and opponents of war to confront Hussein are recast as hapless Chamberlains, all to ready to make the historical mistake of appeasement of a terrible evil all over again. No,
Land admonishes, this evil must be stopped, violently if necessary, otherwise we might have another horrible tragedy, the likes of which we have not seen since World War II and the Holocaust. Rhetorically, it is also a brilliant use of a domestic hero of nonviolence turned against those who would normally identify with Martin Luther King Jr. and use his quotations to buttress their own arguments against the war.

Any hesitation on the behalf of war opponents to see evil in Iraq was seen as evidence of a lack of moral judgment and seriousness. The IRD’s Erik Nelson criticizes the Most Reverend Frank Griswold, presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church for complaining about war supporters adopting “simplistic views of good and evil” by saying the bishop fails to “to seriously engage the moral issues.” The difference between religious supporters and opponents of the war can be understood according to the director of Methodist Action of the IRD, Mark Tooley because

Traditional religious people understand that the world is fallen and sinful. War therefore is lamentable but sometimes unavoidable if evil is to be resisted. Secular people, who are less influenced by biblical notions of human sin, are often more idealistic and utopian. In their view, war can be avoided through greater human efforts at good-will and humanitarian outreach.

Though implicit in this quotation, it is clear that Tooley categorizes religious war critics as “secular people” at least with the respect to having the clarity of moral vision to see sin and evil. Those religious advocates who argued against the war were characterized as unable to be taken with moral seriousness precisely because of this lack of moral acuity.
Religious critics of the war, it is fair to say, were concerned about the potential evil of prosecuting what they say as an unnecessary and unjust war and were often more focused on this evil than the evil of Hussein in Iraq. However, they did address it at times, thought this tended to lead to a consideration of alternative means of engaging that evil. Here, Jim Wallis acknowledges Saddam Hussein as evil while not advocating war as a response to that evil.

Saddam Hussein is an evil ruler, no doubt about it. But that is not enough for a war. Other heads of state have been evil, including some who have been allies of the United States (including Saddam during Iraq's war with Iran). Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. But that is not enough for a war either. Many other nations have them, too, including U.S. allies, and including both Israel and ourselves. The question is what Saddam's evil portends for the world, whether there is an imminent and urgent threat from his weapons, and, of course, what response would be both effective and consistent with Christian ethics.

Wallis is so eager to admit that Hussein is evil, he admits (incorrectly, it turns out) that Hussein has weapons of mass destruction. In so doing, Wallis is attempting to outflank proponents of the war relative to assessing Hussein while he simultaneously distances himself from most opponents of the war. This statement was part of a larger strategy, led by Sojourners, to be seen as relevant by suggesting specific, alternative plans to war (that we have discussed in the second chapter) by dealing with Hussein strongly and realistically. These plans they publicized broadly (including full page advertisements in the New York Times), but it obviously failed to get traction. Wallis focuses his attention on the U.S. avoiding the evil of starting an unnecessary war that would not satisfy just war criteria.

Peace
Peace was understood differently by opponents in this debate. Those in favor of the war argued that peace is best achieved in a free and just political order. Indeed, in the often quoted Augustinian formulation, peace is understood as the tranquility of order. Predictability and organized relations in social and political relations are understood to take away the occasion of the use of violent means to achieve political or social ends. Violence is understood as a response to injustice or disorder in the system. Therefore, injustice and disorder are seen as tremendous threats to this type of peace. Accordingly, disorder and injustice need to be addressed quickly and decisively. Violent intervention against disorder, including war, is seen as a legitimate means for achieving the peace of order. Peace in this worldview is seen predominantly as an end of political and moral action. Consider George Weigel’s writing in January of 2003.

By coining the phrase *ius ad pacem*, I was trying to prise out of the just war way of thinking a concept of the peace that could and should be sought through the instruments of politics including, if necessary, the use of armed force.

In this brief excerpt, we see clearly Weigels’ understanding of peace as the telos of the instruments of politics, as an end of those instruments, not as a tool in and of itself. It is also clear from this short selection that for proponents of the war there is no paradox or irony in seeking that end of peace through the blunt instrument of war.

This is in stark contrast to the opponents of the war, however, who best understood peace as a *means* or as some peace advocates express it, “the way” to resolve problems. The United Church of Christ pleaded “Again, we are called to choose the way of peace.” The Presbyterian Church USA insisted “We are called by our Lord
Jesus Christ to his ministry of reconciliation.” The General Board of Church and Society proclaimed it is, “the first moral duty of all nations is to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among them.”

These advocates were greatly troubled by the idea of using war as a means to secure the peace. Minimally, opponents to the war believed in a negative definition of peace (GALTUNG 1985), meaning the absence of physically destructive conflict. Peace often also had more of an inner, spiritual connotation for opponents to the war. Their desire for inner peace was often to calm fearful, distressed “hearts” and “souls” in the scary times of the war on terror. In the following quotation Bishop Gregory pleads for American Catholics to pray for peace and to heed the pope’s Lenten request for a peaceful resolution to the Iraq issue, just a week before the beginning of the conflict.

At times like these we turn to the Lord and ask for wisdom and courage. We Christians are called to be "sentinels of peace," the Holy Father reminds us. We join with him in urging Catholics to dedicate fasting on Ash Wednesday for "the conversion of hearts and the long-range vision of just decisions to resolve disputes with adequate and peaceful means."

Bishop Gregory implored Christians in the final days of the public debate about the war to be guards or sentries for peace, even as the war is about to commence. His referencing of the pope was a clear message that he wishes Christians to be against the war (as the pope was) and therefore also on the lookout for peaceful resolution of the conflict. Finally, Gregory’s appeal to convert hearts speaks to the inner-outer relation in the understanding of peace of war opponents. By converting the hearts of the right political leaders to peace the pope and Gregory believed that the public dispute Iraq could have been resolved nonviolently.
Love

Love is central to Christian faith and practice. As used in the primary Christian theological assertion that God is love, love discourse asserts ontological claims about the connectedness of the universe in God as well as our relationship to God. Yet despite love’s importance in Christianity, advocates differed in their understanding of it. For advocates of the war, love could be a powerful reason to fight in order to protect innocents whose suffering could be relieved by violent intervention. This understanding of love is grounded in the second “Great Commandment” to love one’s neighbor as oneself. Chuck Colson explains the Thomistic grounding of just war in Christian charity in this manner.

Christians should remember that the just-war doctrine is not grounded in revenge, punishment, or even justice. Thomas Aquinas discussed it in Summa Theologica—not in the section on justice but in the section on charity (that is, the love of God). As Christian scholar Darrell Cole writes, "The Christian who fails to use force to aid his neighbor when prudence dictates that force is the best way to render that aid is an uncharitable Christian. Hence Christians who willingly and knowingly refuse to engage in a just war ... fail to show love towards their neighbor as well as towards God."

Out of love of neighbor, then, Christians can and should support a preemptive strike, if ordered by the appropriate magistrate to prevent an imminent attack.

Colson is grounding his argument for war in Aquinas, one of the principle fathers of the medieval church, and his use of Jesus’ second commandment to love one’s neighbor as one’s self. Of great importance in any use of the discourse of love is specifying who is to be loved. Here and in the discourse of Christian war support generally, the object of love
is the suffering innocent, being harmed by their abuser or persecutor, presumably our enemy. We should love the innocent by declaring war on the enemy.

Erik Nelson of the Episcopal Commission of the IRD criticizes the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church for rejecting “notions of God as vengeful and retributive” instead asserting that “God exhibits only sentimental compassion and love.” For Nelson, it is more complicated. “God is love, compassion and mercy. God is vengeance, retribution and justice. He is all these things — it is a mystery of which we catch only glimpses.” But ultimately, God’s compassion and love for each of us “is precisely the reason why many of us have concluded that war is necessary.” But given that Hussein is a brutal dictator, the question is “is not whether innocent people will die in Iraq; the question is whether the killing can be stopped.”

For advocates opposed to the war, however, there is a different object of Christian love, the love of the enemy. This was legitimated by an appeal to the New Testament injunction to love your enemies. From this understanding, war is seen as incompatible with a love of the enemy, because of the simple logic that it is seen as impossible to simultaneously love and kill one’s enemies. The Evangelic Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) was a critic of the war effort, even while attending to and expressing respect for differences of opinion among their members. In church pronouncements, the church’s social statement, “For Peace in God’s World” was often cited. In that document, the meaning of love and its connection to peace is succinctly made.

God’s promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Rejected by humans, Jesus was confirmed by God who raised him from the dead in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that “on earth” there might be “peace” (Luke 2:14). In bringing
this peace, Jesus taught love for one’s enemies; he reached out to the
oppressed, downtrodden, and rejected of the earth; he prayed for his
enemies while himself being rejected on the cross.

The New Testament injunction to love one’s enemies is commonly referred to as
one (of a number) of the hard sayings of Jesus. It is hard both personally and socially.
Jesus’ reaching out to the outcasts of the earth and accepting his own rejection while
being killed by state violence are hard in both senses. It is only in the acknowledgement
of the radical nature of Jesus’ challenge to his followers that the ELCA contextualizes the
injunction to love one’s enemies. In the broader context of the debate over threats in
the war on terror, this injunction was seldom directly invoked. Directly invoking it could
mark religious advocates as un-redeemably naïve and eliminate them from serious
consideration in the public sphere. Rather than being directly invoked, the injunction is
most often implicit and indirectly referenced. In the logic of most religious opponents’
argumentation—just like this oft referenced document by the ELCA—the injunction to
love enemies lurks, exerting an influence, but seldom obviously.

Alternatives to War: Nonviolence and/or pacifism

Finally, there were distinct differences with respect to how either side
understood the United States’ options for not going to war. Opponents used discourses
stressing nonviolence—seen as a positive and reasonable political strategy—while
proponents used discourses emphasizing pacifism—understood as politically naïve and
morally irresponsible, especially when it comes to protection of innocents. Pacifism is
unsuitable for those in positions of political responsibility. In the debate over the war,
pacifism was a label used to dismiss political opponents out of hand, even those that claimed to have no strong commitments to pacifism as such.

Mark Tooley of the IRD often dismissed mainline advocacy as pacifist in nature. As director of United Methodist Action, the IRD’s efforts to influence the policies and procedures in the United Methodist Church, he critiqued the church’s opposition to war and describes it as pacifist, even as the church’s denominational boards would describe themselves as followers of just war orthodoxy. In discussing the potential war he dismissed pacifist perspectives on the war with Iraq.

Classic Christian pacifists can give an instant answer to the question of war with Iraq. They are opposed to any war against any adversary, regardless of the threat and regardless of the consequences.

On the other hand, those opposed to the war valued nonviolence as political tool and moral commitment and see it as a good in and of itself. They believe recent history (particularly the surprisingly nonviolent resolution of many Cold War tensions, as well as other nonviolent successes around the globe) and the problems of modern warfare have demonstrated the value of nonviolence as a political tool worthy of serious consideration by political actors. The Mennonite Church USA, one of the historic peace churches and fairly described as pacifist\(^\text{38}\) wrote and publicized a letter to President Bush in late August of 2002 arguing against an invasion of Iraq. The third paragraph of the letter reads as follows.

\[^{38}\text{Though it should be noted, they in their public documents seldom used the word “pacifist.” Indeed it seems, in the public debate, at least as can be measured by its infrequent appearance, pacifist was an effectively polluted symbol (see Alexander 2003; Douglas 1976), tainting those who used it.}\]
We do not offer you vain hope in naïve solutions. Rather, history shows that nonviolent solutions can bring substantive change – the civil rights movement in the United States, the changing governments in Poland, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa are just a few examples. The same God who created the universe has tilted it toward peace and justice for all people.

Aware of the charge of naivety that can be leveled against pacifists, the Mennonites apparently wanted to take the charge head-on. In the unquoted preceding paragraph they argued the value of nonviolence as an integral element of Mennonite faith, in this one they argue for nonviolence’s practical utility in recent world history. The paragraph ends with an evocative riff on the well-known Martin Luther King Jr.’s use of 19th Century abolitionist Theodore Parker’s reflections on the moral trajectory of the universe, adding peace to justice as the telos of that arc.

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that religious actors on different sides of this debate articulate and inhabit distinct moral orders with respect to the use of violence by the state. These moral orders differ in their understanding of religion to the nation and state, the nature and constitution of political order, the nature of evil, the role of peace—particularly as it relates to the political order, the proper object of Christian love, and the value and practicality of nonviolence in the world.

These moral orders are loose, though stable associations of relations and meanings. Religious identities’ relationships with the nation and state and its particular religious meanings hang loosely, but nevertheless cogently together. In this chapter, I have argued that as religious identities more closely overlap with national and state
identities, the likelihood of religion’s support of state sponsored violence increases.\textsuperscript{39}

The distinct sets of religious meanings cohere around positions largely based on religious identity’s distance from the state and nation.

In the next chapter, “Religion Entering the Public Sphere,” I examine how religion participates in the public sphere. To what degree do religious actors speak in their own particularly religious voices, grounded in traditions’ understandings of the sacred and the profane? Or do they change their discourse to fit the more secular terms of public discussion? The social scientific literature is unclear on this issue, with some studies pointing towards a rather strong secularizing trend, while others claim that religion mostly sticks to its rhetorical roots in adding its own terms and conditions into the broader debate. The challenge here is more a matter of understanding what conditions lead religion change or not change when it enters the public sphere.

\textsuperscript{39} For non-state sponsored violence there is a different dynamic. Here religious nationalism diverges from a state identity, which though all states have sacred (in the Durkheimian sense) elements, is seen by religious nationalists as irredeemably profane and corrupt. This is a rather significant point, which allows for a more comprehensive theory of religious violence, covering both state and non-state violence.
CHAPTER 5:

UNDERSTANDING VARIATION IN RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR DISCOURSE IN THE IRAQ DEBATE

The New York Times, March 9, 2003:

Profound changes have been taking place in American foreign policy, reversing consistent bipartisan commitments that for more than two centuries have earned our nation greatness. These commitments have been predicated on basic religious principles, respect for international law, and alliances that resulted in wise decisions and mutual restraint. Or apparent determination to launch a war against Iraq, without international support, is a violation of these premises.

As a Christian and as a president who was severely provoked by international crises, I became thoroughly familiar with the principles of a just war, and it is clear that a substantially unilateral attack on Iraq does not meet these standards. This is an almost universal conviction of religious leaders, with the most notable exception of a few spokesmen of the Southern Baptist Convention who are greatly influenced by their commitment to Israel based on eschatological, or final days, theology. . .

What about America's world standing if we don't go to war after such a great deployment of military forces in the region? The heartfelt sympathy and friendship offered to America after the 9/11 attacks, even from formerly antagonistic regimes, has been largely dissipated; increasingly unilateral and domineering policies have brought international trust in our country to its lowest level in memory. American stature will surely decline further if we launch a war in clear defiance of the United Nations. But to use the presence and threat of our military power to force Iraq's compliance with all United Nations resolutions -- with war as a final option -- will enhance our status as a champion of peace and justice.

—President Jimmy Carter
In this Sunday editorial the 39th President of the United States Jimmy Carter made a remarkable entrée into the public debate. It was remarkable for two reasons: one, the clear and very public nature of his opposition to a current foreign policy debate, and two, he so clearly identifies himself as religiously motivated in his participation. Both of these are unusual in American politics. Generally, former presidents do not weigh in on important policy decisions, to do so is seen as a violation of the important principles of the Constitutional peaceful transition of power and the limited power of the chief executive, especially after his term ends. To be clear, these principles do not mean that former president cannot be involved in public life. Indeed President Carter has done that with great zeal, promoting peace, democracy, and development around the world through the work of his Carter Center based in Atlanta, Georgia, and through his work with Habitat for Humanity, building houses for the poor. But taking such a strong position on a domestic policy dispute is clearly out of the normal. In the complicated balancing act that America is always engaging between freedom of and freedom from religion—especially as it relates to state power, it is unusual for a president to identify his motives so directly as originating from his faith. In this context it is particularly striking that in this editorial, the former president first identifies as a Christian and secondly as the president. He does not simply modify president with Christian; rather he is a Christian and a president. This is not surprising given Carter’s longstanding religious commitment. It is unusual, however, in American political rhetoric, where we certainly expect our presidents to be Christians, but we may
be quite hesitant to have them first primarily identify as a Christian, especially on issues of state-sponsored violence.

Carter’s editorial in the New York Times, just 10 days before the commencement of the war is but one example of the remarkably ubiquitous religious discourse and claims making in the war over Iraq. In the debate before the war in Iraq, advocates spoke in rather surprisingly strong religious terms. This frank religiousness in the public debate occurred across both supporters and critics of the war plans and throughout the duration of the (relatively) long public debate. And, as the above excerpts from Carter’s op-ed demonstrate, religious opponents especially engaged in unambiguously nonreligious discourse about the possibilities of the war. Carter engaged both religious and distinctly secular reasons to argue against the war. In the final paragraph quoted above, Carter wonders what a war with Iraq will mean for America’s standing in the world, particularly as a champion of peace and justice. While he is concerned with moral standing particularly, this is not uniquely a religious concern. Indeed, being concerned about backing away from a fight is more of a concern over security and military power than a purely moral consideration. Carter argues that doing the right thing can compensate for what otherwise might be seen as a lack of conviction to finish what the country has started with its military buildup.

What can we learn from this remarkable mix of religious and secular argumentation by religious actors in this moment from American public life? Religious advocates contributed particular religious moral concerns to the debate. During the public debate over the Iraq war religion contributed rather explicitly religious discourse
and much secular discourse and reasoning as well. But there is a central difference between the amount of secular discourse used by opposing sides in this debate. War supporters used less secular discourse than war opponents. The question is why? This chapter addresses this central question. It examines what contextual, identity, and strategic factors lead to the use of unambiguously religious reasons for claims about the war. I find that the social and political context primarily explains the particularly religious tenor of these actors. The socio-historical context of a post-September 11 world, as well as a discursive field opened by the president’s religious laden discourse, made religion more salient and legitimate in the public discussion. In this context, activists against the war believed that speaking in both religious and secular registers offered them opportunities to gain rhetorical traction in a debate they were otherwise losing. Additionally, advocates’ sense of identity and their expertise influenced how they participated in the debate.

This chapter begins with describing how both war supporters and opponents tended to use religious discourse and how religious opponents were much more likely to supplement their religious argumentation with secular rationales as well. I explain this pattern by understanding the particular context of the post 9/11 moment, with a particular focus on the discursive cues established by President Bush. The discursive context was so open and friendly to religious discourse that my interviews with secular advocates on the war reveal that they wished to use religious language and legitimacy to help make their claims against the war. I next explain why secular discourse was so much more likely to be used by war opponents than war supporters. First, the pressure
of losing the public debate encouraged many war opponents to maximize their tactics, including varying their discursive tactics by engaging more secular discourse. War supporters face no similar pressure and therefore did not change their discourse. Next, advocates sense of identity influenced how they contributed to the discussion. To the degree that advocates against the war understood themselves as having a prophetic role to play in the debate, offering Biblical concerns for peace and justice to a morally thin public discussion, they were more likely to engage in both secular and religious discourse.

Using Religious and Secular Repertoires

My analysis of the pre-war debate finds an important empirical mixing of religious and secular discourse throughout the debate. This is distinct from much of the research (described in chapter one), which tends to typify religious participation in public debate as either religious or “secularized.” In contrast, I have very little evidence of purely religious or secular argumentation in my analysis of the public statements of religious advocates before the war. Rather, these advocates tended to alternate between religious and secular discourse regularly. There is a difference, however, between the amount of religious versus nonreligious discourse between war supporters and war critics. Religious supporters, while occasionally mixing religious and secular reasons, on the whole are much more likely to feature and focus on religious reasons in explaining their positions on the war. Religious opponents of the war, on the other hand, are far more likely to have a greater balance of religious and secular discourse.
We have therefore a general widespread usage of religious argumentation and secular reasoning in the debate, along with a distinct pattern of more usage of secular discourse by Christian war opponents. This section of the chapter describes this particular pattern.

Supporters’ Use of Principally Religious Discourse

Religious supporters of the war spoke in mostly religious terms. This was certainly true of George Weigel, Deal Hudson, Michael Novak and Chuck Colson all of whom wrote extensively and nearly exclusively about the possible conflict in just war terms. Writing in January of 2003, Weigel clarifies the value of just war thinking to the broader public.

. . . whatever its psychological, spiritual, or intellectual origins, moral muteness in wartime is a form of moral judgment—a deficient and dangerous form of moral judgment. That is why the venerable just war tradition—a form of moral reasoning that traces its origins to St. Augustine in fifth-century North Africa—is such an important public resource. [italics in original]

Weigel goes on in this rather lengthy piece in the ecumenical journal First Things to elaborate the value of just war thinking compared to those who might think war lies outside of the realm of moral reasoning and inquiry and then makes his just war case himself. He does not stray outside the realm of religious reasoning in the just war tradition. This type of discourse was common among other war supporters. Deal Hudson and Michael Novak displayed similar rhetorical discipline in sticking primarily to religious reasons.

But other war supporters were not quite so limited in their religious reasoning, straying beyond of religious rhetoric to buttress their principally religious arguments.
The so-called Land Letter, expressing support for the war and released in October, 2002, primarily engages religious discourse in articulating seven just war principles that would justify the debated war. Just as soon as Land (and his co-authors) wrap up their discussion of proportionality (as the letter explains: “Does the good gained by resort to armed conflict justify the cost of lives lost and bodies maimed?”) they slip into a more security and safety concerned discourse of containment in the letter’s next paragraph.

How different and how much safer would the history of the twentieth century have been had the allies confronted Hitler when he illegally reoccupied the Rhineland in 1936 in clear violation of Germany’s treaty agreements?

This is a subtle but important discursive shift that demonstrates that even in a letter that is heavy on religious discourse of just war theory, nonreligious discourse is used as well. Appeasement of evil dictators’ ambition only leads to great troubles and suffering. The lesson for leaders today is clear to Land: if you wish to avoid greater trouble, you need to engage and destroy that evil. Land is a veteran of many public debates in the nation and he is also clearly comfortable addressing secular concerns that connect with religious discourse. Of all my interview respondents he is clearly the most veteran and experienced in terms of appearances on national news outlets. On these programs, he needs to talk in secular as well as religious discourse.

Chuck Colson of the Prison Fellowship wrote primarily in religious terms, while also engaging some secular reasoning in a December 9, 2002 article in Christianity Today titled “Just War in Iraq: Sometimes Going to War is the Charitable Thing to Do.” Describing how he and several (unnamed) religious leaders briefed Secretary of Defense
Donald Rumsfeld on just war doctrine at the beginning of the war in Afghanistan, Colson relates how he raised the single “discordant question.”

How would the administration justify a preemptive strike on Iraq?” Without hesitation, Rumsfeld cited the precedent of Israel’s attack on an Iraqi nuclear plant in 1981.

One year later Colson asserts that the question remains of concern, particularly to Christians who are the “heirs of the just-war tradition formulated by Augustine 1,600 years ago.” Historically the doctrine has considered just cause to be a response to an attack, but Colson claims that the threat of terrorism has changed the rules. Indeed, Colson argued the church’s “first” negative response on the question reflected too narrow an understanding of just war.

Our attitudes may be unduly influenced by Cold War memories. For four decades, the world was kept in relative peace—at least from nuclear holocaust—by nuclear checkmate. The West and the U.S.S.R. embraced the policy of Mutual Assured Destruction, in which both sides targeted the other’s cities. Neither side dared attack, fearing a hugely destructive retaliatory strike; with civilians deliberately targeted, preemption was unthinkable.

But this was not the case before the Cold War. Proponents of "anticipatory self-defense" frequently cite a famous precedent of the British attacking across Niagara to prevent an invasion by Irish revolutionaries in Canada. And no less a Christian eminence than Sir Thomas More wrote, "If any foreign prince takes up arms and prepares to invade their land, they immediately attack him in full force outside their own borders."

By establishing and criticizing the church’s “first” response, he tries to establish his own position as the consequence of further thought and reflection. This reflection is both theological and practical. There are the tools of the just war tradition and there is the reality of the nature of the threat in the world. The insights of just war must
necessarily adapt to the new reality of terrorism and the return to pre-Cold War vulnerability to unprovoked attacks.

Similarly, the Institute of Religion and Democracy, the critic of Mainline Church witness, would supplement their primarily religion-based criticisms of church advocates against the war with an occasional secular criticism that would demonstrate how out-of-touch these advocates were with both the public at large and their congregation members specifically. In a December 2002 critique of recent religious anti-war efforts including a recent full page advertisement in the New York Times (described in chapter 3) and a December 10 rally at the United Nations, which resulted in approximately 100 arrests for civil disobedience, Mark Tooley characterized the movement as out of touch.

The organizer of the civil disobedience was retired Methodist pastor James Lawson, another once prominent 1960’s era activist and well known civil rights leader. These grey heads, who think they are still marching against Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, do not exactly put the shine of freshness and youth on the modern anti-war movement. . . Culturally, religiously, or politically there is little that connects these religious left activists to most American church members or to the current century for that matter.

Tooley’s digs on the “grey heads” leading the religious protests is a rhetorical device that supplements his critique of their theology and lack appreciation of the problem of the evil of Saddam Hussein earlier in the piece. By characterizing them as old leftovers from the Vietnam era, he intends to place them on the wrong end of a cultural and political divide that further distinguishes them from the faithful and mainstream American Christians he addresses. Not only are these religious opponents wrong on their theology on the war, they are also not to be trusted because they are also
politically and culturally out of touch. They see the world fundamentally differently than mainstream Christianity. Whether or not this is true, my analysis does indicate that they used more secular repertoires in their public debate with war supporters. It is to this mixed usage that we now turn.

Opponents’ Mix of Religious and Secular Discursive Repertoires

In an early letter in the public debate, dated August 29, 2002, the National Council of Churches released a public statement calling for a stop to the rush to war. Their letter is fairly balanced between religious and nonreligious reasoning. On the one hand, they open the letter with expressing concern that restraint will better serve both Iraqis and international respect for law. They are concerned about these legal ramifications and their possible impact on democracy. In the second paragraph of their statement, they write.

Although both the U.S. and U.K. governments have claimed that they have evidence that Saddam Hussein is building up weapons of mass destruction, they have so far refused to make that evidence public. This undermines democratic government by depriving the U.S. Congress and the U.K. Parliament of the ability to make a considered judgment regarding the justification for war. Furthermore, the United Nations Charter does not permit states to engage in pre-emptive war.

In this vein of argumentation, the church leaders speak more in the voice of concerned public citizens, worried about the quality of democracy and following our obligations under the secular legal system, both domestically and internationally. To hear them speak from a position of their religious authority one need only skip down two paragraphs to the fourth (and final) paragraph.
As Christians, we are concerned by the likely human costs of war with Iraq, particularly for civilians. We are unconvinced that the gain for humanity would be proportionate to the loss. Neither are we convinced that it has been publicly demonstrated that all reasonable alternative means of containing Iraq’s development of weapons of mass destruction have been exhausted. We call upon our governments to pursue these diplomatic means in active cooperation with the United Nations and to stop the apparent rush to war. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

Identifying as Christians, the religious clergy engage both humanitarian concerns and just war concerns (proportionality and using all reasonable alternatives before ending on a Christian imperative articulated by Jesus himself, to be peacemakers, as a central component of what it means to be a child of God.

On August 30, 2002, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson wrote that he was opposed to the United States seeking the overthrow of Hussein because

Morally, I oppose it because I know a war with Iraq will have great consequences for the people of Iraq, who have already suffered through years of war and economic sanctions. I do not believe such a war can be justified under the historic principles of "just war." Further, I believe it is detrimental to U.S. interests to take unilateral military action against Iraq when there is already strong international support for weapons inspections, and when it is apparent that most other world governments oppose military action. I also believe that U.S. military action at this time will further destabilize the region.

Here again, we see a mixing of religious and nonreligious discourse. Hanson begins with religious discourse, but quickly changes to interests discourse and concerns about regional political stability before the paragraph ends. Later in the piece Bishop Hanson argues that his church (the ELCA) has begun processes encouraging its members to engage in moral deliberation on issues of public concern. Here we see Hanson’s style.
of doing precisely that, a style in which Christian concern for suffering innocents and the principles of just war thought align easily and comfortably with what might otherwise be called the “real” interests of national interests and international security and balance of power.

In his New Year’s address given on January 13, 2003, Pope John Paul II admonished the world to say “NO TO WAR” (all capitals in the original Vatican transcript.) He grounded his opposition to war in just war terms, though specifically grounded them in the language of international law.

As the Charter of the United Nations Organization and international law itself remind us, war cannot be decided upon, even when it is a matter of ensuring the common good, except as the very last option and in accordance with very strict conditions, without ignoring the consequences for the civilian population both during and after the military operations.

In the Pope’s reasoning, the contribution of religion, international law, and the UN Charter all pointed in the same direction on the issue of war with Iraq. All three of these institutions expressed positions of extreme caution on the issue a preemptive war with Iraq. By way of contrast, The USCCB’s president Wilton B. Gregory, argued exclusively in just war terms against the war possibility in a letter to President Bush dated September 26, 2002.

At times arguments were made by war opponents primarily in secular terms, something that never occurred with war supporters. In the “Religious Leaders’ Plan”

---

40 Strictly speaking, the Pope is obviously not an American religious advocate. I include his statement here, nevertheless, because his advocacy was of consequence to the American debate.
(discussed in Chapter 3), Christian advocates speak in a nearly completely secular voice. The problem is set up primarily as a security threat. The document states, “The potential nexus between weapons of mass destruction and terrorism is the leading security issue in the world today.” But there is a moral dimension to the issue, even if it is not primarily a religiously understood one. The writers continue, “This is the moral dilemma: a decision between the terrible nature of that threat and the terrible nature of war as a solution.” The letter goes on the elaborate its six parts (described in chapter three), none of which are religious. In conclusion the document’s last short paragraph begins.

It is five minutes before midnight, as Martin Luther King Jr. might have put it. Unless an alternative to war is found, a military conflagration soon will be unleashed. A morally rooted and pragmatically minded initiative, broadly supported by people of faith and people of good will, might help to achieve a historic breakthrough and set a precedent for decisive and effective international action in the many crises we face in the post-September 11 world.

In this conclusion is a rich and quick religious allusion. The phrase “five minutes to midnight” is an allusion to a King speech given June 11, 1967 in which King after having received a life-threatening phone call around midnight could not return to bed. Watching his young daughter sleep, he realized he and his family needed to rely more fully on “that power which can make a way out of no way.” Religion had to be real for him and he had to know God for himself. He prayed for strength and courage in the face of daunting challenges. And King reported that God would never leave him alone and would give him courage in his work. In making this reference, Wallis, Chane and the other “religious leaders” are rooting their current plan in the biblical tradition of peace.
and justice work generally and symbolically associating themselves with the work of
King specifically. Although the moral, religious impulse behind the plan may not be
obvious, it is there, in its roots. Yet it is primarily a pragmatic plan, hoping to alleviate
the real dangers of Hussein in Iraq and avoid the moral conflagration of war.
Additionally, they believe their plan will be effective and useful in the broader war on
terror.

Finally, at times, religious opponents of the war used only secular discourse in
their arguments. In a November 15, 2002 communication to President Bush, the Friends
Committee on National Legislation wrote a public letter commending the President for
his “wisdom and leadership” in involving the United Nations in pressuring the Iraqi
government to comply with disarmament via the passage of Security Council Resolution
1441, which applied new pressures on Iraq towards compliance. The President is urged
to continue to apply pressure through the U.N. and to not act alone. The letter
concludes.

Today, there is substantial international unity in support of disarming Iraq
through peaceful means through the UN Security Council. This includes
strong support from Arab and Muslim governments in the region. The
moral burden and the court of world opinion are now focused on the
government of Iraq, as they should be, and the UN Security Council is
fully engaged on the matter. You know how difficult it was to build this
unity. We implore you not to jeopardize it in an intemperate rush to war.
You have no mandate for war either at home or abroad, but you have
strong support for leading cooperative, international disarmament
efforts.

In short, the letter conveys a message that is entirely nonreligious in
argumentation. The overriding concern is with political support, both domestically and
abroad. To not continue to use the United Nations as the primary instrument of applying pressure to Iraq is to risk losing that support, which is especially important with respect to neighboring countries to Iraq. To lose the support of Arab and Muslim governments in the region is to risk destabilization and all its dreaded consequences. There is an acknowledgement of the moral burden of the task but that moral burden is largely delegated to the United Nations as the proper authority to deal with it.

Following Religious Cues from the President

As we have seen in the second chapter, the socio-historical context of a post-September 11 world made religious meanings and language more culturally resonant and politically useful. The marginal situation of massive deadly attacks on American soil necessitated theodicies that could explain this violence and give meaning to the nation’s future actions. Given the importance of religion in America and the prevalence of Christian themes and meanings in American discourse, it is not surprising that religious advocates were able to contribute to the debate in specifically religious terms.

We have also seen how President Bush’s liberal use of religious discourse contributed to a policy debate that was open to religious discourse. Here the president set discursive cues that opened the discussion to religious discourse. The president used religious language to characterize American identity and to provide some degree of divine sanction on our efforts in the war. Religious discourse helped make the argument
for the war, but it was not the principle reason for it. Following the president’s lead, many participants in the public discussion came to see religious discourse as legitimate and germane to both sides of the debate.

The media generally followed the president’s lead on both his arguments for the war and the religious cast to his language. After the war, the media received considerable criticism for being insufficiently critical of many of the administration’s claims on the war and generally deferential to their push towards war (Artz and Kamalipour 2005b; Dadge and Schechter 2006a; Dimaggio 2009b; Rutherford 2004b). Additionally, the issue of the war was thoroughly covered in the various media. In a prolonged media discussion, the media will seek out a variety of stories on the topic. Amongst the variety of stories that the media portrayed (as we have seen in the second chapter) they displayed interest in covering the religious angle. This high level of media saturation created opportunities for consideration of religious authorities as yet another perspective on the war issue.

This milieu, particularly open to religion, lets us understand why advocates on either side of the issue were able to contribute religious arguments to the public debate. Indeed, in this context, even secular peace activists were interested in

41 It is important to be clear that I do not believe that the president was making the prospective war on Iraq in some sense a “religious war.” A religious war would presumably feature religion per se, as a principal causa belli, or reason for the war, including religious identity as key feature of both our identity and the enemy’s identity. Despite some initial rhetorical mis-steps by the President, his administration was careful to not directly implicate Islam, in toto, as the enemy. Rather, there were dangerous elements of Islam implicated in the War on Terror, but the real enemy was construed as enemies of freedom. North Korea, the third leg of the Axis of Evil demonstrated that Islam itself was not the enemy.
improving their rhetorical positions by the use of religious discourse. They realized that in the atmosphere of fear and the raw hegemony of the War on Terror’s apocalyptic narration of events, their secular, counter-hegemonic narrations were difficult “sells” and that dissent, always difficult to promote in normal circumstances, was extremely problematic in the post 9/11 one. Peace activists understood that they, as such, had limited audiences for their messages. They were quite interested in the broader audiences that they assumed church advocates could attempt to persuade. In searching for persuasive discourse, many activists decided they needed to engage in religious discourse, even if it was not discourse they would otherwise use or they might not otherwise identify as religious themselves.

In my selection of interview respondents, I wanted to speak with some secular activists to have a point of comparison with my religious advocates. These activists were secular primarily because they did not speak for a religious group or constituency. Additionally, in our interviews, none of them claimed a personal religious identity or that religious reasons informed their decisions to any significant degree. What my interviews with these secular advocates affords this study is insight into how even secular advocates believed that there was strategic value in speaking on the issue to in religious terms.

From the perspective of the secular anti-war activists I interviewed, religious activists and discourse offered increased opportunities for legitimacy. Phyllis Bennis is a senior policy analyst at the Institute for Policy Studies, a progressive think tank in Washington that works at informing social movements as the principal means of doing
its work of achieving social change. I asked her about any benefits of working with religious advocates in the coalition against the war.

. . . the big advantage is credentials, credibility. . . the Christian churches, they have huge credential, huge credibility, huge influence in this country, so the Methodists traditionally have played a huge role. My co-author of my book on Afghanistan, David Wildman, is the—what’s his title? Director something for Human Rights and Racial Justice for the United Methodist Church. You can’t ask for a better credential than that. And he and I are like best friends. We’re, he’s one of the best strategic thinkers I know.

Bennis’ comments on the putative value of religious credentials are insightful into the esteem high level secular peace activists afford religious identities in the public debate even as she revealed (here and elsewhere in the interview) little patience for or appreciation of religion in general. (In this context her affirmation of a solid friendship with a religious person is possibly telling of her opinion of religious activists more generally. “Even though this guy is religious, he’s my good friend and he is strategically pretty sharp too. Who would have thought that was possible” was the subtext of her tone in this section of the interview.) Yet, at the same time, she values the religious credentials and the strategic insight that her religious friend brings to the table. Bennis pretty clearly overestimates the value of a denominational official’s imprimatur on a public issue to the average American Christian in the pews (more on this in chapter seven). But given the legitimacy difficulties of a peace advocate—arguing for peace in the time of a perceived great threat to America with its potential costs of the loss of personal credibility and presumed allegiance to the collective, the
presumed credentials and credibility of a church person remains important to her.

The principal grassroots organizing against the war was coordinated by the organization United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ), which was coordinated by Leslie Cagan, a veteran civil rights and peace activist. As we saw in chapter three, grassroots organizing both domestically and abroad mobilized significant and large-scale turnouts against the war. In our discussion, she related to me how, once the war had started, they decided to hire a religious organizer to target Christian communities to get them on board the coalition. They choose to hire a religious organizer rather than a youth or people of color organizer, even though they would have liked to improve recruitment in those areas as well. I asked her why.

We understood that should the potential sleeping giant of the religious community wake up it could be a very, very powerful moral force on a few things. One is we didn’t want to drop the morality issues here. These are not just hard political calculations. There also is a moral element to it, but also because I think there was some, you know, understanding that the right-wing religious community had become a very powerful force in our country and a powerful organizing force and there needed to be some counter to that voice. And we thought that maybe this could help be a vehicle to that.

For Cagan, as well as the rest of the perennially cash-strapped elected steering committee of UFPJ, given their limited options, it made most political sense to try to make the moral argument to and via religious communities. Given Cagan’s past involvement in anti-nuclear work in the 1980s, she knew that religious groups could be efficient movement organizers with the added bonus of having an already established audience for movement appeals and messages. She seemed puzzled by what she
characterized as organized religion’s absence from the leadership in UFPJ. If they could tap under-realized religious opposition to the war, the movement might be able to work more effectively against the war. She was keenly aware of the importance of the religious right in supporting the war and imagined that organizing a counterweight to that voice might prove politically useful.

However, it was not just secular grassroots movement organizers that recognized the importance of religious voices and discourse in the debate over Iraq. As we have seen in chapter three, religious voices played important roles in the media debate on the war via both paid advertising and in news coverage. For example, the new organization Religious Leaders for Sensible Priorities led by Robert Edgar of the National Council of Churches made specific appeals in the New York Times in December 2002 asking the president to allow Jesus to change his heart on the plans for the conflict. Religious Leaders for Sensible Priorities was an offshoot of Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities. Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities was an organization founded in the 1990s by Ben Cohen of Ben and Jerry’s ice cream fame that worked on cutting unneeded Pentagon spending which would allow for more money in the federal budget for healthcare, the environment, and education. I spoke with Gary Ferdman, the Executive Director and Membership and Development Coordinator of Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities about why they were interested in the war.

A war, besides being immoral and unnecessary and all of those other important things, would be incredibly expensive and would obviously drain resources away from the very things that we thought should be funded by the government. So it was kind of a no-brainer for us to line up quickly in opposition to the invasion of Iraq and we did.
I asked Ferdman about how they decided to work with Bob Edgar and the National Council of Churches on the “change your heart” ad.

One of the guiding principles was that we wanted to use the business leaders and military leaders model and extend that to other high profile groups and professions so you know we would have eventually probably you know if things were a little different, had Lawyers for Sensible Priorities, Doctors for Sensible Priorities or whatever, but the most obvious group to get engaged was religious leaders. So we had already started doing the outreach when the war hit, I guess is the best way to explain it.

Why was that obvious?

Because these are people who have influence every Saturday or Sunday they have a captive audience that they talk to and engage and hopefully motivate. And, and some of them could be really effective spokespeople for our issue. So, sort of natural.

Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities, like United for Peace and Justice, imagined a variety of audiences and discourse they would want to utilize in their claims making about Iraq, but decided to first go for religious voices and language. They choose them over doctors and lawyers as a status group that they would both want to appeal to and do some of the advocacy work for them. They would be good spokespeople for their cause. (Again, it is pretty clear that Ferdman overestimated American clergy’s willingness to speak on the war from the pulpit.) They believed that religious discourse was one of the key elements of the administration’s claims for the necessity of the war and that they needed to have expertise in countering it. If doctors or lawyers could have provided useful expertise on the issue, they would have tapped them before clergy. But only religious clergy, experts in issues of theology and policy, provided them with the authority to counter Bush’s religiously inflected claims.
But how did these secular advocates get their messages into the media? I was continually told by my respondents that I should speak to Trevor Fitzgibbon. Fitzgibbon, I came to understand was the public relations guy for the anti-war cause. At the time he worked for Fenton Communications, a major communication firm known for their work on liberal causes. In my interview with Fitzgibbon he repeatedly stressed the importance of being strategic in his work and that using religion was strategic. Unsure of his meaning, I asked him what it meant to be strategic in his work against the war.

Mainly that we just knew that we needed to put forward our best foot, our best face. And we wanted to get out there people who had credibility with the average American and that's why we chose to work with who we chose to work with, whether it was Joe Wilson, whether it was Ambassador Chas Freeman, or whether it was Bob Edgar from the National Council of Churches. We wanted to put forward strategic spokespersons.

Help me understand a little bit more what strategic means, what does that mean in the P.R. world or in your campaign?

Somebody who could deliver a message that would resonate with the American people, that it’s hard to box-in, you know? If you get this big leftwing, antiwar person as your spokesperson, they can be marginalized. If you get a bishop from Alabama who is critical of the war, it’s more difficult to marginalize a guy like him. If you get active duty soldiers who served in Iraq, calling for withdrawal of troops from Iraq, as I did with 60 Minutes, that’s the most strategic voice you can possibly have.

Fitzgibbon, like these other secular advocates, saw religious voices and discourse as usefully strategic in his public relations work against the war. Key to this belief was

42 A story in the Washington Post on the agency amusingly characterized David Fenton, the founder and CEO of the company as “not the poster child of liberal causes; he’s the designer, producer, and distributor of the posters” (Weeks 2007).
Fitzgibbon’s read of religious authorities as credible and difficult to marginalize because they had disinterested credibility. They could weigh in on the issues and not have obvious reasons that the public might find as discrediting reasons for why they might be taking these positions. They, unlike many advocates for peace, could articulate a message that had the potential to resonate with the American public.

To be certain, given the very real difficulties of legitimacy faced by religious advocates, particularly those against the war, these secular advocates may have had overly optimistic assessments of the power and legitimacy of religious advocates. Edgar, as but just one example, was certainly a very polarizing figure even within the National Council of Churches’ own constituency, to say nothing of churches that were not part of the Council, and was not universally supported in his efforts against the war. But these insights are meaningful and helpful nonetheless. They reveal the degree to which explicitly religious discourse was part of the debate over the Iraq War. Religious discourse offered opportunities to directly engage the rhetoric of the President with articulate, credible voices to either support or critique his plans for Iraq.

This is particularly interesting and remarkable given a general tendency towards the use of discourse in coalitions, which can flatten out much linguistic particulars instead offering general discourse that can appeal across the various groups within those coalitions. In either the legislative lobbying or the social movements against the war, the nature of coalitions could have tended towards a filtering of religious (or other particular discourse) from the main statements of the coalitions. I first gained insight
into this phenomenon from Gerald Powers of the USCCB when he informed me about this quandary of coalitions in ecumenical work.

There is an assumption sometimes that the most effective policy work is interfaith and ecumenical, and that’s true to the extent that the more entities that you have working together, obviously on Washington policy, the more impact you can have. But it’s not true in the sense of if you think that common action or the common statement, the common statement on an issue isn’t always as good as coordinated complementary action by individual groups and individual denominations. . . And the reason for that is when we are trying to mobilize the Catholic community, we’re going to quote the Pope, [when] we are going to Capitol Hill. We’re going to quote the Pope on Iraq, and obviously you are not going to be able to do that in an ecumenical statement. The ecumenical statements are always the least common denominator; nobody gets to quote their strength. So when you get all the educational materials on the Iraq war, you want to quote the Pope, you want to quote your own statements. And quoting some ecumenical document is not going to help you. That’s not the way you change minds amongst skeptical Catholics who are more inclined to support the war, so you want to go with the Pope.

As ecumenical coalitions do not allow particular religious rhetorics to be expressed, coalitions that combine secular and religious groups diminish religious expression. Coalitions come together for greater political efficacy, yet their collective work is often marked by a flattened, lowest common denominator discourse that loses much of the particular rhetorical punch that religious discourse can pack. The discourse of coalitions can lose some of its specific appeal to deeply held identities that can help people to convince others to change their mind on important issues. An effective coalition works together to focus attention on the issue and then relies on individual members to go out and rally their constituencies, using the particular discourse to appeal to those constituencies. But, as we have just seen, sometimes coalitions
appropriate language which they estimate will be helpful in making their case. Certainly this was the case during the debate over the Iraq War, where many otherwise distinctly secular advocates, following the lead of the president, countered his argument with religious language. They did this because the context of the argument was particularly amenable to religious discourse.

Winning versus Losing the Debate

In this context that valued religious discourse, how can we understand religious opponents of the war tendency to use both religious and secular reasoning while religious supporters were much more likely to use primarily religious discourse? I believe that, in this case, it is most useful to understand that using a mixed—secular and religious—a Arsenal of repertoires in discursive battles was the result of tactical flexibility of religious opponents. They were tactically flexible out of necessity. They changed tactics as their arguments struggled to influence the debate in the face of the administration’s relentless movement towards war. War supporters, on the other hand, because they were apparently on the winning side of the public debate, did not experience pressures to change their discursive tactics. They could stay with predominately religious arguments in support of the war.

On Losing and Tactical Flexibility

As time passed during the public debate, a war with Iraq became more likely. The possibility of a military engagement with Iraq began (publicly at least) with the President’s identification of the “Axis of Evil” in January of 2002. This speech identified
the three most likely next targets in the War on Terror: Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. In June of 2002, Bush gave a speech at West Point’s graduation in which he made an argument for preemption in general terms. Throughout the summer, the media and members of the administration were discussing Iraq as the most likely target. In September of 2002, a year after 9/11, the President made this position clear and appealed to the United Nations to enforce its previous resolutions regarding Iraqi disarmament. Prior to this speech, it was unknown if the administration would go through the United Nations in pressing the Iraqis to demonstrate their disarmament.

The machinations of the United States Congress (in authorizing the potential use of force against Iraq) and the United Nations (in pressing the Iraqis to re-admit weapons inspectors) occurred throughout the fall and gave some lift towards war opponents who hoped that the United Nations’ process and weapons inspections might avoid the conflict. February of 2003 marked the apex of war opponents hope that the conflict might be avoided. The global protests of February 15th were the principal cause of this optimism. But the administration’s continued press for U.N. authorization ahead of an unofficial, though widely known, mid-March deadline to begin conflict before the onset of hotter and more difficult to fight in weather in Iraq quickly dashed their hopes.

Throughout the public debate, the administration had the upper hand, in controlling its terms and in terms of winning the public argument. By focusing on weapons inspections, the administration was able to frame the debate as an imminent security concern for the country. In the nation’s insecure post-9/11 mood, this provided a very strong foundation for a case of preemptive war. People did not want to be caught
off guard again. Though polls from the time generally varied a bit in their measures of support for the war, depending on the precise wording of the questions they asked, the majority of the country generally supported the war, particularly if the effort had the approval of the United Nations (See chapter five in Jacobson 2011). In short, war opponents had their discursive work cut out for them. They could not be assured that their claims would gain a sympathetic hearing from the American public.

In our interviews, religious opponents often characterized their work as attempting to do anything that might stop the war. They saw the circumstances as extraordinary with respect to the stakes and the rules. While Christian opponents of the war were far from certain that they might actually be effective at stopping the war, they nevertheless used whatever discourse, secular or religious, they thought might possibly stop the war. Because advocates were strategic and the larger context of the debate welcomed religious discourse, they choose to be discursively flexible, hoping that some tactic would pay off and help change the debate’s outcome.

Jean Stokan’s (who worked for Pax Christi USA) and her colleagues were trying desperately to stop the country’s momentum toward war.

My memory is trying to use every millisecond to stop this war. Coming up with strategies and ideas and pursuing them with all the boldness possible. Pope John Paul was saying great stuff about this is not a just war, but it was not getting heard in the way we thought mattered in the U.S.

She and her colleagues began talks with the Secretary General’s assistant secretary to try and get the Pope invited to the United Nations so he could speak against the war there. They were hoping that might make a difference. They went to Europe on
the National Council of Churches’ trips to the key voting members of the Security Council. Stokan’s account reveals her sense of desperation in trying to stop the war. In the interview, her face was still wrenched as she related these details to me over seven years later. By the end of her tale of all of their efforts she was emotionally worked up and disappointed all over again. Her comments reveal a keen sense of trying to leverage whatever tactics they could for any political purchase possible to stop the conflict.

Stokan’s colleague in the Catholic peace movement, Marie Denis of the Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns similarly characterized their work as doing everything possible to stop the war.

We were involved in all of the efforts, all of the ecumenical efforts. . . We were tying that to our Pax Christi International connections so we had, I mean all of the Pax Christi movements in European countries were also doing everything they could think of. . . It was almost like trying to get the voices loud enough that the White House might hear. But there was no dialogue, there was no real direct engagement with the administration.

Dialogue with the White House was not the ultimate goal of the war opponents. They wanted dialogue so that they might have had the chance to stop them in their war-making plans. They were frustrated by the lack of engagement with the administration. They had hoped to have a chance to convince their hearts and minds that the war plans were a bad idea. But, the White House was not interested in conversing with them. Opponents were responding to the administration’s push towards war with arguments they thought might be persuasive, either religious or secular, but frustratingly, the administration was not responding to them, even when they were successful in mobilizing the largest protests the world had ever seen. Trying to counter the White
House meant engaging their argument, much of which was secular. Religious advocates used secular arguments in response.

At the United Nations, Jack Patterson of the Quaker United Nations, recalled the optimism and idealism that he and his compatriots, John Rempel, liaison of the Mennonite Central Committee to the United Nations, and Jim Paul of the Global Policy Forum, a New York City-based think tank specializing in international policy, might just be able to stop the war at the U.N.

We were concerned about how do we stop this from happening? And we did strategize about it, I don’t know that we had what I think could be charitably called long-term strategies, I mean our goal was certainly how do we avert this war that seems to be so increasingly likely regardless of what we do.

To outsiders and those not convinced of the possible power of negotiations at the United Nations, these hopes would probably be considered naïve at best and delusional at worst. They do reveal, however, the tendency among war opponents to use whatever tactical means that might make it possible to try to avert the war.

Finally, Peter Elms, of the American Friends Service Committee, reflected on how the type of language he used in his work varies depending on their “target” as they tried to be strategic in stopping the war, even after it started.

And maybe it has to do with the targets that we were choosing to try and influence because I think if you look back at the Civil Rights Movement, it was organized through the churches and that was to be expected and suddenly, we sort of lead up to the war, we focused on the UN more because that was where the opportunity was to stop an invasion. Since then, we focus a lot on Congress and the language of Congress is very institutional. You lose the principled stuff because automatically if you’re dealing with legislators or elected officials, you’re in the game of compromise and it’s the language of politics which is always soft and it’s
always a small step at a time, versus the strength of principles. Which people often just discount as unrealistic.

For Lems, religious language is the language of principles and it was a strength that he could use when appropriate. While religious discourse was often useful, as in the Civil Rights Movement or at the United Nations, there were other times, such as in Congress, where it would not work. As the debate over Iraq only briefly occurred in Congress before the war started, this did not limit the use of religious language much in the public discussion then. Lems’ comments help us see two important things about how war opponents advocated. One, they tried to speak to a variety of audiences to whomever might be able to stop the war. Two, they used difficult discourses for different audiences. In the context of overall losing the public arguments, war opponents spoke to a variety of audiences and accordingly used both secular and religious discourse in so doing.

In the context of losing the public debate over the war, the importance of speaking in different manners was crucial because war opponents were simply trying to convince anyone possible to be against the war. They spoke in ways that might appeal to any number of audiences, both secular and religious. War opponents also generally saw themselves as part of the broader movement against the war, which included many elements, from the grassroots anti-war mobilizations, to various artist groups against the war. These other groups were mostly secular and consequently, in identifying with this broad movement, many religious advocates adopted some secular language in the hope that their message might resonate with a secular audience as well. Elements of the
anti-war movement were generally extremely aware of the risks and problems of alienating Americans in their positions. This is why Win Without War was founded in the fall of 2002. As David Cortright, one of its original organizers realized, these organizers had “the willingness to frame a message in a more kind of mainstream American, even patriotic, context.” Coming across as patriotic is a way to be seen as not alien from the normal concerns of Americans when it comes to war (Coy, Woehrle, and Maney 2008b).

In a similar fashion, religious advocates did not want to be alienating to their potential audiences. In the post 9-11 context of greater insecurity over the potential threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction, religious voices against the war could easily dismissed as naïve and irrelevant to the new dangers the country faced. In order to more fully address this possibility of alienating themselves from their audiences, Christian advocates against the war hastened to bring some degree of secular argumentation to their case as a way to increase their legitimacy in the public debate.

In addition to being concerned about being in touch with America on security concerns, some of them were particularly concerned that in addition to their strong opposition to the war, some were also concerned that in addition to this strong “no” on the war, they needed to offer a realistic and practical alternative to war. Jim Wallis, the primary drafter of the church leaders’ plan discussed in Chapter 3, described his concern.

Sometimes on the pacifist side, or anti-war side, there’s no real attention to what our viable political alternative is. It just, we’re against this because we’re Christians or good Jews or Buddhists or whatever, but it’s, Jesus was against this, too, but there’s no sense of, I was aiming at an alternative for the British parliament. Because they hadn’t yet voted on...
this. They had to vote on the war. See, we didn’t have to. They had to vote up or down. And they could have voted down and then Blair couldn’t have gone to war. He needed their approval.

To speak viably to politicians (in England or in the United States), Wallis believed that you had to engage realistic political alternatives, otherwise they will not take you seriously. If you want to have a chance at political impact, there are times when you need to speak in particularly secular terms. I believe that this was generally the tendency of war opponents who were desperately trying to get any rhetorical traction they could muster and were addressing multiple audiences in their efforts. They wanted to have potential of political impact with these audiences and they used secular as well as religious discourse in order to do so.

On Winning the Debate and Not Changing Tactics

Religious proponents of the war were not similarly motivated to change discursive tactics. The momentum of the public debate was on their side and they revealed no similar perceived need to be strategic and active in the way that war opponents were. Proponents did not have to choose to try to influence events in the same way that opponents had to. The unfolding of events and the maneuvering of the administration favored those who supported the war. Proponents participated in the debate, but they did not feel compelled to try novel strategies as the opponents did.

War supporters tended to understand their role in this public debate very differently than war opponents did. In being voices on the hegemonic side of the debate (in support of the war-making power of the state) they played a narrow, more clearly
defined role. The argument in favor of the war was largely carrying the day and accordingly, these advocates could understand their roles as religious participants in a very circumscribed manner. This is how George Weigel, perhaps the most widely cited religious advocate in favor of the war characterized his involvement in the discussion.

So, I was by my reckoning a decidedly minor player in all of this. And I understand my role primarily as one of in the first instance, making clear what seemed to me the authentic Catholic Just War Tradition and secondly, trying to clarify and challenge, when necessary, distortions of that as they were coming out of other public intellectuals or out of other elements of the church.

Weigel’s understanding of the authentic Catholic Just War tradition was firmly contested by the public voices of the Catholic Church. Weigel thought he was offering a strong and necessary dose of Christian realism to counter the political naivety and theological laxity that he saw in Catholic voices against the war. (Of course, those Catholic voices tended to view Weigel’s view on just war to be a distortion of that tradition rather than an extension of it to the current condition.) Relative to the larger public discussion in the United States, however, Weigel’s arguments were consistent with the administration’s arguments on the war. In the context of that larger argument winning the war, there were no tactical pressures on him to change his discourse and use secular reasons in clarifying his support for the war. It was enough for him to stick with his original contribution to the debate.

In our interview, Weigel took some time to clarify his relationship with the administration, particularly in reaction to some of his vocal Catholic critics who claimed he was too close to the White House.
I was in fairly regular conversation with the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See in 2002, 2003, with Ambassador Nicholson who had become a good friend and remains a good friend, despite the fantasies of people on the Common Weal blog world. I was never consulted by the White House on any of this, although I think people in the White House would read the things I was writing. I never spoke to President Bush prior to the war about any of these things. I did have conversations with middle-level people in State Defense and National Security Council, but these are my friends and I talk to my friends all the time about a variety of things.

It is difficult to determine Weigel’s precise interactions and relations to the administration on this issue. While he said he was “never consulted” by the White House, he was part of the Catholic Working Group in close communication with them, at least according to Hudson (2008). Regardless of his interactions with the White House in the context of the broader argument for the war, Weigel had a narrow brief—expertise on Catholic Just War—and little reason to change his argument. There were plenty of other voices offering secular reasons and the argument for the war was winning the day.

Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention in his vigorous support for the agenda of Bush, saw himself as supporting the noble and historically impressive work of the 43rd President. Indeed in our interview he quoted Bush’s second inaugural address at length. I asked him what his best success from the time of the public debate over Iraq.

I think the best success was to keep the argument on the question of liberating Iraq. That these people were suffering under a horrendous dictatorship and that it was, it was, to quote George Bush’s second inaugural address—I put both of his inaugural addresses as appendices to my book because I do think that both of them are going to be more appreciated as time goes by because I do think he’s going to be the Harry Truman of our time.
“America’s vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one. From the day of our founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, dignity and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of heaven and earth. Across the generations, we have proclaimed the imperative of self-government because no one is fit to be a master and no one deserves to be a slave. Advancing these ideals is the mission that created our nation. It is the honorable achievement of our fathers. Now it is the urgent requirement of our nation’s security and the calling of our time.”

Casting his own presidency in terms of the triumph of the nation as the defender of liberty and human dignity for the world, Bush narrates a heroic role both for himself and America. This is a characterization and narration that Land, given his own self-identification as an American Exceptionalist, can fully back and use his public advocacy to support. Indeed, he has memorized a full paragraph (at least) of the speech! He offers his expertise on a Protestant take \(^{43}\) on Just War Theory in support of the larger argument for the war. Again, as that argument seems to be winning the public discussion, he faces little to no pressure to change his discursive tactics. Similarly, as we have seen in his offering of his opinion that the war was justified to Donald Rumsfeld, Colson also clearly understood himself supporting the administration’s war effort. He had a similarly narrow brief with respect to the larger argument for the war and had little reason to change his discursive tactics given that he was on the winning side of the public discussion.

\(^{43}\) I am not claiming that the manner in which just war theory was used or explained by Land was particularly Protestant, any more than Weigel’s use or explanation was particularly Catholic. My intention here is to differentiate between Land and Weigel as public advocates for Protestants and Catholics. Any substantive difference, by my reading, in articulating their position is negligible.
Identity and Contributions

What else can we learn from the religious advocates themselves? Why did they speak up on this issue and engage it publicly in the distinct manner of either war opponents or supporters. If we are to consider social actors’ agency—that is, their ability to choose to act in ways that are not merely the consequence of their social context and their political opportunities—we must certainly also consider their perceptions and understandings of their opportunities for action, even given the constraints of social, cultural, and political contexts. Advocates have some degree of choice relative to their strategic goals of either supporting or protesting the war and their tactical decisions of how to do so. Their perceptions and understanding of the possible war inform their choice of tactics. It is important therefore to listen to the voices of those in the debate to see how they understood their identity as public advocates and how this influenced their tactical decisions.

Identity matters because advocates speak on issues which are close to their sense of who they are and what they offer expertise on. My respondents often expressed a keen sense that they had something important to offer on the debate that was otherwise missing, a moral perspective or consideration that was otherwise being excluded. Religious opponents saw themselves as offering salt and light, grounded in a Christian concern for issues of peace and justice, to an otherwise dangerously misguided public discussion. This was grounded in a sense of being Biblically prophetic—adding the tradition’s concerns for peace and justice to a public debate that needed these considerations. Religious proponents saw themselves as offering a sobering dose of
Christian realism—affirming the danger of evil in the world and the need to arrest it—to a religious debate they were concerned was being dominated by naïve and unpatriotic voices.

We Add a Moral Perspective—War Opponents

Sean Casey, Christian ethicist at Wesley Seminary and the initiator of the petition of Christian ethicists against the war described in Chapter 2, related to me how he decided he needed to take a more public prophetic stance, even though as an assistant professor (without the protections of tenure) such a public maneuver might be risky for his vocational future.

So I woke up and said, “Wow there has been no real public debate on the moral side!” By summer 2002, there was not a real robust moral public discussion about should we invade in Iraq or not. I mean there were rumblings and it was fragmentary...you know John Courtney Murray, the great Catholic Theologian said that one of the functions of the just war theory is to structure a public debate. And the Bush administration clearly was not going to have a structured public moral debate, they were just going to come down from the mountain and the phrase that Bush always used was “our cause is just,” as if it were self-evident about the rest of the moral case. So, I was frustrated it seemed to me that the public discourse was being short-circuited and we were going directly from 9/11 to Iraq in terms of politics, but without the kind of moral deliberation.

Now as an Assistant Professor one doesn’t exactly possess a lot of credibility to structure that public debate, you can’t...you just obviously can’t do that, but I remember quite vividly a few weeks before the statement was published, a light bulb went off in my head, “Oh my God we’re going to go to war.” Now one of the things that ethicists do is they often look back at the Vietnam War and see where we are different on the Vietnam War. And there is this kind of unofficial score card about who got it right and who got it wrong, and I thought, “well if nothing else I want to be on the card that gets it right.”
Casey was so convinced that he had something to offer the public debate, as a Christian ethicist, that he gathered up the support of his fellow ethicists and started his petition, which got considerable media attention and the broad support of his colleagues. As a Christian ethicist he saw it as part of his social obligations to try to do something to help inform a public discussion about the war, if for no other reason to be on the right side of history. In this case Casey’s institutional identity as an assistant professor did not offer him much political cover but he decided to do it anyway. As a Christian ethicist, this lead to his participation primarily in religious terms; his statement “As Christian ethicists we share a common moral presumption against a preemptive war on Iraq by the United States” consisted primarily of an appeal to a religious identity, devoid of specifics.

Bishop Melvin Talbert of the United Methodist Church emphasized the importance of being prophetic, and understood himself as part of a long tradition of prophetic church witness, both collective and individual. This is why he was active before the war started. This is how he explained what he meant by being prophetic.

Prophetic leadership doesn’t mean simply saying the right thing from up here. Prophetic leadership is what, as a theologian once said, it is entering into the struggles of a suffering humanity and from the vantage point of those who are suffering, there to speak a word for God. That’s what it means to be prophetic. So, it means that you don’t speak just from here, you speak by entering into the struggle and that’s what I have been able to do. I didn’t just get engaged, I didn’t just get up from the pulpit and say you shouldn’t go to war. I went to Iraq and that was risky business, believe me, it was risky business

Talbert saw himself as a prophetic leader, entering into the struggles of humanity to “speak a word for God” and acted accordingly by being bold in his advocacy.
against the war. He went on a trip to Iraq as a way of entering the lives of those 
suffering and speaking a word for God among them. Later, he demonstrated willingness 
to speak to an American audience in the unusual format of a television advertisement 
against the war with comedienne Janeane Garofalo. While in the ad, Talbert clearly 
spoke in a mixture of religious and secular terms. As we have seen in chapter 3, he said, 
in response to Garofalo’s question if it was okay for the United States to invade a 
country that’s “done nothing to us?”

   No nation under God has that right. It violates international law, it 
violates God’s law and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Iraq hasn't wronged 
us. War will only create more terrorists and a more dangerous world for 
our children.

   Talbert rhetorically mixes God’s law, the teachings of Jesus Christ with 
international law, more terrorists, and increasing danger in the world in these quick 3 
sentences. Entering into the struggles of humanity allows him to speak for God in a 
variety of discourses, both secular and religious.

   Bridget Moix of the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) told me 
how she understands FCNL’s role in the long term making of policy and bringing their 
moral vision to life in the rough and tumble world of politics.

   So having the lobbying and the work, like specific things like a packet that 
goes to new members or individual lobby visits, helped us build the core 
in congress who would begin voting against, speaking out against, 
eventually Barbara Lee became our champion for what was later on, after 
the war unraveled, was the no permanent bases legislation, which 
passed, and had, and then helped lay the groundwork for absolute full 
withdrawal. And so we failed at preventing the war but that work, you 
know, it’s a long-term process—you don’t lobby, you don’t send one 
packet and suddenly twenty members vote no. You don’t do one visit and 
suddenly you’ve changed someone’s mind but slowly you lay out the
position and the reasons behind it and the moral implications for the religious community, the moral voice is important, [it is] the currency. . . that they offer to Congress. And you lay that out and then you work steady, steady, steady to help people come along and it takes years of this.

According to Moix, religion makes its moral voice heard and has impact in terms of policy in the long term. Long term engagement and work are the way that she understands moral contributions taking root. That’s the way moral advocacy works in the legislative process in Washington and that is what FCNL does. But the legislative process needs to hear both moral (in this case religious) and practical reasons for acting. If lobbying groups want to exercise any degree of influence on this process, they must season their appeals to moral reason with plenty of practical (in this case understood as secular) reasons as well. FCNL, Network, and the Iraq Policy Working Group had clear mixes of religious and secular argumentation in their positions.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops had a very different approach in its advocacy. It did not participate in travel to Iraq, but instead used its moral authority to communicate its doubts about the justness of the Iraq War in many different fora and for many different audiences, ranging from the President of the United States to the parishioners in its many pews. Gerald Powers of the USCCB was very concerned that I understand the proper role of the church in public debates. In his estimation, the most important contributions of religious groups in times of the war was to speak against the secular, realists’ assumption that morality should have nothing to do with decisions to go to war.
A major contribution that religious groups can make in these, in the Iraq debate for example is to say well actually morality does have something to do with behind us. It might not be decisive, it doesn’t mean that other political issues and security issues and military strategy and all that doesn’t also play a role, but you know morality...you have to look at the moral questions. . . And the moral questions that help you shape faith and shape the debate. I think that’s a major contribution that religious groups could make. I don’t think you should judge religious groups mainly by whether they stop the war.

So, churches do have something that they do add to the public discussion. They add their moral evaluation of the situation, which is central to their identity. However, another role of religious actors and the Catholic Bishops in particular, interacts and occasionally impedes their ability to offer strong moral guidance. In addition to their role in the political process of public policy debate, the Bishops also have a pastoral role within the Catholic Church. Because of this, Powers insisted that I would be wrong to think of churches having constituencies like any other political actor.

It’s a delicate mix of the moral and the pastoral that they have to take into account and that is one of the reasons why they are not on the mall protesting, leading the protest against the war. They are not fasting outside the White House like Mairead McGuire was, begging Cardinal McCarrick to join her, partly because it’s not their style. They’d rather be inside the White House trying to persuade them to change their position.

The Catholic Bishops’ style of discursive engagement follows from their sense of identity, particularly their dual roles as public moral witnesses and pastors for their flocks. As we have seen in chapter 3, the Bishops are relatively deferential and keep to their area of expertise in public debate, religious discourse on the morality of the war. They are not likely to venture into secular argumentation. To do so would be an overreach that might offend fellow Catholics in the military or the pews who may not
appreciate the Bishops expressing their opposition to the war in either moral or secular terms. They are not as likely to be as prophetic in the way that Talbert was.\textsuperscript{44} Next we consider the different ways that religious supporters of the war understood themselves and how that influenced their use of mostly religious discourse.

Affirming Moral Realism—War Supporters

Religious supporters of the war were frequently aghast at the moral simplicity and naivety with which they believed war opponents were not up to the task of countenancing the evil that Saddam Hussein presented to the world. They spoke clearly that they thought that Hussein’s evil needed to be acknowledged and that the United States had a responsibility to stop it. Because the issue was understood as an issue of theological import, religious war supporters spoke to the issue in religious terms.

Chuck Colson of the evangelical Prison Fellowship clearly believed that a religious, moral perspective was helpful to policy makers and that this was a particularly apt thing for Christians to offer them. Colson published several internet missives offering primers on just war theory and claiming that the Iraq conflict would be a just war. As we have seen in chapter three, Colson told Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that the war in Iraq would be just. In a different Breakpoint posting, he argued that

\textsuperscript{44} Another key factor limiting the Bishops both in terms of their own messaging and their ability to be heard on the war was the damage to their credibility and authority by the ongoing sex abuse scandals within the church.
This is one of the toughest issues our policy makers have to wrestle with. We can be thankful that they are weighing the moral questions involved. And Christians must weigh them as well. As the debate rages on, it is our task to use our biblically informed worldview and the moral reasoning that flows from it to speak to the moral issues – not just with policy-makers, but with our neighbors as well.

As Colson is speaking to the moral issues to Rumsfeld and his audience, he similarly encourages his readers to speak with their neighbors. As Christians this is necessary and good. His frequent allusions to Hitler allow no confusion about how evil Hussein is and that an understanding of the Bible’s worldview allows us to deal with evil proactively.

The IRD’s Tooley complained about the mainline church offices’ inability to see the moral stakes involved in Iraq.

They seemed completely indifferent to Saddam Hussein’s human rights abuses and were completely focused on blocking a decisive action by the U.S.

Against such moral myopia, the IRD worked to clarify the terms in which we should understand the debate. A colleague at the IRD, Alan Wisdom reminded his readers of the value of just war thinking in a fallen world.

These “just war” criteria do not yield immediate, simple answers to all the conflicts of this world. They encourage governments to pursue alternatives to war; however, they also acknowledge that sometimes armed force may be the last and only resort left. Yet war is not the ultimate solution. When evil runs so deeply through every individual and institution, the best result that can be achieved in any conflict is to curb the evil partially and temporarily, allowing space for a somewhat more just and peaceful order to grow.

In the context of this article, “Discernment Needed: WHAT MAINSTREAM CHRISTIANS KNOW AND DON’T KNOW ABOUT POSSIBLE WAR WITH IRAQ” (all capitals...
in the original), Wisdom’s admonitions about the omnipresence of evil in the world, point clearly towards the need for Christians and policymakers to engage the evil of Hussein realistically. As we have seen in the last chapter, this concern that the majority of Christian advocates against the war were not taking evil seriously was shared broadly by Christian war supporters.

Identity and theology, the Sacred and Profane

Another important difference related to identity and the differing nature of using religious and secular discourse relates to differences in general theologies between war opponents and supporters. In general—although there are some notable exceptions—war supporters were more theologically conservative, while for the most part, war opponents were more theologically progressive. Theology matters with respect to the use of religious or secular discourse because of differences in how starkly the sacred and profane are differentiated and how big of a symbolic boundary lies between them. Conservative theology imagines a stark, solid division between the sacred and profane, crossing this boundary is very difficult and mixing the two is highly problematic. More liberal theology imagines a less starkly defined, more permeable difference between the profane and sacred, and discursive slipping between the two cultural domains is common and nonproblematic. Differences in how the sacred and profane are symbolically constructed matter because they contribute to the relative ease advocates have in using either religious or secular rhetorics. Conservative theology, with its tendency towards a starkly divided symbolism of sacred and profane is less apt to be
consistent secular discourse, while liberal theology consistently lends itself to a mix of religious and secular discourse.

The importance of theology can most clearly be seen in the positions and words of war supporters who were often quite forthright in naming their conservative theology as a principal source of authority and legitimacy in their public participation. At the same time, war supporters were often quite critical of war supporters’ theological liberalism and how they represented a deviation from the historical Christian tradition.

My data primarily offer insight into the group’s theology via the specific theology they use in making their claims on the war and claims to authenticity of the Christian tradition that they espouse. For war supporters, this theology tended to focus (as we have seen) on the theology related to the ethical tradition of just war thinking. War supporters tended to claim they were articulating the authentic tradition and they grounded their claim as a recover of the just war tradition. Writing on December 4 of 2002, this is how George Weigel described the ancient tradition.

For more than fifteen hundred years, the venerable “just war tradition” has helped responsible Christians think through the many moral problems involved in deciding to go to war and in the conduct of war itself – and to do so in ways that recognize the distinctive realities of warfare. That this tradition “lives” in our cultural memory is demonstrated by the fact that Americans have, instinctively, been debating the future of the war against terrorism and the possible use of military force against outlaw states with weapons of mass destruction in classic just war categories:

By describing the tradition as “venerable,” Weigel characterizes the tradition and its insights as worthy of respect, honor, and esteem. It is a descriptor of particularly
religious valence. Those who use it are serious with respect to the life and death
decisions of morality, while implicitly those who do not are not morally serious. Indeed,
this was precisely the charge Weigel most often made against those who understood
the tradition as having a presumption against war. These people were corrupting the
original purpose of the tradition by not understanding it and putting it to inappropriate
use. In the same December article Weigel continued.

. . . it should be a cause for concern that many of the nation’s religious
leaders and religious intellectuals seem unfamiliar with the moral logic of
just war thinking and with what we might call the just war tradition’s
“location”.

According to Weigel, the moral logic of just war tradition, in being understood as
having a presumption against violence is wrong because this is a start the ethical
consideration with the moral means the discussion. Weigel argues that just war thinking
should begin with a consideration of the legitimate political ends under consideration,
specifically with a high concern for political order. Only after this is considered should
the means of establishing this order be addressed. The issue of location concerns who
has the moral authority to make judgments on whether a war is just or not. Weigel
believes argues that it is “primarily for statesman,” while religious leaders should solely
“clarify the moral issues at stake” rather than reach their own conclusions. There is a
distinctive spiritual gift (Weigel here uses the Latin, charism) of “political discernment
that is unique to the vocation of public service” that is, unique to politicians. He
continues.

Religious leaders (like the Jesuit superiors of the United States) who
suggest to the President of the United States that they have superior
insight into the future of U.S.-Iraqi relations (because of the Jesuits’ alumni network with Iraqis and Iraqi-expatriates) make themselves (and, far worse, the just war tradition they debase) look absurd.

The stakes involved in getting this just war theory wrong are serious, both in terms of the consequences of war and the claims made by those in ethical error are quite serious. To make these errors is to make oneself appear foolish and more importantly, the just war tradition not get the veneration it deserves. To profane the sacred tradition in this manner is particularly offensive, far worse than the liberal Jesuits presenting themselves (yet again?) as absurd.

Protestant supporters, most notably Richard Land of the Southern Baptist held just war teaching (and its proper interpretation) in similar high esteem. In the “Land Letter” of the fall of 2002, after praising President Bush for his “bold, courageous, and visionary leadership” in the opening paragraph, Land and his co-signers begin a second paragraph with, “We believe that your policies concerning the ongoing international terrorist campaign against America are both right and just.” The letter continues

Specifically, we believe that your stated policies concerning Saddam Hussein and his headlong pursuit and development of biochemical and nuclear weapons of mass destruction are prudent and fall well within the time-honored criteria of just war theory as developed by Christian theologians in the late fourth and early fifth centuries A.D.

Identifying the President’s policies as prudent clarifies that they satisfy the just war criteria. Identifying the tradition as time-honored helps establish it as both reliable and useful, in the same way that these men tend to argue orthodox Christian theology is reliable and useful in much of their other public advocacy. The sacred remains valuable across time and space and is immutable. It does not mix with the profane, for that what
be a corruption, a diminution of its purity and value. This type of profanation is most undesirable and this concern for purity also affects these advocates use of discourse more generally.

The Institute for Religion and Democracy’s principal strategy with respect to theology in the debate was to attack religious war opponents as unorthodox and dangerous. In an October 10, 2002, article pleading for discernment in the church in the “mainstream” church, Alan Wisdom said church leaders “should follow the Scriptures and the church’s traditional teachings.” By identifying these church leaders as outside of the mainstream and not following Scripture or traditional teachings, Wisdom criticizes the leaders as spiritually corrupt and thereby having invalid positions with respect to the war on Iraq. Similarly, in response to Bishop Melvin Talbert’s appearance in a television advertisement (described in Chapter 3) Mark Tooley of the IRD criticized him as liberal, outside of mainstream Christianity, and possessing dangerous views on salvation outside of Christianity. On January 27, 2003 President of the IRD, Diane Knippers wrote

. . . the Religious Left is back. There’s a possible war with Iraq to oppose. The movement has a cause around which to organize. There are buses to charter, placards to design, press releases to draft. There is a reason for full-page newspaper ads, fact-finding trips to Iraq, and Washington marches.

Later in the piece she ends with a call for a more religious offering from religious people.

We need fewer marches and more serious discussions. And most of all, we need prayer, recognizing that those prayers are the greatest gift that people of faith can offer in these perilous days.
Knippers disparages secular marches by contrasting them with serious discussions. Rather than these secular activities, what is really needed is something only religious folks can offer. The “Religious Left” as she identifies them at the introduction of this editorial, do not offer anything worthy of the danger of the days.

Information and Contributions

What advocates believed they brought to the table also impacted what they did and how they did it in the debate before the war. Religious advocates believed they had license to participate assertively and vocally in this political debate because they understood themselves as having some form of expertise to offer. Their perceived expertise afforded them legitimacy to participate in the public sphere and also gave them opportunities to add to the discussion. This expertise is in addition to their moral expertise, which was nearly universally acknowledged by my respondents. In the debate over Iraq, this expertise tended to take one of two forms: good information and reliable measures of support. In the push and pull of national politics on foreign policy debates these are relevant currencies to bring to the table. Many advocates, most often war opponents, saw themselves as offering important and otherwise lacking information to the debate. War supporters believed that they were representing the views of the majority of American Christians in the pews. In the next section of this chapter, we examine what these advocates told me about what expertise they offered the debate. First we consider information and then we consider the issue of representativeness.
Information from the Field and War Opposition

Religious groups often have networks that are international in scope. Missionary activity and outreach can connect far-flung regions of the globe in projects of mutual concern. The various Maryknoll Communities of sisters, brothers, and laypersons is one such network, which also has a Washington based office to educate the country’s leadership and public on issues of relevance to their work. Marie Denis explained what they offer to public discussion.

The Maryknoll Global Concerns office is a collaborative project of the three Maryknoll communities: the Maryknoll Priests and Brother, the Maryknoll Sisters and the Maryknoll Lay Missioners. Our focus is on educating U.S. public about the rest of the world, based on Maryknoll experience in different parts of the world and advocacy with the U.S. government, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the United Nations around foreign policy issues, international affairs that have an impact on the communities where Maryknollers work. They work in... about 40 countries in different parts of the world. . . So our work is partly one of being attentive to understanding the reality that they’re experiencing. Some of which they are very involved in and sometimes not. Maryknollers working in any part of the world may or may not be paying particular attention to the U.S. foreign policy or to the role of the U.N. but that’s our job. So our job is also one of educating Maryknollers about what will affect their communities or what is behind some of the challenge that they face. So our work is one of a lot of education and advocacy at different levels.

The various Maryknoll Communities around the globe learn much about conditions on the ground and Denis’ frequent travel helps connect her and the rest of the Washington office with that knowledge. They, in turn, use that information in their advocacy with important national and transnational institutions, which formulate policy.

Accurate and trustworthy information from the field is a valuable commodity that Christian advocates could offer to the debate. It is also data that can lead to expression
in both secular and religious discourse. On the one hand, accounts of living conditions and the suffering of people are easily and directly expressed in secular terms. With very little effort, however, normative religious terms can be used to evaluate these human conditions and build an argument for a policy position.

Other religious advocates were also convinced that good information yielded trust with their potential allies and was one of their most important contributions to the public debate and the political process. Bridget Moix of FCNL reflected on the importance of providing trusted information as part of in the Iraq Policy Working Group (the principal lobbying group against the war) given the constraints faced by lawmakers and other working group members.

In terms of the working group and how you build consensus . . . you have people who have very little time and so they’re coming and they, because of FCNL’s reputation over 65 plus years, they trust FCNL and we trust all the colleagues on certain issues, certain things, and so there’s a lot of coming in to say what should we do? And people want help, they can’t spend the time trying to do the strategizing and doing the Hill outreach and figure out what’s the approach that should be taken with the Hill and that’s something that FCNL does have people dedicated to doing.

FCNL offered to others interested in working on the Iraq issue trustworthy information relevant to both the issue and how Capitol Hill operates and it can offer these to others. FCNL claims political expertise on issues peace including nuclear nonproliferation, alternatives to conflict, and military funding. In the universe of national religious advocacy, this information and expertise are valuable commodities. FCNL offers them to both religious and secular coalition members in their legislation-
based advocacy, this type of advocacy (as we have seen discussed above), may result in a relative diminished presence for religious discourse.

Finally, religious opponents of the war, with the benefit of hindsight, liked to remind me in our talks that they offered correct information with respect to both the devastation and difficulty of the war (especially its aftermath) and with its rationale. This was in response to the administration’s claims that regime transformation would be easy in Iraq. In addition to their moral critiques of the war, Christian war opponents had elaborated a number of unintended consequences of the war ranging from destabilizing the region to the unnecessary suffering of many innocent civilians. They also were quite vocal in criticizing the administration’s claims of the threat that Saddam Hussein posed due to his alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction. This was a frequent subject of conversation in the interviews, but Joe Nangle’s comments will suffice as representative.

We did not get enough credit for seeing the futility of this war long before it started. I think the peace movement was dead on in its analysis of this terrible initiative, especially Iraq. Afghanistan? a little harder to judge. But I don’t think the peace movement has been given [credit], and I don’t mean just the Catholic peace movement, I mean just across the board, you know, those marches and I was in Washington and I went to all the marches, they were saying stuff that was absolutely dead on. Weapons of mass destruction, where? Who’s got them? We’ve got them!

To Nangle, the war opposition accurately expressed the problems with both the forecast for the ease of the war and the intelligence that pointed to Iraq’s possessions of weapons of mass destruction. After the war began, Nangle was concerned that everyone forgot that prior to the war, these were precisely the significant terms of the
debate. Once the war began, as the nation rallied behind the troops and then the long grind of the occupation wore on, people seemed to forget that war opponents were right on these crucial matters.

Information from the Pews—War Supporters

Christian war supporters, because they were supporting the hegemonic position of the administration, whose various advocates provided plenty of secular rationales for going to war, did not tend to understand themselves as primarily contributing any more information to the discussion. Rather, they tended to focus on presenting themselves and their positions both as the correct Christian position (which the opponents also claimed to be doing) and as the representative view of most American Christians in the pews. This information was valuable because it could be need as statements of actual grassroots political support of the war. In a country where religion matters politically, this political support could be consequential.

As we have seen in chapter 3, the Institute for Religion and Democracy (IRD) often criticized mainline churches for their positions on the war. The IRD claimed to represent the membership of the mainline churches on the issue of Iraq. The IRD saw itself as part of a movement to get the churches back to their roots, both theological and sociological. I asked Mark Tooley of the IRD his most salient memory before the war. His answer helps reveal the core of his claims of representation with respect to how to think about the Iraq War as a Christian.

Well, of course I remember the time that vividly and IRD as always was monitoring how U.S. churches were responding to, continued to respond
to the aftermath of 9/11 and the preamble to the Iraq War and our critique of the mainline churches then, as it had been in previous years under previous crises; was that essentially the mainline churches were behaving as though they were pacifists even though their traditions were decidedly not pacifist, in terms of how they approach Iraq.

The IRD criticized the mainline churches because they were acting as if they were part of a pacifist tradition; they were not representing their true tradition, a tradition of just war approaches to violent conflict. The tradition with which most church members agreed. They did not agree with a pacifist stance. Since the IRD was primarily concerned with reforming the church on these issues of representation, its messages were primarily addressed to co-religionists. They occasionally got picked up in the secular media, but their primary focus was on addressing fellow Christians through their own distribution networks as well as through conservative Christian publications and websites which often carried their commentaries. Given this audience, the IRD was able to use explicitly Christian discourse extensively in making its claims.

The person who got the most secular news coverage in supporting the war was Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Land is the President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Convention, the agency charged with

\[\text{45 In the context of the public discussion before the Iraq War, labeling an argument should be first and foremost understood as an attempt to discredit arguments as naïve and irresponsible. Whether or not they actually were pacifist is a second question. They were certainly not self-identified as such, even groups that could legitimately be labeled as pacifist understood that labeling their arguments as pacifist would delegitimize them. There were certainly some groups that were pacifistic in the debate. It is not all clear, however, that mainline witness was pacifist. The mainline advocates I interviewed and analyzed, would not say they were opposed to all war, but that their standard for a just war was so stringent that no recent American war would qualify. Tooley looked at this lack of support for war as basically a pacifist position, the logic being, they have been opposed to all of these wars therefore they will not support any ones.}\]
addressing public issues of importance to Southern Baptists. Land is charged with addressing issues of concern to them and he was outspoken in his just war arguments in support for the war. As Southern Baptists are the second largest denomination in the United States, being representative of the Southern Baptists was a strength for him as well as the reason that he took his pro-war position.

One of the most interesting questions I got at the time, and I still think it’s true, was “Why is it that the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention is supportive of intervening in the War and liberating Iraq when the religious leadership of all the other major denominations is against it?” And I said, that’s a real simple answer. We’re the only ones that are elected. It’s our democratic structure. At the time, when the Catholic bishops were opposing the war, 70% of Roman Catholics supported it. Among the mainline denominations, the Methodists, 70% supported the War, while the Methodist structure, ecclesiastical structure was against it. But I’m elected. All the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention is democratically elected so it would stand to reason that the democratically elected leadership would be more representative of their constituencies then would an ecclesiastical leadership that’s appointed.

While his recollection of the percentages of members of other denominations supporting the war are probably rather high (It is impossible to know these numbers exactly, as there were no polls before the war started that asked for religious affiliation. In this interview Land is either relying on support for the war measured after it began or is guessing on the percentages of demographic support for the war.) That being said, Land is probably correct that the leadership of other denominations was often out-of-step with its members. Land, however, is representative of his rather large and politically significant 16 million members of the Southern Baptist Convention and this information is of particular interest to politicians. Even as Land largely sticks to just war discourse in his arguments for the war, this bit of secular information frees him from
making other secular arguments. He has a constituency that supports Land’s interpretation of just war thinking.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined several factors which lead to variation in the amounts of religious and secular discourse between war supporters and war opponents. As we have seen in chapter two, the events of 9/11 and their consequent narration lead to a rhetorical context in which religious discourse was a central element. Much of this was a result of elite cues by the President, who used religious discourse to make sense of both the terrorist attacks of those days and the nation’s response to them. The context was so conducive to religious discourse that we have seen that secular advocates against the war actively sought out religious spokespersons to articulate rationales against the war. Because they perceived themselves as losing the public debate on the war, war opponents felt strategic pressure to change their tactics, including the use of secular discourse in addition to the religious discourse. Meanwhile war supporters, feeling no such pressure as they were on the winning side of the debate, tended to stick with religious reasons in their discourse. Additionally, religious advocates contributed distinctly to the debate based on their sense of identity. Religious opponents believed that they added a prophetic moral critique to the national debate sorely in need of it. Religious supporters believed that they added reminders of moral realism to the debate, especially in response to religious opponents, sorely in need of it as well. Finally, advocates’ understanding of their particular expertise in the debate
influenced what they brought to the debate. War opponents conveyed information from their global connections that they were concerned were missing in the discussion, while war supporters tended to portray themselves as accurately representing the positions of those in the pews.

In the next chapter, we turn to consider the crucial question of why did some advocates end up taking a war opposing position while others took a war supporting one? We discover an interesting pattern in advocates’ reporting of their life stories that suggests that the difference, at least in part, results from very different socializations and experiences of socially different others. These differences in turn redound into significant differences in how advocates narrated the potential war in Iraq.
CHAPTER 6:
INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF VICTIMS: EMPATHY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR REPRESENTATION AND NARRATION

When I was nine my mom was a real-estate broker. Or she was a Canadian; she was a green card holder so she didn’t have a license. She worked for somebody. But she’s good, she got paid for it. And at nine years of age I’m sitting in front of the television, watching the Ed Sullivan show and all of the sudden there is this tremendous—she had just sold this house in this town that we were raised in, which was an all-white town called Winchester, Mass. about 13,000 people, northwest of Boston. She sold it to a professor at Tufts University, I’ll never forget his name: Bernie Carlston was his name. He bought a house in Westside, not on Eastside where all the Italians and the Irish and the fancy side, divided by the railroad tracks. And we’re sitting there, I’m sitting there on the floor watching Ed Sullivan, on a Sunday, there’s this tremendous crash and a big flash and there was fire. And somebody had thrown a rock at the house and there was a note on it. We had to call the fire department. The note said, “We don’t want niggers in our town and we don’t want nigger-lovers either.” This was a pretty nice suburban town and I was frightened to death, flames, the shrubbery in front of the house was on fire. Somebody tried to throw a rock through the window and I’m nine years old, watching the Ed Sullivan show, and I remember when everything dispersed and it was late at night, my mother said to me you need to understand there are people who are filled with hate. But that should not deter you from doing what’s good because the good will always outdo the bad. So I mean it was, so I think it was a matter of learning about justice at a very young age.

This is the story the Right Reverend John Bryson Chane, episcopal bishop of Washington, DC told me when I asked him how his biography contributed to his
advocacy on the Iraq War. It is a dramatic vignette of a troubling aspect of American life, racial segregation and discrimination and the threat of violence that supported them. The country’s racial divisions were supported extralegally by the thinly veiled threat of violence and intimidation. The mere possibility of a threat to the racial system was enough to keep most in line and stop them from challenging the rigid division between black and white. That structure was beyond question, even in the north. This experience for Bishop Chane was a powerful one for him and as he told me, an important influence in the formation of his life as an advocate. Chase’s Roman Catholic father and Baptist mother taught him to give to others and “be engaged in the lives of our neighbors.” But it was not just this teaching that was influential to him. Chane, supported and loved by a strong and courageous mother, learned lessons about justice and that what was often accepted uncritically was worthy of being challenged and being brave in the encountering of resistance. Bishop Chane’s story is uncommon for a white, northern boy. These sorts of threats were far more commonly experienced by African-Americans and southerners who were so bold as to challenge racial segregation and discrimination. The majority of people, especially white Northerners, did not have this type of direct experience of being victimized by structural violence. For most people, especially white, educated middle class people, experiencing or directly interacting with those who do experience structured violence is rare.

But in my interviews with Christian war advocates, these encounters with structural violence or the victims of structural violence were rather common (They were reported by 14 of my 29 religious war opponents or 48% of respondents, clearly the
most common account offered in my interviews.) These experiences came to have lasting formative influence for advocates on both the way they saw the world and their ultimate vocation to work for peace and justice in it. Moreover, there was a distinct pattern in these stories of intense experience and empathy for suffering, both locally and globally. I only heard them from critics of the war. They were noticeably completely absent from the stories my war proponents told me were influential in their life what influenced them in their advocacy. Their stories about their Christian formation were much more rooted in the quotidian struggles of American congregations that did not encounter victims of structural violence. As we shall see in this chapter, this difference in social experiences contributes to significant differences in how advocates narrated their positions on the Iraq war.

In this chapter, we examine the question, why did some Christian religious elites support the war and why did others not support it? As I have discussed in the first chapter, to answer this question, I take a micro-level interactionist perspective that uses the insights other researchers have gleaned into the processes of religious conversion. This makes sense if we understand Christian positions either supporting or criticizing war as distinct traditions within Christianity. If we can presume that state legitimating, hegemonic religion is one tradition and counter-hegemonic state criticizing (at least with respect to the war making power of the state) religion can be understood as another we have two further basic questions to consider: One, how do religious advocates come to a counter-hegemonic position? And, two, what are the social conditions that facilitate and maintain this new position? That is, how do networks of people provide support for
a counter-hegemonic position to endure, once a person arrives there? In other words, in
this chapter, I examine the social conditions that allow such cultural positions to
perdure. Sociologists refer to these as social plausibility structures (Berger and
Luckmann 1966; Berger 1967a), the groups and social support that affirm a worldview.

In attempting to answer these questions I make an analytic move that is
classically sociological. I look for the social origins of a curious empirical phenomenon
that at first glance does not seem to be related to its social roots. Earlier, I analyzed the
different constellations of religious cultural repertoires for either the support or
criticism of the war, now, I try to explain them in terms of important differences in the
social experience of those who used those arguments. I find that my data suggests that
the key difference between these two groups is meaningful experience with various
forms of structural violence and its victims that has been incorporated into advocates’
identities.

But first it may be useful to clarify my use of the term structural violence. What
do I mean by structural violence? Sociology (and the rest of the social sciences) uses the
term structure to denote the important ways that society and social life are
meaningfully patterned in such a way that allows us to make helpful and accurate
generalizations about how society works. Much of this work in sociology highlights the
way that the patterning of society privileges and empowers some groups over others.
For example, for many years, the laws of this union favored whites over nonwhites.
Now, laws do not enforce white/nonwhite differences, yet the differences remain across
many measures of social life. For example, whites have persistently higher incomes,
better performance in school, and better employment chances than blacks. The social structure of race differences in the United States highlights the degree to which how society is shaped collectively influences the prospects of individuals.

I use the word violence in a rather expansive sense. Violence in my usage connotes some sense of harm to individuals or groups. This harm may be physical, civil, economic, or social. Structural violence, then, refers to those who have been harmed by the patterning of groups by power (GALTUNG 1985). We are very used to thinking of interpersonal physical violence, when someone hits, stabs, or (especially in the United States) shoots another person to do them harm. The concept of structural violence expands this commonsense understanding in two directions. One, it broadens it to include the way that society “picks” winning and losing groups in society. Two, it broadens the sense of harm. While African-Americans (to pick just one example) were certainly vulnerable to threats of physical, interpersonal violence, they also were and still are, collectively and individually, differently vulnerable to poor social treatment that adversely affects their employment prospects, their civil rights, and their general stress levels. But African-Americans clearly are not the only victims of structural violence. Domestically, other minority groups (including women) receive clearly harmful treatment from society as a whole. The poor are particularly harmed by the manner in which society is patterned. Internationally, there also many groups that the world’s current structure harms. Of particular interest for this study in looking at the issue of domestic discussion of American policy, are victims of American policy decisions, either foreign or domestic. Encounters with the victims of structural violence, as we shall soon
see, were particularly important in the identity formation of war opponents and in how they see victims of violence. These in turn are important for how they narrate events, which as we have seen in chapter one, is of grave consequence for advocating whether or not a nation should go to war.

In this chapter I argue that these intense experiences of structural violence are so profound that via the power of empathy they helps advocates reimagine the suffering and potential suffering of other victims of structural violence. Furthermore, advocates were connected to social networks, in a variety of forms, but especially in the form of family and church members, who provided the necessary social support and confirmation of their new perspectives on structural victims. Once established, a critical perspective on suffering and the systems that caused them also tended, in the case of my respondents, to be applied to other areas of social violence and victims. In the public debate over Iraq, war opponents and proponents represented Iraqis and the possibility of their suffering in different manners. These differences help explain why war proponents tended towards an apocalyptic narration in their advocacy and war opponents mostly told a tragic narration of the events that were unfolding.

Discovering the Importance of the Biographical

Initially, I put questions about biography in my interview schedule out of habit and desire to give my respondents a chance to warm up to our discussion. It was only much later in coding and analyzing the interview transcripts that I realized how much
the answers between war opponents and proponents differed. This came as a surprise to me. My training as a sociologist taught me to look for the consequences of social location, such as gender, race, class, and education in my interviewees’ advocacy. But, my group of respondents was remarkably similar on most of these measures, they were (largely, but not entirely) white, male, and educated. Given the relatively small size of my sample and especially the relatively small number of war supporters (six respondents), the minimal variation in these characteristics was very hard to interpret. But the difference in my interviewees’ accounts of what in their life had influenced their personal trajectory to become public religious advocates was so stark and clear that it practically begged for an explanation. Biography does make a difference. In this chapter we explore how and why.

War Opponents: Meaningful Encounters with the Other

In my interviews I asked people about their biographies, their experience of the church growing up and how these informed their advocacy on the Iraq War. In response, my respondents told me compelling accounts of various influences on their lives, often focusing on the influence of family and other important personal relations, the power of thinking through issues of peace and justice in academic (or other settings), and the challenges of troubling times, particularly Vietnam and the Central American foreign policy debate in the 1980s. But the most common and compelling accounts were personal stories of accounts of encounters that crossed social boundaries and made my relatively otherwise privileged respondents aware of human suffering in ways that seem
to have greatly influenced their sense of identity and the way that they saw victims of structural violence and policy.

One of the boundaries crossed was racial. Most of my respondents were white and, like most Americans, lived in situations of relatively strict social segregation. Jim Wallis of Sojourners spoke with me about growing up white in white Southview, the “first suburb out of Detroit” and wondering about the importance of race and how segregated his world was from that of largely black Detroit. His high school teacher, Mrs. Wallendorf, had the class read a book about the racial problem in America, *Crisis in Black and White* by Charles Silberman and it piqued an interest and concern in him that he responded to with action. He went out and experienced the very different lives being lived just a few short miles from his home.

So, for me, from 14 on, something was really wrong with my world in Detroit and in ’67 was when it all blew up in Detroit. It was just like a couple years before that. So, it’s like, and then I went into the city, got involved in a black church, I took jobs in the inner city working alongside young black guys like me but they grew up in a different country and I became friends and I was hanging around with them, going to their houses at night, and when I saw that I had grown up with basically a lie, that it was hard to believe, it was hard to believe the other lies, too.

When the nation’s racial situation came to a flashpoint, Wallis felt it personally.

. . . . once you look at racism from the other side, when Detroit erupted and went into flames, my friends were on the inside of the perimeter and I couldn’t get in. But I was. . . I was, how do I get to my friends? And I couldn’t get in. The police had it all cordoned off.

By working with, befriending, and worshipping with black people, Wallis began to understand their lives in a “different country.” He began to understand how they saw
and felt about the world. He began to empathize with them in a deep way. This allowed
a substantial degree of interpersonal accuracy, the ability to understand the lives of
others by interacting with them. For Wallis, empathy was a significant consequence of
these encounters with structured violence.\textsuperscript{46} Feeling the pain and suffering of particular
victims of structural violence appears to have “opened his eyes” to the broader
suffering of others as a result of structural injustice. For Wallis, this was a particularly
dramatic and transformative event for which his home church offered little support.
Later, in seminary, his anti-Vietnam War activities nearly got him expelled even as he
found a broader network of church support and came to form a particular concern for
issues of peace and justice (Nepstad 2004b). He came to a central identity as what I am
calling a \textit{peace and justice Christian}. In short, this means that collective biblical issues of
peace and justice come to be central in his identity. We shall see other elements of this
identity as this chapter progresses.

Bishop Melvin Talbert, the Ecumenical Officer for the Council of Bishops of the
United Methodist Church, and the man who appeared in an anti-war television
advertisement with the comedian Janeane Garofalo, was one of two black men that I
interviewed for this study. Unlike Wallis, he did not have to travel to experience the
structural effects of racism personally. He was not in need of a profound encounter with
an “other” victims of structured violence. His family suffered it directly, as

\textsuperscript{46} I should be clear that I am not claiming that encounters with structural violence will affect
everyone in this same manner. That is a question that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For many
of my war opponent advocates, this does appear to be the case however.
sharecroppers, living the after effects of Southern slavery in the face of persistent
discrimination and segregation.

My Mom and Dad were sharecroppers. My Mom finished the 7th grade, 
my Dad didn’t finish the 1st grade. So, I’m the first in my family, immediate 
family, to finish high school, college and beyond. But, even though my 
Dad did not finish any schooling and he, by the way, could not read or 
write, I was able to teach him how to sign his name after I was in school, I 
guess I must have been about sixth grade or something, so that was, so I 
was born and raised on the farm. Hard day to day, tilling the soil for a 
living, in Clinton, Louisiana, north of Baton Rouge. So, I lived in a 
white/black society, just it was clear, never the twain shall meet. And 
that’s with all of my education through high school. . . when I was going 
to school about 300 yards from where I caught the bus, a new yellow bus 
came along and picked up those white kids and took them to school. So, 
bussing is not something that is only done to integrate people. Bussing is 
done to get people to the school in order for them to be educated. My 
problem with bussing in those days is my bus came along and it was an 
old, dilapidated bus that had wood burning stoves on it, to keep us warm. 
And the big yellow bus came along, I wanted to ride that big yellow bus to 
school. [chuckles] . . . So that’s the kind of society in which I came up in. 
And I developed my moral commitment to inclusiveness out of the civil 
rights struggle.

Later, Talbert explains how his early experiences were solidified through learning 
and socialization in seminary.

I was in Atlanta in seminary and my seminary was Gammon Theological 
Seminary, which at that time, was the black seminary for the United, for 
the Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church. . . So, then my 
commitment to inclusiveness and my ecumenical vision were both honed 
in the civil rights movement and in theological school. So, I developed a 
good relationship with people of other churches and other faiths in 
seminary and in the civil rights struggle. So that’s, that helped shape my 
thinking.

Bishop Talbert experienced the structural stain of racism directly, staring at that 
yellow bus and it helped him form an identity as a peace and justice Christian. This was
further formed in the interchange of ideas and relationships he forged during his time in seminary.

CJ Sprague was an often outspoken, both theologically and politically, bishop of the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church. In his book, *Affirmation of a Dissenter* he tells the story of an upbringing as the child of immigrants distinctly aware of social difference and its consequences. One fateful day, he and a black basketball teammate, Sanford went to a soda and chips. The clerk charged Sprague ten cents, but Sanford fifty. Sprague started to complain, but Sanford stopped him, saying “This happens to us all the time.” Sprague describes what happened next.

It was then that I heard God say in my heart of hearts: *Joe, I want you to spend your life seeing that people who look like Sanford... are not treated as Sanford just was and that people who look like you and the man behind the counter don’t treat others as your friend and teammate was just treated.* [italics in original]

I asked him about this in our interview.

In *Affirmation of the Dissenter* you talk about the incident of discrimination at the soda shop. So that’s the sort of thing that opened you up to justice issues, is that fair to say?

Yes. I think that’s a fair statement. I’m not sure about all of the reasons why. I was always a little bit different in terms of the way I related to, talked about, or didn’t talk about, persons who were different. My best friend, for example, growing up was a Macedonian immigrant. The kids all called him Honky. That always rankled me. And of course you know what African Americans were called in those years by many whites. And all of that was distasteful to me and I’m not sure that I can tell you all of the reasons why. I think, in part, as I reflect, I did take the Bible seriously. It didn’t seem to jibe with that and my family, while not formally educated and while always struggling with what it meant to be outsiders coming to a new place, not formally educated, etcetera, both of my parents were very accepting people and grew over the years far beyond the boundaries of their rural, well rather, extremely parochial background.
For Bishop Sprague, feeling like an outsider himself, noticing and caring about other victims, enabled him to feel empathy for those similarly excluded. The experience in the soda shop with Sanford stands out in his memory as a particularly important moment, but Sprague understands it as one of a number of moments which explain his trajectory towards committing his life to challenging structural violence as a servant of God. Furthermore, taking the Bible seriously lead him to discover resources there to understand the Bible’s mandates to work for justice and how being a Christian might be related to his experiences with prejudice in his childhood. His parents too, despite their lack of education and achievement helped provide models and expectations for tolerance and understanding of others despite social difference.

The encounters of my respondents with structural violence were not limited to domestic experiences, but also reached out to the larger world and its many victims. Global church networks and trans-national organizational structures were particularly effective at affording opportunities to meet international victims, some of whom were specifically victims of violence as the result of United States’ policy. Despite the fact of a vast global Christian community, the lived experience of many Christians America focuses almost exclusively on the local context, most often on aspects of local congregational life. Consequently, the imagined universe for Christian concern often does not extend much (if at all) beyond the local congregation’s social world. International religious networks, however, can help broaden local American’s religious perspective by bringing news in the form of first-hand accounts of their missionary and charitable works abroad. This information, from trusted voices within the church can
have dramatic broadening effects in enlarging American Christians’ understanding and
care for the rest of the world.

As these had been important in the formation of Central American peace
activists (see Nepstad 2004a; and Smith 1996c), they were similarly effective at bridging
the world’s far-flung structural victims and the, at times, potentially isolated and
parochial American Christian. Indeed, the Central American was formative for a number
of the peace and justice Christians I interviewed. International church networks and
communication along those networks got many people aware of the problems of victims
of structural violence and also gave advocates the opportunity to significantly
experience the plight of victims of structural victims as they did the challenging work of
the church.

Jean Stokan, Policy Director for Pax Christi USA before the war began, described
a concern for the poor, solidified by experience of their suffering in the United States
that grew to a “life changing experience” with the Sanctuary Movement in the United
States. The Sanctuary Movement was a network of churches that, in defiance of United
States’ law offered safe haven to migrants fleeing the violence of Central American civil
wars in the 1980s. Because of the U.S.’ support for many of the actors in these conflicts,
these migrants found the usual amnesty protections of immigration law unavailable to
them.47 Here Stokan describes her personal journey.

47 (for more on the origins of the Sanctuary Movement, see Nepstad 2004a; Smith 1996c)
Undergraduate and graduate, I had both degrees in social work and so it was always this draw to the poor and the poor, but you don’t need the long story of how that switched to justice perhaps but how do we change the conditions that are creating these people as poor so when I, by the time I got into graduate school I had four years off in between, I went to Appalachia, I wanted to work on the organizing aspects. But I would say more poignantly, after graduate school I worked at Catholic Charities in Baltimore and I became involved in what was called at that time, the Sanctuary movement—Salvadorans, we were in the height of the war in El Salvador, so I met, again it’s meeting victims of war and then beginning to work to end the war in El Salvador. Meeting these people from El Salvador and seeing torture wounds, hearing their stories, being shot by bullets that were produced in Carbondale, Illinois. So all of that prompted me to get much, that was my meeting the victims, than getting the, connecting the dots with the issues and then going to El Salvador for the first time, seeing my, seeing it firsthand, seeing the tufts of hair after a massacre and then after that my whole life is—is changed. And it wasn’t just the stories of poverty and war, it was meeting, because, meeting victims and marginalized people who are full of hope. At that time they were being killed and tortured as they were working on the side of the poor. So I remember meeting, that first trip in ’86, sixteen and seventeen year olds who were, every day they go out working with the poor and just for doing that they could be killed. So their parents have to see what clothes they’re wearing in case their bodies are so tortured they can’t recognize them. But these people had sparkles in their eye and everything was stuffed with meaning and because they were giving their whole life for the sake of others and they talked like that.

The daughter of a former nun and a man who spent his life working in the mill, who steeped their daughter in a rich Catholic tradition of both piety and concern for others, Stokan grew up with an interest in charity, but her education helped her understand the plight of the poor as a justice issue too. But it was the immediate experience of the victims of violence that really made her motivated to work for justice and peace. Seeing torture wounds, inspecting bullets made back home, and tufts of hair, these physical artifacts of the structural violence as well as hearing the stories of its victims made an indelible and lasting impression on Jean Stokan. Everything was
different thereafter. She was converted to a peace and justice Christian with a critical eye towards United States policy. The transcript of our talk continues directly from the excerpt above.

And so I came back because I would give talks and those, I'm a selfish, selfish, I want that much meaning in my life and how do we convince people in our day that as they told us, entertainment for young people in El Salvador is secondary, most primary is to help the poor. Why can’t we say that? We’re stuffed with movies and T.V. so it was the Salvadoran people that gave me my first taste of what war looked like, how to challenge it, how to devote your life to it, how to connect the dots with U.S. policy and how to find hope while you’re doing it.

Stokan found so much meaning in her encounter with Salvadoran war victims, that she rearranged her life after it. It became a new meaningful life in the service of others that was also deeply satisfying to her. In her story we see the importance of context, which provides opportunities for biographical “conversions” to a commitment to working for peace and justice. In considering Stokan’s story we see the importance of Cold War context, especially in the major controversy in the 1980s over U.S. support in Central American politics and conflict. But there are many other contexts that helped shape war opponents’ identities.

For Baby Boomers, the Vietnam War and Civil Rights Movement were both incredibly divisive and formative. I asked Barbara Green of the ecumenical Churches Center for Theology and Public Policy, how she got into her peace and justice work.

I would say that the sort of formation for moral decency was there, but the Peace & Justice bug was really the formation of Vietnam and the Civil Rights movements. When I went to college, I mean both in 1968, both were just steaming all over the place, well Martin Luther King had just been shot and I mean, campus life across the country was just full of it, you couldn’t miss it and it really made sense to me.
For Barbara Green, her experience in the 60s and 70s began a life-long commitment of work in the church, including both pastoral and public policy work. (For other Baby Boomers, of course, the lessons of Vietnam particularly, were very different.)

Other Christian advocates were taken abroad by the global reach of the church. Peter Lems, the Iraq Program Assistant of the peace building unit of the American Friends Service Committee lived in Algeria and worked for a Quaker school in the West Bank. He came to see the world differently and became an advocate on issues of foreign policy and the Middle East. I asked him, “Did your family give you this concern? You’ve lived in the Middle East, you’ve committed your professional life to working to issues related there. What turned you on to it?”

It was probably the experience with my sister because at the time I didn’t have sort of a, I didn’t have a world view that was necessarily shaped by my parents, per se, that they weren’t activists or particularly interested in this part of the world and I think just going to, living in Algeria for a year, and my sister married an Algerian and so I got to understand a little bit about the Algerian War against the French and sort of what happened to him and his village and so I sort of, I guess in a way, had a broad sense of sort of the last gasps of colonialism and what it meant to people who were shaking off this foreign presence, foreign control of their lives and country and so when I went to the West Bank in ’89, I hardly knew anything about Palestine. I was just going for a job and so, and then again, it was just sort of learning on the ground and seeing what conditions were like in the country for Palestinians and for Israelis and I think that just, from there it just snowballed.

48 Richard Land, for example, in our interview argued that Vietnam was the political and cultural fork in the road that explained much of the cultural and political tension in the country, on Iraq as well as sundry other issues.
Peter’s “learning on the ground” and “seeing the conditions” were like had a profound effect on him. As he says, things “snowballed” and his commitment to working for peace and justice and his identity in doing so congealed and persisted.

Father Joseph Nangle, the Franciscan priest and pastor who personally petitioned Pope John Paul II to come to the UN or otherwise be more vocal in opposition to the war, was a newly ordained priest volunteered for overseas missionary work. After four years in Bolivia, he came to found a new upper-middle class parish in Lima, Peru, which eventually came to have a keen awareness of and prophetic witness for the masses of the urban poor that surrounded it. I asked him how this formed his peace witness.

Well, it does basically come out of my experience in Latin America and my education by the liberationists who challenged me to look at my culture and the society I came from with eyes that look through the lens of the poverty of Latin America and the third world. I mean, they really challenged us to take seriously the problems that begin here and so I came back purposefully... I went as a 26 year old recently ordained guy, I didn’t know anything. And I come back 15 years later pretty well shaped in terms of world view and that the United States has a lot to answer for, before God.

Father Nangle’s conversion was based in interaction with victims of violence and their particularly articulate advocates. Nangle was influenced by Gustavo Gutierrez, one of the founders of liberation theology, a theology which argues for the so-called “preferential option for the poor” in Christian theology and practice and calls for the alleviation of unjust social structures.49 In this one brief quote we can see all the

49 (for more on liberation theology see Brown 1993; Smith 1991).
important ingredients of a conversion to a peace and justice Christian, exposure to structural victims, exposure to a set of ideas that help make sense of injustice and attempts to ameliorate it, and a social plausibility structure which provides the social support for these counter-hegemonic views. As a social context for learning the rich gospel of the poor, it probably does not get much better than working with Gutierrez in the poor barrios of Lima in the middle to late 1960s. As a Franciscan priest, Nangle returned to the United States, continuing this work in pastoral duties in suburban Washington D.C. and as occasional spokesman for Pax Christi (including as we have seen in chapter three as messenger to the Pope shortly before the beginning of the war).

Jim Winkler, General Secretary of the General Board of Church and Society, grew up a “pk,” or pastor’s kid, of a Methodist minister, he did not envision a life in the church, until a missionary told him of an interesting opportunity.

I had a great experience as a preacher’s kid and was always active in youth group for example. I never felt the call to ordained ministry, in fact I never really anticipated working for the church in any capacity, not that I was opposed to it. I think it was called a coincidence, or a “Godcidence” as we sometimes say, but a missionary was living in Naperville, Illinois around 1979 or 80 when my father was serving there, and I was home one weekend from school and he handed me a brochure about a program with the church. A three year program, half overseas and half in the United States, but the theme is what grabbed me. The Search for Justice, the Gospel’s Claim on the Rich and the Poor. So I served for a year in Fiji with the Pacific Conference of Churches back in the states for a year. Then I work on Wall Street for a miserable year and then was invited to apply for an opening at a program called United Methodist Seminars on National and International Affairs which was wonderful because it tied together my background in history and interest in current affairs, my faith and I led seminars for mostly, but not exclusively United Methodist youth from around the country, first in New York and then here. And then one thing led to another and here I am serving as the Chief Executive Officer of the General Board of Church and Society, our public policy arm; but as
a kid my father spoke out strongly against the Viet Nam War, and was active in Civil Rights struggles such as they were in Northern Illinois. So I was aware from an early age, directly of the churches concern for and involvement in social concerns.

Winkler was miserable at Wall Street and was happy to hear of an opening in the life of the church and expressed his gratitude for finding his vocation in the life of the church, even as it was not in pastoral work as his father’s work had been. Winkler’s father clearly had an effect on the trajectory of his son. I learned out later from my interview with CJ Sprague, the United Methodist Bishop of Chicago, that Winkler’s father was a prominent peace and justice minister in the area. Having been pointed in this direction by his father’s leadership, Winkler’s experience in the justice program confirmed that path.

John Rempel, the Mennonite Central Committee’s liaison to the United Nations received academic training as a church historian, but embarked instead on a several decades sojourn into the larger public mission of the church.

The only other thing I did that was somewhat helpful in terms of imagining my role was that I spent a year with MCC in the Philippines in the mid-80s, largely associating with Catholic and some Protestant settings, shall we say, including teaching settings, that were liberation theology oriented. That was very educational. I mean, and my first serious encounter with a 2/3rds world setting.

Later in the interview, I asked Rempel how he balanced learning Mennonite Church history with its brutal suppression by state authorities and the consequent withdrawal of Mennonites from politics and his own extensive commitment, as a church representative, to engaging public institutions at the highest level.
So, I grew up sort of with some sort of political sense and with the ambivalence that haunts groups like Mennonites, in other words, how much can our ideals apply to a whole society. I mean, that was a debate that I sort of learned growing up, without knowing how to resolve that. But this thing about sort of utopian groups on the margins, saying what the world should be like and how do those two realms relate. The other thing I think that fostered that, is when I came here to seminary, we all had to take, not only theology and church history courses we had to take ethics courses in which these very questions were talked about. And in which there was an increasingly activist slant to them. In other words that we might not have all the answers about how these two worlds relate. But we have to engage the institutions of society. I mean, I was here in the late 60s, Civil Rights, Vietnam War. And so I carried that with me, even though it was not, it was sort of a given of my mental and moral life but it was not anything that I developed a competency.

Rempel’s experience as a devout, engaged life particularly emphasizes the importance of social context in shaping one’s religious formation. Part of a generation of Mennonites who engaged the broader concerns of social life in ways that earlier generations never did, Rempel’s previously sectarian takes on peace and justice in the community encountered the vexing problems of the United States in the second half of the 20th century. Rempel’s life suggests that experience, theology, context, and ethical commitments can interact in surprising manners to result in peace and justice commitments for some.

Other times, in the accounts of my respondents, the consequences of experience of victims, exposure to theology that supports working for them, and rich plausibility structures in producing a peace and justice identity seem all but inevitable. Catherine Gordon, of the Washington DC-based Public Policy Office of the Presbyterian Church USA described her upbringing in a deeply committed peace and justice family.
Well, my dad was a very social-justice oriented minister so it was; Cesar Chavez was having lunch at our house. And we were marching with the United Farm Workers and when we lived in Costa Rica I saw the protests against the U.S., and when we were in Texas, it was the sanctuary movement so the illegal immigrants would run, would come to our school to get food on their way further north. So it was a sort of typical social justice, Presbyterian minister, sort of family.

You, meanwhile, he’s actually on missions a lot of this time particularly, is he pastoring these various churches?

Yeah, he went on sabbatical to, we actually, went to Nursery School in Edinburgh, Scotland, when he was on sabbatical there and he had a church in Charlottesville during the ‘60s before that and he was the campus minister at UVA so we would go and I was a baby at the Vietnam War protests and then in Miami, he pastored a church for seven years and then they were going to do mission work in Nicaragua and they went to language school in Costa Rica, but then they decided they didn’t want to pursue that so we moved back and were in South Carolina for a year and then went out to Texas.

Given Gordon’s upbringing it is no surprise that she works in an office across the street from the nation’s capital, preaching peace and justice. But we should be careful to remember that not all children continue on the trajectory upon which their parents try to direct them. For a variety of reasons, ranging from the psychological to the sociological and the ideological, these important social experiences may influence people in any number of directions.

Finally, some of my respondents put particular stress on the power of ideas to convince them that they were sympathetic to a peace and justice approach to Christianity, with its concomitant commitment to question state policies. Though, it should be noted that none of this occurs in a social vacuum, the importance of engaging
sympathetic and unsympathetic interlocutors is evidenced throughout. Engaging counter-hegemonic ideas and understandings of the world can be changing for individuals, but maintaining that change is very difficult without the ongoing support of those who make one’s new understandings plausible.

Joe Volk, Executive Secretary of the Friends Committee on National Legislation spoke with me about his religious upbringing and his challenging of religious authority in middle school.

When I was growing up in the Methodist church and we had bible study, youth group meetings periodically, our pastor had been a veteran of World War II and he’d been in the Navy and we read this passage about the night Jesus was taken captive at the garden of Gethsemane and I think the versions of the story vary but basically part of the story is that a security person for the high priest, other people say Roman soldier, went to take Jesus into Custody, take him prisoner and a disciple, I think it was Peter, drew his sword and lopped off his year and Jesus told him, put your sword away and he picked up the ear and he healed the person who had just been wounded and then he said, he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword and I said to my pastor as, I think I was even in Junior High at that time, “don’t you think that this indicates that Jesus didn’t believe in fighting wars and if you’re a Christian you shouldn’t take up arms?” And my pastor smiled and said, “you could believe that but if you did, you’d get in a whole lot of trouble.” So, he didn’t say yes, he didn’t say no. But I thought that that was the basic story. This infuriated my father, who said “Jesus H. K. Reist, you’re not, you’re not Jesus. That was the plan. That was God’s plan, was to have him, but it’s not God’s plan to have you put into jail. So quit trying to be so religious.”

Though, unlike many of my respondents,’ Volk’s father was particularly unsupportive of his burgeoning Christian position for peace, he did find social support for it when as a graduate student he decided as a moral position to give up his deferments and resist the draft as a conscientious objector. He went to his pastor again and he directed him to an American Friends Service Committee “storefront draft
counseling thing” in Denver, Colorado. That acquaintance led to a personal and
professional affiliation with Quakers that extended throughout the rest of his life.

Sean Casey, professor of Christian ethics at Wesley Seminary in Washington DC
and initiator of the Christian ethicists sign-on statement against the war, talking about
his growing up in the deep South.

Interestingly enough and ironically is that Churches of Christ have a
pacifist strain that was pretty much erased in WWII, but there were still
traces of it alive in Vietnam, so I heard people ask the question in church.
Is it legitimate for a Christian to join the military and go fight in Vietnam?
Now the answer we got was don’t worry about it, but the fact that the
question got asked shows kind of the traces, but I grew up. . . in 1968 I
was eleven years old, so I grew up seeing the classic photos on the AP
wire. I saw Walter Cronkite start every Tuesday night with the body count
in Vietnam, we debated it in high school in my government class and so
Vietnam was very much in . . . and what I experienced at 18 when I had to
go down to the Post Office and register was I had nobody to help me
work through what I really thought about this, so it kind of became a
mental thing with me to say if the day every comes when I am in the
position to help somebody else work through these issues, I want to be
resourced and to have an intelligent conversation with somebody who is
vulnerable to the draft, so that changed me hugely, the Vietnam
experience.

Even though Sean Casey’s experience of structural violence’s victims was highly
mediated through his family’s television set, it came to have a lasting effect, primarily
through the power of the ideas that we wanted to explore to be able to help someone
like him in the future. Given his specialization as an expert in the ethics of war and
peace as well as in religious politics, the engagement of these ideas has become his life’s
work.
War Proponents: Mediated Contact

These stories of significant contact with the victims stand in sharp contrast to the explanations I heard from religious war advocates when I asked them the same question about the influence of their biographies. Their stories tended to focus on stories of interaction within the church of co-religionists rather than socially and geographically distant others. Any recognition of structural violence or its victims was highly mediated, that is it is not direct & conducted either via stories of other intermediaries or purely in the imagination.

My most important finding is a lack of the substantial, direct contact with structural violence and its victims. The small number (six) of religious advocates in my sample makes generalizations about war proponents’ experiences somewhat difficult. At the same time the absolute absence of this type of interaction even within this small sample, suggests that this indicate a meaningful difference between these two groups of advocates.

First, let us consider the responses that focused squarely on local co-religionists who were not clearly victims of any structural violence. When I asked Alan Wisdom, of Presbyterian Action program of the Institute for Religion and Democracy, about his religious formation, he spoke primarily about his concerns about the direction of his congregation and its integrity on matters of faith.

_________________________

50 This problem is compounded by the nonresponse of some of my respondents. Specifically, Mark Tooley and Deal Hudson declined a response to my questions about biography and its relation to their advocacy.
Yeah, although I did have a period of sort of wandering and sort of junior high and early high school, and subsequently there was some bitterness in the church that I grew up in. It went through a crisis, we had a minister who divorced his wife and married another woman. There was an affair... but it tore the congregation apart and I knew his daughter and was really sort of mad... but I felt like um that I never really clearly heard the gospel there. I mean it is sort of our Presbyterian culture there was a lot of kind of indirection and sort of I didn’t feel like it was clearly explained to me what being a believer and follower of Jesus Christ was. And at the time I doubted how many people here really have faith. Now subsequently I have come back as an adult I’ve gotten to know some of these people and I think I was overly harsh as a teenager towards them.

After going to another congregation for a while, Wisdom came back to his home congregation.

I decided to go back and with my eyes wide open to all the failings and defects of the congregation and it’s had some struggles in some years, um, but it’s a place where I’ve been able to share the gospel and use my spiritual gifts, I don’t agree with everything that is preached from the pulpit, but you know, I do hear the gospel and there are faithful believers there, even though there are a lot of other people who come in there and I don’t think really get it, but I think that is the nature of a main line church that it is open and all kinds of people come in with all kinds of mindsets, um, and you have to share the gospel with them and take them where they are.

I follow up, asking him what his critique of the local congregation about people who do not get what it means to be a Christian.

I think that often times in our congregation and other main line congregations we’re hesitant to talk about sin, about particular sins, and about sin in general. I think that sometimes there is a feeling that people have such a negative self-image that you don’t need to tell them their sinners, but a lot of times I think when people have struggles in our lives, we tend to blame others; we tend to blame circumstances... I mean I think you know particularly coming out of reform background, you need to let people know that you have no capacity to save yourself. Only God can save you, and your situation is indeed desperate without God.
Wisdom, like most of the other Christian war supporters, believed that war opponents did not take the reality of sin, manifest in the evil of Saddam Hussein’s rule over Iraq, seriously.

In contrast to my advocates against the war, here we find that Wisdom’s concerns and stories of his formation center squarely on the local trials and tribulations of his affluent Washington DC congregation. He encounters human weakness and sin and it troubles him. In response, his outlook, at both the individual and collective levels, becomes deeply concerned about addressing sin and its consequences. He is formed into an identity that I call an **American Christian Realist**. Christian realism is a theological perspective on reasonable political (broadly defined) action in the world for the faithful given the realities of human frailties such as the seduction of power and human sin. It was a perspective in reaction to both the political and theological optimism of Social Gospel movement of the early 20th century and the encounter with depraved totalitarianism in the Second World War (Niebuhr 1953). The modifier American might seem redundant, at first, as Christian Realism is both indigenous to American and seems to particularly reflect an American experience of the 20th Century. But, I use the term to describe this particular manifestation of Christian Realism, which despite realism’s strong distrust of power and concerns for its corruption, trusts that American power can be trusted. This is in direct contradiction of Niebuhr’s—the intellectual architect of Christian Realism—deep concern over the universal temptations of power and dominance.
In response to my questions about his biography, Michael Novak, the Catholic scholar at the American Enterprise Institute who went to Rome to argue a just war case for the war, gave me an intellectual autobiographical account. With Novak, as with Wisdom, we can see the clear influence of Christian realism and a profound trust in America. He told me his intellectual heroes were Jonathan Edwards, preacher and theologian involved in the “First Great Awakening” of American religious revival in the 1730s and 40s, Albert Camus (the French existentialist, who Novak admired for his commitment to engaging the world), and Reinhold Neibuhr, the expositor of Christian Realism. Novak admired Neibuhr for engaging the world as it really is, that is beginning with the realization that every man is a sinner. Only after we have fully countenanced this reality, argued Novak, should we then start thinking of what we should do. According to many religious thinkers get this backward, starting with considering what we should do with little regard for the real problems of the world.

I asked him how he came to more of a conservative position in the course of his life, particularly with respect to the war in Vietnam. Novak told me that at first he was skeptical about the war, but that the reporting of the New York Times’ reporter David Halberstam convinced him that this was a war worth fighting. Ultimately, he came to understand that conflict through a just war lens and was concerned with getting out responsibly and minimizing the loss of life. With the way we did get out of Vietnam, Novak was horrified by the great suffering and death. He saw a need to be pro-military to provide safety for the innocents. This is where the Democratic left and the peace movement went wrong: they became reflexively and simply anti-military.
Here Novak is responding to his concern for victims of structural violence, but it is important to notice that his knowledge of these victims is mediated through news coverage and casualty reports of the conflict. Unlike the stories my I heard from my war opponents, it is not immediate. When I did hear about structural violence’s victims from my respondents who supported the war, their experiences were second-hand, not immediate. As we shall see, this is of consequence for how they understood the potential victims of the proposed war in Iraq.

In our interview, George Weigel, Catholic Scholar at the Ethics and Public Policy Center think tank, directed me to read his book, where his experience of the church was “Described in Chapter 1 of Letters to a Young Catholic, in great detail.” Growing up in Baltimore, he writes how parish affiliation gave him both a taste of “tribalism” and of a catholic universalism because he experienced something “beyond and through all those rivalries, an intense sense of belonging to something larger than ourselves, something beyond ourselves that somehow lived inside us too” (Weigel 2004). Yet most of that catholicity of Weigel’s childhood seems to be focused on specifically overcoming the local tribalisms of ethnic, parochial Catholic life. When he did broaden the focus to an international level, Weigel discussed missionary connections, “ransoming pagan babies” (i.e., raising money for the missionaries so that converts might be given Christian names at their baptism) (Ibid. 6), awareness of belonging to a worldwide church under persecution in parts of the globe, and the strong connection amongst the diverse Catholic family via their shared affinity and reverence for the pope. Again, this awareness of the wider world is highly mediated, not immediate. The victims of
persecution imagined in it are from the same social category as Weigel (Catholics), while the victimizers are culturally, politically, and ethnically different. This social imaginary leads to a strong realization of the problem of evil in the world, a critical element of Christian Realism. It largely occludes, however, the realization or the concern about the ways in which victims may be others and the ways in which we (or other socially similar people) could be victimizers. In sum it tends to focus moral attention other actual and potential others who victimize and direct moral attention away from our own capacity to potentially victimize others. In the case of the debate before the Iraq war, it means that the social imaginary of war supporters made it difficult to see how American military exerting authority in Iraq could victimize Iraqis.

Richard Land, of the Southern Baptist Convention, was quite candid talking with me about his experience growing up with racism in the South and a family who was working its way through the race question in the context of the deep South.

I mean, I was fortunately, I was raised in a home with a mother who was strongly supportive of Civil Rights and a father who had a sort of a benevolent, paternalistic attitude toward African—I mean, he would have been extremely upset with me or my brother, my younger brother, had either one of us ever made any kind of racially derogative remark. And I can remember when I was a boy, my dad had some African Americans who worked for him and he would take them food and take them stuff and I’d go with him and he’d say, I’d say, “Dad why are we doing this?” And he said, well he says, “colored folk are like children.” He said, “it’s our obligation and responsibility to help take care of them.” Which, certainly is not an acceptable position but it was not the hard, the Wallace sort of, he would have been very, very, very upset. In fact, I asked my mother about this later and she told me a story about my father that I had never heard. He, in 1943, he was a chief in the Navy. He was assigned to take 12 black sailors, new recruits, to their assignment on a ship in New Orleans. And they left Chicago and when they got below the Mason Dixon line, the porter came on and said, now, he said, Chief, he said you can eat in the
dining car but these fellas are gonna have to eat somewhere else because we’re in the South now. And my Dad said, well, he said we’re all wearing the uniform of the United States Navy and we’re gonna all eat together. We’re either gonna eat, I’ll eat where they eat or they eat where I eat. And so the compromise they came to was after the dining car was closed to the public, they brought them in and they all ate together. Well, that’s a pretty strong stand in 1943. And I think it was, he wasn’t gonna have sailors who were African Americans treated that way. But, I was, I heard King’s speech on television the night it was broadcast and it, what it did for me was, from King’s speech at the Lincoln Memorial forward, I understood that it was not enough to be philosophically opposed to racism, that it was my Christian duty to combat it. So, I was considered pretty progressive on the issue [laughs] of race, for 1963 Houston.

Land’s story is a moving one of his family and his dealing with the difficult problem of race in the South. It certainly comes closer to a direct encounter with victims of structural violence than Novak’s highly mediated experience through the New York Times. It remains, however, noticeably different than the other accounts of direct interaction with racism that I have recounted above. It is mediated through his mother’s accounts of his father’s past ambivalent action and attitudes on race. Land’s account centers on the dad’s account and experience on the train’s dining car. Direct encounters with racism’s victims are not mentioned in the story. Land’s parents, especially his mother, appear to have been important influences in his coming a position of being opposed to racism. As we have seen in earlier chapters of this dissertation, Land is a clear example of an American Christian realist in his grave concern for addressing the problem of evil in the world and his firm conviction that America is the best country to do it.

At this point, I want to pause a moment to be perfectly clear what I am not claiming about my respondents experiences with structural victims. First, I cannot say
definitely that war proponents were not exposed to structural violence or its victims. They may well have been, but they did not tell me about when I asked them how their lives had lead them to their position of public advocacy. If this was the case, the encounter did not apparently become a significant part of their own personal story, of making sense of themselves as advocates, as their religious identity. Retrospective life history questions are often best understood as providing insight into a person’s current understanding of themselves rather than a verifiable personal history. What my data suggest is that life changing encounters with victims mattered to war opponents in a way that they did not matter for war proponents.

Secondly, I am not claiming that these encounters are the only things that mattered in the formation of identity formation. There are clearly other factors which contribute to the formation of a religious identity. Most particularly important, as we have seen are the continuing interactions with sympathetic others that occur and afford social plausibility for the religious identity and the ideas and schemas that help make sense of the meaningful encounter with the other. In my data, these are clearly the most important factors which explain the differences in identity formation, there may well be other factors too, that are beyond the reach of this study.

Finally, I am also not claiming that the concern for others is any more or less sincere between these groups of advocates. I believe that both sides on this argument cared genuinely about the welfare of Iraqi victims (both of Saddam Hussein, the sanctions, and of any war with Iraq). Their different social experiences and identity
formation are of consequence, however, for how they represented the Iraqis. And we shall see this representation had ramifications for their policy recommendations.

So, what then, given the ubiquity of accounts of structural violence in my war opponents and their complete absence in my war proponents, are we to make of this difference? I believe my evidence points towards an important difference in identity as a result of an important event in identity formation. In the formation of a peace and justice identity, contact with victims of structural violence, particularly as a result of American policy decisions is a powerful and common experience. For the formation of an American Christian realist identity, this type of experience is not central.

The direct, unmediated experience of real structural victims brings home the complicated reality of structural violence and its victims in a dramatic and lasting ways. It impressed upon my respondents the previously unforeseen difficulties faced by victims and problematized both the easy ways in which we can forget them and the easy acceptance of American policy decisions that may actually produce otherwise hidden victims. In short, these different social experiences result in distinct schemas, the typical ways in which people form ideas, for victims and policies. For those without meaningful interaction with victims, it is easy to be, to some degree, blind to the real challenges of them. Without seeing their suffering, it becomes less likely that they might challenge policies that produce them.

Once formed, these schemas are transposable, that is “they can be generalized to. . . new situations when the opportunity arises” (SEWELL 1992). They can be transferred to other objects and creatively applied to new situations and dilemmas. Jim
Wallis of Sojourners describes how his experience in race came to be extended to the new situation and policy dilemma of the war in Vietnam.

And so, race came first and then Vietnam and once . . . once you look at racism from the other side, when Detroit erupted and went into flames, my friends were on the inside of the perimeter and I couldn’t get in. . . . I was, how do I get to my friends? And I couldn’t get in. The police had it all cordoned off. Once you’ve had that experience and then you start to study Indo-China, I mean, they wouldn’t, the State Department wouldn’t come to our college anymore. Because we would win all the debates, you know?

Meaningful interaction with victims with this kind of lasting effects is possible because of the power of empathy. As we have seen in the theoretical discussion in chapter two that informs this chapter, empathy allows for better apprehension of the life and perceptions of others. Increases in “interpersonal accuracy” probably result from role-taking processes that accompany greater empathy for others. Immediate, meaningful contact with victims helps create awareness and empathy for others, as understanding increases of the difficulties of the lives of these victims. Schemas are elaborated, which account for the complications and tribulations that victims encounter. These schemas then, are transposable, applied to other contexts and struggles and victims. In the context of the debate over the war in Iraq, these schemas are of import because they result in advocates representing victims in distinct manners. For Christian war proponents, victims remain relatively obscure, out of focus as the principal focus is on the melodramatic characterization of absolute good encountering absolute evil. To the degree to which victims are elaborated at all, they are simple stock characters there as pawns in the larger machinations of the global moral struggle taking place.
For example, in the so-called Land Letter, in the fall of 2002 the people of Iraq were mentioned only in this sentence. “We believe your stated policies for disarming the murderous Iraqi dictator and destroying his weapons of mass destruction, while liberating the Iraqi people for his cruel and barbarous grip, more than meet those criteria.” Here, the heroic president is beseeched to save the unfortunate, helpless victims from their murderous tormentor. In an October 4, 2002 (right at the height of the Congressional debate over the war authorization) Breakpoint radio broadcast Charles Colson only alluded to the Iraqi populace in this, the piece’s last two sentences. “Remember, we believe a just war is a way to show love of neighbor—protecting our neighbor. And in protecting innocence against Saddam Hussein, we are doing just that: exhibiting Christian love.” It is actually unclear which innocents Colson is referring here, Iraqis or Americans (who would be vulnerable should Hussein arm terrorists with a dirty bomb—a possibility Colson mentions four sentences earlier). But either way, it demonstrates victims’ positions as stock, undeveloped characters in this narration. Iraqis, Americans, does not matter. Just as long as the heroic Americans arrest the dangerous threat of the evil Hussein. The war’s proponents tended see them as hapless victims in need of an easy rescuing by the forces of a virtuous American army and consequently, de-emphasize the war’s potential for increasing Iraqi suffering, while concentrating on the need to go to war to avoid any further American suffering. For Christian war opponents, victims are better developed characters, though admittedly one-dimensional, with a focus on their suffering. They are also prioritized in the ongoing drama, their suffering often being stressed, even over American suffering. This serves to
problematic the coding of America as symbolically pure, instead portraying it as morally vulnerable—at risk for corruption of its highest ideals.

Proponents’ Representation of Iraqis

In his public arguments George Weigel focused very specifically on the just war conditions of right authority (to declare war) and the necessity of establishing a just order. He so clearly focuses on the responsibility of the civil authorities (American) to defend their citizens that the suffering of Iraqis fades from his public statements on the war. He only makes a very generic mentioning of the protection of innocents, which can only occur in a fallen world, “built in a world in which swords have not been beaten into plowshares, but remain swords: sheathed, but ready to be unsheathed in the defense of innocents.” The Iraqis are passive, only to be protected by the virtuous Americans.

Paul R. Hinlicky, religion professor at Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia is expressed a similar view of Iraqis needing to be rescued by the virtuous Americans in a February 7, 2003 United Press International article covering the religious debate over the war. He was quoted as an example of a Christian supporting the war, “To deliver the Iraqi people from the butcher who terrorizes them in their own land would be as morally right as delivering the Afghans from the Taliban."

The portrayal of Americans as so virtuous in no small measure depends on convincing those concerned with the risk of civilians becoming collateral damage that the American army is both so well-trained, technologically advanced, and virtuous that
these concerns are effectively trivial. This is what Michael Novak set out in arguing against a concern over “immense civilian casualties” as an argument against the war.

What about immense civilian casualties? Such casualties are inadmissible. It would be absurd to predict no civilian casualties. War always brings pain (even if it is only to combatants) and family grieving. But what if there are surprisingly few? What if, at any rate, the rules of engagement of the United States forces, like those for all of NATO today, insist that troops must never fire deliberately upon civilians or civilian centers? In that case, any civilians that do happen to be casualties are purely accidental, usually because of weapon malfunction. At any rate, such rules of engagement can be promised, because they are in effect. There will be no deliberate casualties. And there are unusually powerful motives to keep collateral ones exceedingly low by unprecedented care in selecting targets; and there are military reasons why this might be the best of all tactics.

In Novak’s vision, the fog of war is largely lifted. Chances are good that civilian casualties will be “surprisingly few.” He expresses great faith the rules of engagement will constrain collateral damage and that any civilian casualties are usually the result of weapon, rather than human error or malfeasance.

As we have already discussed in the fourth chapter, one of the perhaps most counter-intuitive ways to characterize American role in the war on behalf of the long suffering, passive Iraqis was to ground an argument for the war in order to protect them as an obligation of love. (In just war terms, this makes sense since Augustine originally discussed just war obligations as a consequence of love.) In the terms of the Christian New Testament, love of neighbor implies that you should help them when they are being victimized. Chuck Colson, as we have seen in chapter four, used this argument explicitly. He argued:
Out of love of neighbor, then, Christians can and should support a preemptive strike, if ordered by the appropriate magistrate to prevent an imminent attack.

In a National Review article Michael Novak, criticized the Italian Left for opposing the war in Iraq. “The Italian Left is willing to allow the poor and tyrannized and tortured of Iraq to suffer indefinitely,” he wrote. “They oppose the United States more than they love the Iraqi, who suffer under Saddam, bitterly and unaided.” The Italian Left are characterized by Novak as being reflexively anti-American, so much so that it embitters them towards their Christian obligation to aid the suffering Iraqis. The Americans, by way of contrast, clearly love the Iraqis because of their plan to save them.

Richard Land was very sympathetic to the administration’s argument that ridding the Middle East of Saddam Hussein could unleash a cascade of freedom in the region. In his argument, America is virtuous for saving the Iraqis and for giving them “a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” He continued:

Any military campaign authorized by President Bush would not seek to destroy the Iraqi civilization but would aid the Iraqi people in constructing a self-governing, representative democracy that would respect the rights of all its citizens and neighbors. This would not only strike a blow against terrorism but for freedom in the region. The establishment of a stable democratic Iraq would have a wonderfully liberating and stabilizing effect on the whole Middle East. It would suggest to Iranians, Saudis and Syrians that they too could have such a government of the people, by the people and for the people. That would be real peacemaking. … Our goal is not to kill the Iraqi people. Our goal is not to impose a government on the Iraqi people. Our goal is not to conquer and subjugate the Iraqi people. Our goal is to remove a really atrocious, war-crimes-committing dictator who terrorizes and enslaves his own people. . . The United States has no quarrel with the Iraqi people. . . Liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause, and a great strategic goal. The people of Iraq deserve it.
America’s particular blessing to the world is freedom. As the administration promoted it, the gift of freedom would be so powerful that it could transform the authoritarian Middle East. In this understanding the suffering of those in Iraq specifically and the Middle East generally is quite simple: to alleviate it all is needed is the same political freedom that we enjoy.

After the National Council of Churches went on a trip to Iraq over New Years of 2003, Land more specifically addressed the concerns about the suffering of the Iraqi population under the sanctions regime raised by religious opponents of the war.

Edgar and his NCC delegation make much of the suffering of the Iraqi people under the United Nations sanctions. Did they choose to ignore the fact that the UN and United States are not responsible for the suffering of the Iraqi people? That responsibility belongs to their pathological and brutal head of state, Saddam Hussein. The sanctions and suffering would end if Hussein would comply with the UN inspections he agreed to—then defied or ignored for more than a decade. During the period of the sanctions, while his people have suffered, Hussein has continued to construct lavish presidential palaces and to squander resources in his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. The people suffer because of Saddam Hussein, not the UN or the United States.

Land argues that the suffering of the United States is innocent of imposing suffering on the Iraqis, only Hussein is to blame. Again, the problem of Iraqi suffering is simply solved. Stop Hussein’s reign and the suffering would stop.

In sum, I found that Christian war proponents had a difficult time representing Iraqi victims in a manner that accurately reflected their complicated and tenuous lives, both living under the awful rule of Saddam Hussein and as auxiliary players in the showdown between Hussein and the United States. Rather than seeing their complexity and vulnerability as Iraqis, they tended to see them through distinctly “American” eyes,
which understood them first in the categories of our experience and secondly, as part of a narrative in which the United States played the symbolically pure hero. Land, of the Southern Baptist Convention, went on in the interview to argue that Southerners in particular understand being on the losing end of a war.

I’m an unreconstructed Wilsonian. And, one thing you may not know, that you do need to know, during the 30’s, there was only one section of the country that wasn’t Isolationists. It was the South. The only part of the country that supported Roosevelt . . . and supported trying to get America to get involved, was the South. Now, I would argue that one of the reasons for that is, is the only part of the country that’s ever been conquered by a foreign army.

So they get it?

They get it.

They get the relieving the suffering of the victims.

It’s, you know C. Van Woodward, I don’t know if you’ve ever read C. Van Woodward’s, he is a famous Yale historian.

No.

C. Van Woodward wrote a little essay, very influential essay, called “The Burden of Southern History.” And in it, he basically argues that the South’s burden is to explain to the rest of Americans how the rest of the world feels. That Ohioans have no idea what Faulkner is talking about when he talks about the land being cursed by the sin of the forefathers. Germans and Russians do. And when Faulkner was out of print in the U.S., he was a best seller in Europe. And that up until, of course up until Vietnam, we had never lost a war. And so that it was up to the South to explain to the rest of the country what it’s like to lose a war.

But it is not entirely clear that the South knows how the rest of the world feels. Its expertise seems to be specifically limited to how the South feels about losing the Civil War and it imagines that the rest of the world feels as it does. Faulkner understands the land being cursed and the foreigners, the Germans and the Russians, get Faulkner, the
Ohioans do not. It is clear the South feels the shame of that battle loss and converts that into a desire to fight so as to not be shamed again. This is distinct from feeling what the rest of the world feels when it is victimized by violence. This is seeing the rest of the world through American, particularly in this case, Southern-American eyes.

In easily the most searching and scrupulous interview I conducted, Deal Hudson related how actual contact with Iraqis and people who knew Iraqis helped him realize war opponents hesitation. His reconsideration of what was known before the war began provides evidence that the representation of Iraqis was an important factor in the debate over the war.

What I have learned subsequently about Iraq, through my friend Mandy Miranda who lived over there for over a year, setting up the constitution, I was really shocked once I really learned because I got involved in trying to help Iraqi Christians and I spent about a year studying that, I held a dinner for them trying to raise awareness. And when I really found out what life was like on the ground there, did we really think we could totally reorganize their social structure in a matter of a year or two? Made no sense. Anyway, um, um, I wish the fact—okay, if I regret one thing, it’s not knowing enough about Iraq myself, personally. I wished I had done my homework on what the civilization of Iraq, social structures, family tribal structures were like. I think that would have played a greater role in my thinking about it, in my advice about it. Because one of the, if you clarify, one of the criteria speaks of, criterion, speaks of a plan afterward. . . Yeah, that really figured into my thinking about that. Could you have a stable occupation of a country like that? So anyway, that’s what I wished I had known more about. And I’ll tell you, by the way, interesting little side, I’m just remembering now. I had some friends, old Reagan people, who were Catholics—Bob Riley. . . if you remember there were a lot of Reagan

51 What was somewhat surprising in these interviews was the degree to which, a long protracted conflict later, advocates—on both side of the issues—seldom considered how they might have been wrong. The most obvious exception to this rule was this interview with Deal Hudson.
Catholics opposed to this invasion. . . and uh, they were all opposed to the war and they were conservative, Republican, Catholic, and Reagan-people. Why? They all knew what Iraq was like. They all knew what people, what was, what the Middle East and Iraq was like.

Just because of their experience.

And I remember not quite getting it. You know, we were friends, I couldn’t quite get their reason for their objections and once I learned about life, society there, I understood their hesitation. Am I being too candid?

No, I assured Dean, he was not being too candid. Hudson’s experience of understanding the anti-war position of “Reagan Catholics” only came after he had a better appreciation of the challenges of the Iraqis. It allowed him to better understand how difficult the situation after the invasion became and that Iraqi culture and society would not simply allow us to reshape it in a matter of a couple of years.

Opponents’ Representation of Iraqis

The war’s opponents tended to insist that suffering in war is acute and the lives of Iraqis may will be worse in a war than it was under Hussein. They also put primary emphasis on the suffering of Iraqis in consideration of the war, even prioritizing it over the potential suffering of Americans. The war’s religious opponents attempted to be voices for the Iraqis in the public debate.

In their statement against the wall, the Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, expressed their concern based on their global experience of the victims of war.

Maryknoll missioners live and work in communities around the world torn apart by conflict and war. We know too well the intense suffering and destruction that war brings. As followers of Jesus we are committed personally and institutionally to reverence and affirm the dignity of each
person and the whole community of life of which we are a part. . . The cost of war on Iraq in terms of human life and suffering for the people of Iraq, for our own service people and their families, and for others involved in the conflict would be unconscionable.

It is important to note the order of concern in this sentence, first comes concern for Iraqis, then concern for our service people. This is a fairly radical rhetorical move and risky move politically, as it establishes—however slightly—principal concern for others rather than us, as Americans. It is dissonant with an apocalyptic rationale for war, which stresses the existential danger of the threat to the collective. It is also fodder for war supporters who wish to challenge the patriotism of war opponents. It is, however, a common rhetorical tactic of religious war opponents.

A statement signed by many religious leaders and released on October 11, 2002, the same day that the United States authorized the use of force on Iraq expresses grave concern about the suffering of Iraqis and discusses this before a relatively brief concern over American suffering.

We are particularly concerned by the potential human costs of war. If the military strategy includes massive air attacks and urban warfare in the streets of Baghdad, tens of thousands of innocent civilians could lose their lives. This alone makes such military attack morally unacceptable. In addition, the people of Iraq continue to suffer severely from the effects of the Gulf War, the resulting decade of sanctions, and the neglect and oppression of a brutal dictator. Rather than inflicting further suffering on them through a costly war, we should assist in re-building their country and alleviating their suffering. We also recognize that in any conflict, the casualties among attacking forces could be very high. This potential suffering in our own societies should also lead to prudent caution.

Because this suffering remains so hidden, advocates often took on a role of advocating—of providing a voice for—the Iraqis, whose interests might otherwise not
be represented in the public debate. Again, after the Congressional authorization of the use of force, this statement from the members of the General Board of Church and Society, of the United Methodist Church saw their role in giving voice to the voiceless Iraqis.

Those of us who have been sheltered from much of the world’s fear and suffering have now been drawn into its presence. We have been made to see and feel, though still sheltered from much. . .

In the midst of war and the rumors of war, we must speak for the vulnerable who have no voice in the negotiations. We plead for the children and families of Iraq who continue to suffer from the economic effects of sanctions and from life under the oppressive rule of Saddam Hussein, but they would likely suffer more were the U.S to launch an attack. We plead for the young men and women of our armed forces and all those whose lives would be placed in harms ways from a renewed war with Iraq. . .

The regime of Saddam Hussein has carried out many atrocities against its own people and has been a highly negative influence in international and regional affairs. We all yearn for a just and peaceful government in Iraq. The Iraqi people have suffered greatly for many years and our prayers are with them. The United Nations estimates its own sanctions, the most severe to ever be imposed on any nation, have already resulted in the deaths of one million people.

Though religious proponents of the war often accused the war’s opponents of denying the threat or evil of Hussein, my analysis does not support such a claim. They did differ in their characterization of Hussein, tending to a slightly more nuanced representation of him. Rather than code him as absolutely symbolically polluted, they described him as “oppressive,” committing “atrocities,” and a “highly negative influence” regionally. However negative, this is surely not the same with comparing Hussein to Hitler as Christian war proponents commonly did. At the same time, the characterization of America is notably nuanced in these selections from the United
Methodists. Suffering is likely to increase rather diminish if the United States were to launch an attack. Compared to the war’s proponents characterization’s the United States is not so much symbolically pure as symbolically vulnerable to committing dramatic acts with terrible, unintended consequences for the people of both Iraq and the United States.

In a letter hand delivered during a meeting with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Bishop Wilton D. Gregory, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, discussed the bishops’ concern that “a pre-emptive, unilateral use of force is difficult to justify at this time.” In discussing the just war criteria of probability of success for a war and proportionality, the Bishops wrote the following quoting the Catholic teaching.

The use of force must have "serious prospects for success" and "must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated" (Catechism, 2309). War against Iraq could have unpredictable consequences not only for Iraq but for peace and stability elsewhere in the Middle East. Would preventive or pre-emptive force succeed in thwarting serious threats or, instead, provoke the very kind of attacks that it is intended to prevent? How would another war in Iraq impact the civilian population in the short and long term? How many more innocent people would suffer and die or be left without homes, without basic necessities, without work? Would the United States and the international community commit to the arduous, long-term task of ensuring a just peace or would a post-Saddam Iraq continue to be plagued by civil conflict and repression, and continue to serve as a destabilizing force in the region?

In this series of rhetorical questions, the Bishops emphasize their concern that the war will have dramatic, unintended consequences for many. They correctly identify
the problems of building a just peace—problems which in retrospect were clearly not give enough attention by the administration or war supporters in general.

The claim by Christian war opponents to know what Iraqis actually wanted or needed in terms of their material well-being and the avoidance of suffering was made stronger by actual social ties, both institutional and personal, between members of these religious groups and Middle Easterners generally and Iraqis in particular. These were absent from the war proponents. At times religious opponents were conduits of religious voices from the Middle East.

The social ties to Iraq, as was discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation, were formed for some religious advocates during their advocacy over the UN sanctions regime meant to force Iraq to comply with Security Council Resolutions after the end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. I asked the United Church of Christ’s Peter Makari about his trip to Iraq.

Sure, this was in January of 1998 and it was an invitation from the Iraqi churches for the WCC in particular to develop a delegation that might come and study the effects of the sanctions because this is a situation where all Iraqis were suffering. And they were having, Iraqi churches were having a hard time getting that word out. And so I as a staff member of the MECC was asked to participate and we got a chance to visit Baghdad and then our group split in two and some went to the north and others of us went to the south and you know throughout the trip were engaging with church leadership as well as Iraqi Red Crescent people and had a chance to see the impact of the breakdown of medical care at facilities, hospitals, as well as infrastructure, particularly water. On the physical bodies of Iraqis, children who had experienced growth stunting and that kind of thing, um, and you know so the two-week visit you know left an impression on all of us and you know, helped us to understand the devastating impact on the real lives of people of the sanctions regime.
Makaris’s encounter with suffering Iraqis was immediate and physical and motivating to his work to advocate on behalf of them.

Similarly, Bishop Melvin Talbert’s of the United Methodist Church involvement stretched back to the beginning of the decade before the Iraq War was contemplated.

Well, to give you a little further background, I was not only, I was involved in the 1990s in the first Gulf, in the Gulf War, so that’s when I made my first trip to Iraq. I was part of a group of 18 religious leaders in the country that went to Iraq in an effort to try to deal with that situation and that happened and then so, so my advocacy dealing with it didn’t just start with 2003. I was adamantly opposed to our moving into Iraq even before then. But, my most salient point in remembering that situation is I was Ecumenical Officer and several of us decided we needed to do something to try to stop the war because Bush was rattling, President Bush was rattling his saber and he was dead set on going into Iraq and we went on a kind of a people to people visit to Iraq.

Why is it so salient to you?

Well, the thing that was, that was so revealing to us as religious people from this country is that the religious people in that country agreed with our assessment is that neither they nor us wanted to go to war. People here didn’t want to go to war, they didn’t either. Now, of course, there were some people and after the President declared it then obviously there was support for that. He sold us a bill of goods on it. To get it done. But ah, but people there did not want the war and we did not want it. So, we had a chance to meet with the people, with the people in general and with religious leaders of the various churches and religious groups in Iraq and they, too, expressed that strong sentiment and pleaded with us to see what we could do to try to stop the war and as we met with people and talked to them, it’s clear that they were not strong supporters of Saddam Hussein. They were caught in between and they did not, they like us thought that he was a tyrant and, but that’s their problem that they have to deal with and not ours. That they have to do what they can do to do that. But he was in our assessment, he was not personally a threat to this nation, and so the purpose of our trip was simply to go to have that person to person contact with people and then to come back here and to share that with the people in this country, to try to get a groundswell on the part of the people here to put pressure on President Bush not to go to war. That was the aim.
Contact and communication with religious bodies and officials in the Iraq region continued through the debate over the Iraq war as well. The UCC’s Peter Makari told me about communication they engaged in with Iraqi church leaders.

But the immediate period before the Iraq War, I think one of the, one of the most important messages we received, churches worldwide including us, received, was a statement by church leaders in Iraq basically saying that we as Iraqi church leaders oppose this war. We’ve been opposed to the sanctions regime and we are, we are very concerned about what a war in our country would mean in terms of the future and I tried to find that statement.

One particular source of information was the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), an ecumenical fellowship of churches in a similar vein as the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches of the United States. Peter Lems told me about them.

We did an enormous amount of work with the Middle East Council of Churches. It was a group that was based in Beirut and really represented all of the Christian denominations and orders in the Middle East and so they had Eastern Orthodox and the Armenians and obviously a great deal of attention on Palestine but also because of the Christian communities in Iraq, they also had better connections inside the country and so when we were beginning to get re-engaged with Iraq, one of our key partners was the Middle East Council of Churches.

As we saw in chapter two, the Bob Edgar of the National Council of Churches led a delegation of religious leaders to Iraq over New Year’s 2003. Speaking on National Public Radio, Edgar describes some of their travels and how those trips affected their claims on Iraq.

Some of us went to Lebanon, and Syria and Jordan, Israel and Palestine recently; and in conversations with the leadership, particularly in Lebanon and Syria, their concern was whatever we think of Saddam Hussein, Americans need to have some compassion on the people of Iraq,
particularly the children of Iraq who have suffered greatly under the sanctions and we all see in the media these pictures of Saddam Hussein holding a rifle; what we don’t see are the people of Iraq who will be heavily inflicted by the bombing and invasion that is contemplated.

Melvin Talbert, reporting back from his contact with Iraqis over the New Year, “Children want to know why the U.S. wants to kill them. Why does the U.S. want to use its imperial power to crush a small nation?”

Again, I should be careful in detailing the limits of my claims. I am not claiming that the claims and representations that the Middle East Council of Churches or the Iraqis encountered in the NCC trip are unproblematic sources of information about Iraqis and the state of their wellbeing. The MECC may not accurately represent the positions and desires of Middle Eastern and Iraqi Christians. The religious leaders’ trip to Iraq was probably also heavily orchestrated by the Hussein administration and therefore the Iraqis representations of their suffering were probably not entirely accurate. As problematic as these sources were, however, I am claiming that, compared to the war proponents lack of any contact, these communications and interactions with representatives of the region, do provide some information and claims about conditions on the ground that can be used to represent Iraqi victims as long-suffering in the advocacy of these religious voices in the debate.

---

52 This would be similar to the manner in which the National Council of Churches is often criticized for being out of touch with large swaths of American Christians.
Representation and Narration

In order to understand how the representation of victims is important in contributing to arguments over wars, we need to review how arguments for wars are made generally and how culture matters for a decision to go to war or not go to war. As we have seen in chapter one, Philip Smith (2005) proffers just such an account. In short, Smith argues that an apocalyptic narration of events is necessary for a war to occur. An apocalyptic narration involves the maximum moral polarization between protagonists and antagonists as they engage in an extraordinary, global struggle over the most important ideals. Smith argues that coding the protagonists as highly virtuous, pure, and the antagonist as highly corrupted, symbolically polluted, is a necessary component of the narration necessary for a convincing cultural argument for war. In this case, Americans are the protagonists while Saddam Hussein is the antagonist. Indeed what we have seen both in the analysis of the administration's arguments and religious war advocates in this dissertation is consistent with Smith’s arguments on the necessity of an apocalyptic narration of events.

However, Smith also reminds us that narration itself is contested and problematic. First, the meanings of events and the dangers faced in a political standoff before a war are far from certain. Accordingly, actors must make genre guesses in which narrative genres are chosen with imperfect knowledge all of the social facts. Because different actors may make different genres guesses, they argue in the public sphere over what genre is the correct and most effective way to narrate events. Smith calls this contested process genre wars. The outcome of this discursive and political process
determines whether a war will occur by determining whether an apocalyptic narration of events emerges hegemonic. Any factor that contributes to a different genre is an important factor in explaining how actors arrive at their positions on a particular war.

How actors see victims is an important factor in how actors arrive at their narrative genre. Why? It either facilitates or hinders the degree of moral polarization between protagonist and antagonist, which is a key component of determining a narrative genre. It also influences the motivation of the protagonist and questions their powers of action. Smith calls narrative moves toward greater moral polarization between protagonist and antagonist, more idealistic motivations, and greater powers of action genre inflating. Moves that mitigate these factors tend to deflate the narrative into a tragic genre. In a tragic narration, the moral difference between protagonist and antagonist is less pronounced, as their motives are mixed and the powers of action are much more mundane and limited than they are in the apocalyptic. The essence of tragedy, according to Smith is a theme of moral descent through character movement and plot development (2005:25).

How you think about victims provides an important entrée into these basic components of narrative structure via its influence on your characterization or representation of protagonist and antagonist. If your protagonist’s action is represented as likely to produce many innocent victims, then their action seems less powerful and more morally questionably. Their actions contribute to a moral debasement of their character as events unfold in the drama. This narrative trajectory is classically tragic.
The relation between genre and the characterization of victims is bidirectional. Smith describes how Aristotle’s conceived of tragedy’s effect on victims: “Tragedy is particularly effective in generating sentiments of identification with the suffering innocent in part because things could have been otherwise if some error had not been made” (2005). Though in Aristotle’s formulation, the tragic genre generates sentiments of identification with suffering innocents, I argue that generating sentiments of identification with suffering innocents is effective in generating tragic narrations. These narrations, in turn, can be used to put the brakes on movement toward war. To remind the nation of the threat to others and the Christian obligation to others in either biblical or just war terms is an attempt to deflate the narration inflation that is necessary for war.

When religious war proponents represented Iraqis as hapless victims in need of an easy rescue by the American forces, they were helping code America as a symbolically pure hero, an extraordinary power fighting for the highest ideals (particularly freedom) against the symbolically polluted Saddam Hussein, an absolutely corrupted dangerous threat to life as we know it. In short, they were constructing an apocalyptic genre guess. When religious war opponents represented Iraqis as long suffering real people, who would be further hurt by an American invasion, they were coding America as on the edge of making a tragic mistake by using its power to set in motion events that would turn out to be beyond its control. Though perhaps motivated by our high ideals, these advocates argued that America’s action would ironically and
tragically result in compromising other of our ideals, especially our Christian ones towards innocents.
CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION: CONSIDERING CONTRIBUTIONS

In this dissertation we have examined and analyzed elite Christian advocates’ discourse and activities and social origins at some length. We have detailed the activities of elites in the public debate and analyzed the cultural structure of their positions both for and against the war. We have examined the factors that led to the use of religious and secular discourse taking a prominent role in the public debate. We have located the source of these positions in the social life and biography of the elites. This brief, concluding chapter has two parts. First, I consider the direct contributions of this dissertation to academic understandings of religion, politics, war, and peace. Second, I consider the contributions of this dissertation to knowledge about public religion’s relations to the politics of war and peace in America.

Direct Contributions

Better Understanding of Christianity’s Ambivalence

This dissertation contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Christianity’s relative autonomy with respect to the sanctioning of violence or peace as well as a clearer articulation of its internal cultural tools that it can use in either stance. By
analyzing variation in religious positions on one case, I can better understand religion’s ambivalence. The findings of this dissertation can be built upon with comparative work that looks at variation in religion’s ambivalence across cases that allow for meaningful comparisons across important contextual factors.

Analysis of Christianity’s capacity to justify war or not tends to focus, understandably enough, on the ideas and articulation of Christian just war theory. For good reasons, this is the object of inquiry of ethicists into Christian ambivalence. My analysis, however, suggests that these meanings of great internal importance to Christian thought are not the only categories of meaning that inform and differentiate between supporting and critical war positions. These are important to a fuller understanding of Christian ambivalence. They might not be the principle categories which Christians think in when they evaluate their own positions on the war, but they are meaningful nonetheless. Identifying and describing the meanings that inform distinct Christian positions on war helps us achieve what Abbot (2004) calls an explanation in the semantic mode. In the semantic mode, I translate my observations of a social phenomenon from the understandings and meanings of social actors into other explanatory understandings so that the original phenomenon is better and more concisely understood.

With respect to our understanding of the relations between religion, nation, and state this dissertation both confirms earlier findings and adds nuance to those understandings. The social scientific literature and this dissertation both stress the potential power for legitimating violence when the spheres of religious and national
identity significantly overlap. But this is not purely a domination of religion by national interests and understandings. This dissertation highlights how religion has some degree of autonomy in taking political positions. Additionally, this dissertation considers religion’s relation to the state as an important factor in how religion legitimates or criticizes violence. This dissertation focuses on war making—the distinctive capacity of states, and therefore illustrates the importance of considering religion’s relations vis-à-vis state-sponsored violence. Despite this focus on state-sponsored violence, I believe the state should be a central category for the study of religious support for nonstate-sponsored violence as well. The power of the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of force casts a long shadow. Religious legitimation of nonstate violence often occurs as a consequence of a negative evaluation of the state’s legitimacy.

Better Understanding of Religious Political Participation in America

This dissertation also contributes to better understanding the factors that lead to the prevalence of religion in public policy debate. Most broadly, some contexts are particularly amenable to religious interpretation and religiously inflected arguments for policies in response to these contexts. The attacks of September 11, 2001 created a crisis of meaning and interpretation that was deep and threatening to American identity and security. In response, the nation made sense of the slaughter and suffering in religious terms and using cultural repertoires that reached deep into America’s civic and religious cultural repertoires. As we have seen, this use of religious cultural resources continued forward into the President’s case for war with Iraq. Better understanding this
case allows us to see how both context and interpretive inertia can contribute to a public sphere being particularly amenable to religious participation and discourse. Often the subject of a public policy discussion is seen as particularly amenable to religion because religion may offer some level of expertise on the matter. Though public discussions of war may vary to the degree that they are open to religious contributions, in this case we see the importance of context, historical precursors, and the rhetorical lead of the President in making this debate open to religion.

Further, this dissertation helps explain differences in the use of mixed religious and secular rhetoric between war opponents and war supporters, a type of empirical variation in discourse use on a particular issue that is seldom addressed in the academic literature. By considering strategic and identity factors that contribute to the greater use of a mix of secular and religious argumentation by war opponents, this dissertation again foregrounds the importance of internal religious factors and highlights the relative degree of autonomy that religion has in terms of how it participates in public debates. Even given a context significantly open to religious argumentation, religious advocates can and do speak in a secular as well as religious register, depending on their strategic calculations as well as their understanding of what they offer to the discussion. This dissertation follows the lead of Yamane (2005), in articulating a middle position examining the conditions under which religious advocates can use both different mixes of religious and secular repertoires in their political participation.
Understanding the Social Origins of Religious Positions on the War

Having explained how religion varies in both identity relations and cultural repertoires with respect to either legitimating or criticizing war, this dissertation also contributes to further understanding of how advocates come to these respective positions. By conceptualizing Christianity’s two ambivalent positions towards the war as religious traditions this dissertation argues that we can understand taking a position on the war for religious reasons as akin to participating in a tradition and changing one’s position as a Christian with respect to one’s general acceptance of war as a course of normal politics is tantamount to a conversion to a new religious tradition. This lens lets us understand the factors that lead to coming to a religious position on the war through the theoretical insights of accounts of religious conversion. My data suggest that so-called conversion experiences in the form of significant, involved and affecting contact with victims of structural violence are a central factor in conversion of advocates to a peace and justice Christian identity.

This finding expands our understanding of how our social networks and significant social experiences inform our capacity to imagine the lives of other potential victims of structural violence not yet encountered. With the benefit of hindsight, we see that religious opponents’ of the war “vision” of the probable suffering of Iraqis was accurate, while that of war supporters (when it was articulated, it was not always considered) was inaccurate. Empathy for one group of victims transferred to another group and enabled the accurate imagining of the possible suffering of another group. This seems to suggest a corollary to the well-known contact hypothesis (Allport 1954) in
social psychology. The contact hypothesis suggests that a way to improve conflicted
group relations is to have positive interpersonal interaction under conditions such as of
equality, cooperation, and fair rules of interaction. My account suggests that social
familiarity or contact with victims of structural violence may be generalizable to other
victims, both actual and potential. Surely, this finding is preliminary and in need of
further empirical investigation, the precise conditions under which contact with
structural victims leads to significant changes in identity needs to be tested and
clarified. Nevertheless, this finding helps this dissertation contribute to a more nuanced
understanding of the social foundations of religious political commitments.

Broader Contributions

Finally, as a way to conclude this dissertation, I briefly consider the contribution
of this dissertation to several important public discussions in this country. Here, I
broaden my scope a bit and briefly consider how this dissertation can hopefully add light
to the examination of a number of important issues challenging the United States. It
seems appropriate, in a dissertation which takes public conversation and debate
seriously, to at least aim to add to ongoing and contested discussions of contemporary
importance. These issues include public religion in America, understanding the threat of
religious violence, and evaluating the lessons of the Iraq War.

Public Religion in America

This dissertation affords a look at public religion at the very center of an
important public debate in America. As such it offers a valuable opportunity to
understand the role of public religion in American public life more generally, an issue of
great interest for many. Whether one is a strict secularist—who laments the enduring
power of religion in American public life, an affirmer of public religion in America—who
rejoices in it, or at any middle point between these two extreme positions, religion is
likely to stay a force in American public life. While at times, discussions of public religion
can focus primarily on either religion’s presence or absence in public life, I believe the
conversation could be improved by a consideration of the kind of religious voices that
are influential and their consequences. Casanova has argued that public religion should
not be evaluated solely by its ability to impose its agenda upon society, but also by its
ability to inform the debate with concern for moral issues (1994). I would add that
public religion should also be evaluated by the quality and impact of its concerns for
moral issues. What kind of public religion leads to wise policy decisions? What kind of
moral insight do varieties of public religion add to public debates? How do different
religious cultures and worldviews impact the real world? Though these are certainly
contentious questions—difficult to resolve definitively, they are certainly worthy of our
contemplation. Considering the impact of public religion in the debate on the Iraq War
may contribute to our understanding of public religion more generally.

Understanding Religious Violence after 9/11

America is a powerful country only slowly realizing a strange paradox about
itself. It is the strongest country in the world’s history, projecting and using its power
across the entire planet in ways never before seen. Yet, its population remains woefully
ignorant of the rest of the world. For the most part, we Americans, when we “see” the rest of the world at all, do so through distinctly American “lenses” that blind us to others’ reality. September 11, changed that, in part, by making the average Americans more aware of the rest of the planet, at least the threat of Al Quaeda and Islamic terrorism. Many have come to an understanding that approaches that articulated by Huntington’s Clash of Civilizations, imagining a clash between the political recalcitrant and resisting strains of Islam against western modernity and threatening the political, moral, and security order of it. This vision, though it varies considerably in its precise formulation, essentially still sees a strict polarization between some element of Islam and the Christian tradition—broadly defined in the west—that results in religious conflict.

To this understanding of either the religious sanctioning or origins of violence, this dissertation offers a different analytic lens. Rather than finding the pulsating source of violent conflict only in inter-religious boundaries, this dissertation suggests, you can profitably search for this source in intra-religious boundaries. If you want to understand religion’s capacity to work towards peace or conflict, you need to understand differences within traditions as much as you need to understand differences between them. This suggests we are facing a Clash within Civilizations as much as we are facing a Clash between Civilizations.

This is not to suggest a moral equivalency between different types of religious sanctioning of violence. Rather it is to suggest we have much to learn from considering the full range of empirical manifestations of religious violence in the world. The real
danger in seeing potential violence primarily in other religions stops our understanding of our common humanity and our shared frail predispositions and predilections that continue to transcend the differences of geography, culture, and religion.

Understanding Iraq

What are the lessons of Iraq? Certainly one of the central lessons addresses how we got into a war, that from the vantage point of hindsight seemed (at least to some) to be unnecessary, optional, chosen. When the weapons of mass destruction never materialized and the intelligence was shown to be a sham, the questioning began. Historians, social scientists, and other concerned citizens will debate how the country managed to get into the war, when so many stated reasons for it turned out to be false. This dissertation explains how religion contributed to this policy outcome. It helped construct a narrative that lead to war.

The narratives that we construct are of importance for the good of our collectivity and for the good of other collectivities with which we engage. The full practical and moral assessment of an invasion of Iraq will be argued for many years. The central questions being what perspective, which telling of events, do we wish had won out? Which of these lead to the right assessment of the risks and necessity of going to war? Which, in the terms of just war, lead to the right prudential judgment on the facts of the case?

Writing now, with the end of United States’ troop presence in Iraq just months away, for better or worse, I am painfully aware of the gravity of war and the importance
of a decision to begin it. The United States has lost almost 4,500 souls to the conflict and tens of thousands of wounded soldiers have returned to try to rebuild their lives. In Iraq, the toll is nearly unimaginable. Yes they are free of the tyrannical Hussein, but tens of thousands have died, many more wounded and all live with deep scars and insecurity that most likely will continue to mark the country for years to come. I hope this dissertation serves as a starting point for reflection and discussion on both how religion has contributed to the discussion and decision to go to war in Iraq as well as how it should contribute to similar discussions in the future.
This dissertation analyzes the Iraq War debate by examining two principal data sources: public documents produced by war advocates at the time and interviews with key participants in the debate. These two sources of data allow me insight into the cultural structure of the debate itself—primarily via the analysis of the public documents, and the process of producing the debate—via hearing the stories of my interview respondents. Interviews let me see the full range of activities and efforts engaged in by advocates, which may not be knowable from only investigating those items that made it into the public record. For example, in my interviews I received far more information on the meetings with foreign officials by religious opponents of the war than what made it into the public record of these meetings. In what follows I explain my methodological choices and their implications for my investigation.

Documentary Evidence of the Public Sphere Debate

I analyzed public documents of arguments for and against the war in order to understand the structure and content of the public debate and to compare religious arguments both for and against the war. These documents were published or authored by religious and secular advocates who took a clear position on the war. The religious
documents I read and analyzed ranged widely in form, from net postings, to
denominational newsletters and magazines, to parachurch publications, to articles in
secular periodicals. I read documents put out by the principal, important religious
advocates using a purposive sample (Singleton and Straits 2005) in which I identified all
the documents I could gather produced by typical and important national-level
advocates within participating traditions or types of advocate, on each side of the issue.
While I almost certainly failed to get the entire universe of these documents, I certainly
covered a large proportion of the extant documents and advocates. Given the lack of a
sampling frame and the nature of archival research, even in the digital age, I believe my
sample is modestly representative of the parameters of the religious debate. To
participate at the national level means that they spoke to an audience that was, at least
potentially, nationwide even if they spoke primarily to members of their own tradition
across the nation. To be religious, these either worked or spoke on behalf of a religious
institution or otherwise identified as religious in their participation.

Why focus on national-level data? Religion clearly played a part in regional and
local discussions, congregational discourse and in the many, more private conversations
among friends, co-workers, and families around the United States. Most of the content
of these conversations are lost to us know, save in the spotty memory of our fellow
Americans. And so, in this dissertation, I focus on the national discussion where a record
of the debate exists. But this focus is due to more than just the absence of good data on
more local public debate. First, the decision to go to war was a national one, concerning
the federal government, and therefore the national discussion was most relevant to the
actual decision making process and most dependent on national political support.

Second, given the highly mediated nature of the public sphere, I argue that the national level of discourse is largely constitutive of more regional discussion and debate. The national discourse largely sets the limits of the discursive field for the public discussion at any other level (see Spillman 1995; Wuthnow 1989). The parameters of these smaller, more local debates are largely (though not entirely) set by the national level debate. Alternative voices may struggle to make it into the public debate. Many of these alternative voices can largely be heard and spoken along networks of sympathetic actors, but their message may prove problematic when uttered in the larger public sphere.

Most of the documents analyzed for this dissertation were gleaned from electronic sources. Some organizations have extensive online archives, which allowed me to find their organization's documents easily. Fortunately, for those organizations that did not have online records, near the beginning of my research, the Library of Congress launched the Iraq War Web Archive. This resource allowed me to find archived web pages from the spring of 2003 and greatly helped in tracking down old documents. For a few organizations, electronic records of their statements on the war were not available, so I got paper copies of them and either scanned or transcribed them into electronic form.

Although many treatments of the public sphere tend to focus, both conceptually and empirically, on the electronic media exclusively (see Putnam 2000—especially his definition of the public sphere—cited by me elsewhere—and others), I wish to expand
my conceptual and empirical consideration of the public sphere to consider a wider variety of speech acts than those merely echoed through the news media. The internet has greatly democratized the public sphere (obvious cites go in here later) and has allowed a greater variety of self-posted information to be disseminated easily and broadly by a just a few posters. Of course this very ease undercuts the relative efficacy of publishing online by introducing far more competitors for your (potential) audience’s attention and time. Nevertheless, the postings of actors, both religious and non-religious are an important part of the early twenty-first century public sphere and should be accounted for in any account of the contemporary public discussion.

Furthermore, I wish to consider the mass mobilizations of anti-war protesters as acts of discourse that perform speech acts in the public sphere in their very performance and in the commentary they engender throughout the public sphere. There were huge national and global protests in the period before the war and they deserve to be part of an analysis of the treatment of the public discussion before the war, because they both made important statements and generated many more revealing statements about the differing assumptions and worldviews of partisans on the war issue.

I looked for statements by active and important participants in the public debate. Some of these participants represented large portions of American Christianity. But importance in the debate was not limited to consideration of the size of the religious tradition being represented. Some active and important contributions were made by advocates despite the small share of American religion for which they spoke.
For example, Quakers make up a miniscule percentage of American religion, yet their lobby, FCNL, was widely reputed, especially by anti-war activists, to be one of the most effective organizations and voices on Capitol Hill on the war issue.

Interviews to Understand Processes of Cultural Production

I used interviews as a means to gather data on how the debate documents were produced that may be otherwise obscured if I only analyze the final documents that made it into the public record. I used interviews to better understand a full range of cultural, organizational, historical, and personal influences on the processes of producing the debate on the Iraq War. Additionally, speaking with the public advocates helped me better understand the immediate context of the debate from the perspective of those most fully engaged in it. Despite the gap in time between the heated battle over Iraq in 2002 and 2003 and my interviews, conducted between 2009 and 2011, many respondents had vivid memories of their challenges and successes and their testimony to the experience helped me better understand how religious repertoires are used in the heat of political debate. Each interview was recorded and professionally transcribed.

I interviewed all of the principal religious advocates in this debate that were willing to talk to me and were able to schedule an interview. First, I tried to speak with the authors of the documents in the public record. Second, I used a snowball sampling method, asking the religious advocates I interviewed to identify other important religious actors in the debate. The religious advocates include major denominational
leaders, and parachurch leaders as well as social movement leaders, social commentateurs, think tank writers, and lobbyists who work for religious organizations, publicly identify as religious, or claim to articulate a distinctly religious viewpoint. I asked religious advocates about the theology and interests motivating their advocacy, their assessment of their own resources that helped and hindered them in their work, how they collaborated with other organizations, how they communicated with their constituents, and how they thought about their tactical decision making. For the full interview schedule, please see Appendix B.

To better understand how religious advocates and religious discourse interacted with the broader secular movement against the war, I also interviewed a number of secular advocates in the debate before the war. (For these interviews, I asked the religious questions as they seemed relevant to the interview and typically added a few questions about their understanding of the role of religion in the debate.) These interviews proved to be very useful in understanding the importance of religious discourse in the larger discussion and to demonstrate that religious voices and language were esteemed by other actors in the public debate. I interviewed most respondents in person in Washington DC and in New York, though some of the interviews were done on the phone for logistical reasons. I noticed no differences between the in person interviews and the phone ones. I believe because my respondents are professional commentators (in one form or another) they had distinct ease and comfort in articulating their detailed positions and recollections of the debate, in either type of interview.
In general, advocates were quite willing to speak with me and apparently quite comfortable talking with me on the record about their articulated positions and their recollections of the public debate. This is not surprising, given that speaking on policy issues is their occupation. Some advocates, however, were not willing to speak with me. The only pattern I could discern for these non-responders was that some tended to be from positions of considerable power in the past, on either side of the debate. Unfortunately, their absence from my data prevents me from insight into how power might influence advocacy on the matter of the Iraq War. Otherwise, I am confident that my interviewees fairly represent the range of religious positions on the debate. That being said, I look forward to doing more interviews for incorporation into revisions of this work for publication. I am particularly interested in speaking to more evangelical leaders to better understand some of the evangelical silence in the debate. For example, in my interviews I have heard of tensions in the National Association of Evangelicals that did not permit the organization to issue support for the war, despite many member organizations and representatives support for it.

Interviewing the people who were central in these struggles and ascertaining their structural position, cultural knowledge, historical conditions, and biographical

\[53\] Luckily, on the war supporting side, there is already a good deal of journalistic and insider accounts of administrative policies printed in the last several years and barring full access to the administration officials involved in putting out their message, these accounts do help fill in the gaps of my data on the administration specifically. There were other advocates, formerly in positions of political power, who did not participate in interviews. For these, unfortunately, I do not have insight into their participation from interview data.
experiences, allows me to analyze the critical and creative choices (Jasper 1997) they made in this debate and the possible importance of their formative biographical and religious experiences that helped them become religious advocates (Nepstad 2004b).

Because the people I interviewed are public figures and made comments that are part of the public record, I did not have to offer blanket anonymity for their comments in interviews as is common in sociological research. Rather, my respondents could select to participate in this study confidentially or not. Only one interviewee wanted to do the interview anonymously. You can see the names and institutional affiliations of my respondents in Appendix C.

Analysis of Data

Using MAXqda qualitative software, I coded and analyzed the transcribed interviews and the digitized public documents using an inductive method, adjusting codes and categories as data analysis proceeded. I generated categories inductively from a close analysis of the original documents, especially important categories of distinction between the two positions of advocacy. This analysis allows me to shed some light on the discursive repertoires these advocates articulated and do the empirical analysis featured in this dissertation.

But, what may be gained theoretically from the examination of one case? How does one reasonably generalize beyond it? Focusing on one case can contribute to theory most effectively via the logic of the extended case method (Burawoy 1991). Often, particular cases can reveal the limits of a theory. Burawoy argues that the in-
depth analysis of one case can be used to extend current theoretical understanding to
cover a broader universe of cases. In accommodating a theory to challenging cases,
theory can be improved and made incrementally more generalizable. In this manner, my
findings from analyzing this one case can contribute to a more generalized theory that
can help cover a broader constellation of cases than was previously possible. The case of
the Iraq War provides an opportunity to add to our understanding of this dissertation’s
research questions.
APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

(This interview is semi-structured, it will be supplemented substantially by the investigator’s knowledge of the particular history of advocacy of the interviewee.)

BASICS
What does your organization do in Washington?
What do you do in the organization?

BACKGROUND
BIOGRAPHICAL
  Quick basics: age, SES of upbringing, education, rural vs. urban, experience of church growing up.
  How has your personal story informed your advocacy on the Iraq War?
  Why did you care about this issue?

INSTITUTIONAL
  How does the history of your organization impact its advocacy?
  What specific events or lessons were influential to the organization?
  How does your organization relate to other religious institutions?
  Do you represent any group or interest? If so,
  How does your constituency inform you of their positions?
  How did you communicate your position to your constituency?
  What resources does your organization have for advocacy?
  How did your organization’s attitude toward or relationships with the presidential administration influence your advocacy?

WORLDVIEW
  What were your basic assumptions about the way the world works that influenced how you advocated?
How did religious faith inform your work?
How did political concerns inform your advocacy?
Why are you different than your opponents on this?

TACTICAL DECISIONS
What was your basic plan for advocacy before the war?
Are there any tactics that you dismissed quickly?
Are there any plans that you considered, but ultimately decided against?
Did you switch tactics at any point in the course of the debate? If so, why?
To whom did you try to convey your message?
How did you convey your message?
How do you think your message was received? How do you know this?

COLLABORATIONS
Who were your allies in your efforts?
Did you work with or consult them during the debate? If so, how did this occur?
How were you similar to your allies? How were you different?
Who did you think were your competition, in terms of competing messages on Iraq?
How were you similar to the competition? How different?

ENTERING THE PUBLIC SPHERE
To whom were you addressing your advocacy? If different audiences,
How did you talk to different audiences?
Do you have to change your rhetoric when you advocate to different people?
What were your biggest struggles or challenges in making your case? Why?
What was your best success (or successes) in the debate? How did these occur?

CONCLUSION
Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion?
APPENDIX C:

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

(listed alphabetically by last name)

Anonymous

Phyllis Bennis
Director New Internationalism Project
Institute for Policy Studies (secular)

Leslie Cagan
Coordinator
United for Peace and Justice (secular)

Sean Casey
Professor of Christian Ethics
Wesley Seminary

John Bryson Chane
Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Washington, DC

Mary Elizabeth Clark
Lobbyist
Network, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby

David Cortright
President
Fourth Freedom Foundation (secular)
Founding member
Win Without War (secular)
Michael Cromartie (consulted for information on evangelicals, interview not transcribed nor analyzed)
Vice President
Director, Evangelicals in Civic Life
Ethics and Public Policy Center

Marie Dennis
Director
Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns

Robert Edgar
General Secretary
National Council of Churches

Gary Ferdman
Executive Director and Membership and Development Coordinator
Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities (secular)

Trevor Fitzgibbon
Public Relations
Fenton Communications

Catherine Gordon
Associate for International Issues
Office of Public Witness
Presbyterian Church, USA

Barbara Green
Director
Churches Center for Theology and Public Policy

Frank Griswold
Presiding Bishop and Primate
Episcopal Church USA

Mark W. Harrison
Director, Peace with Justice Studies Program
General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church

Tom Hart
Director of Government Relations
Episcopal Church USA
Deal Hudson
Publisher
Crisis

Robert Keithan
Director, Washington Office for Advocacy
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations

Richard Land
President
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
Southern Baptist Convention

Peter Lems
Iraq Program Assistant
Peacebuilding Unit
American Friends Service Committee

Marie Lucey
Associate Director for Social Mission
Leadership Conference of Women’s Religious

Peter Makari
Executive for Middle East and Europe
Global Ministries
United Church of Christ

Kevin Martin
Executive Director
Peace Action (secular)

Brian McLaren
Evangelical Author

Bridget Moix
Legislative Secretary
Peaceful Prevention of Deadly Conflict
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Father Joseph Nangle
Franciscan Priest
Pax Christi
Michael Novak  
George Frederick Jewett Scholar in Religion, Philosophy, and Public Policy  
American Enterprise Institute  

Jack Patterson  
Quaker Representative to the United Nations and Director,  
Quaker United Nations Office  

Gerald Powers  
International Policy Office  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  

John Rempel  
Mennonite Central Committee Liaison to the United Nations  
Mennonite Central Committee  

Rabbi David Saperstein  
Director and Counsel  
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism  

Duane Shank  
Senior Policy Advisor  
Sojourners  

C. Joseph Sprague  
Bishop, Northern Illinois Conference  
United Methodist Church  

Jean Stokan  
Policy Director  
Pax Christi USA  

Melvin Talbert  
Ecumenical Officer for the Council of Bishops  
United Methodist Church  

Kathy Thornton  
Director  
Network, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  

Mark Tooley  
President  
The Institute on Religion and Democracy
Joe Volk
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Jim Wallis
Editor-in-Chief/Chief Executive Officer
Sojourners

Arthur Waskow
Rabbi and Director
The Shalom Center

George Weigel
Distinguished Senior Fellow
William E. Simon Chair in Catholic Studies
Ethics and Public Policy Center

Jim Winkler
General Secretary
General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church

Alan Wisdom
Vice President
The Institute on Religion and Democracy
REFERENCES


377


