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“Every Nation Except Our Own”: The Social Gospel, Anti-Immigrant Sentiments, and U.S.

Foreign Policy

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Submitted for Honors

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In the summer of 2023, New York City found itself in a crisis. Thousands of migrants were pouring in from various countries, mostly Venezuela and Nicaragua.¹ The overflow meant that the city was housing migrants in gyms.² Such was the problem of too many people overwhelming the city; the supply of shelters was dwindling fast. In New York City, all residents have a right to shelter, and there is no limit on how long migrants can stay in an emergency shelter.³ The population in shelters had risen by 50,000 since 2022, and more immigrants continued to come, driven by Republican governors and nonprofit groups who sent migrants to the city knowing they would find help there.⁴ This led to conflict, as costs for housing the migrants ballooned, federal assistance proved insufficient, and the shelter system reached capacity.⁵ This accumulation of challenges forced New York City's mayor, Eric Adams, to spend on sending migrants to hotels outside the city. This development upset Republican officials in rural and suburban parts of New York state, who did not want the newcomers disrupting their towns.⁶

How to resolve this impossible situation? Eric Adams' administration urged the federal government to expand TPS, or Temporary Protected Status, to the largest populations of arrivals.⁷ This would allow new arrivals to have eighteen months in which they enjoyed legal status, including eligibility for work authorizations that would allow them to support themselves economically.⁸ But Adams faced resistance from the Biden administration.⁹ They were reluctant to heed his pleas because they feared that expediting work permits and expanding TPS would incentivize more migrants to come to the United States. Higher numbers of arrivals would provide further fuel for Republican attacks focused on the allegedly uncontrollable nature of the immigration issue.¹⁰ The stalemate on the situation proved dire enough that at one point, Adams went so far as to proclaim, "This issue will destroy New York City."¹¹ Those are strong words from the mayor of a reliably liberal city, one that has consistently been defined by the immigrants who choose to call it home.

The push and pull between opposing interests reveals a familiar dynamic. Most recent academic literature and punditry has focused on the anti-immigrant sentiment of the right.¹² The New York episode is a reminder that the left, both today and historically, has not been consistently favorable to immigration. In his comprehensive history of the United States' immigration policy, Roger Daniels points out that people in the United States often take pride in America's immigrant past while simultaneously harboring suspicion for the continuity of its immigrant present.¹³ Thus, New York's dilemma is nothing new.

The crisis in New York City points to the questions at the heart of this thesis. How is it that liberals, often associated by contemporary members of both parties with an embrace of diversity, resort to borderline hostile rhetoric when immigration overwhelms a city's resources? Additionally, when many on the opposing, conservative side are associated with religion, how have the attitudes of the religious left influenced modern attitudes toward this issue? In order to answer these questions, this thesis will provide an examination of the social gospel, a pillar of liberal Protestantism. Despite its high ideals and its quest to improve the earthly world, the figures who defined this movement were also complicit in perpetuating negative attitudes and associations with racial minorities. Even as theologically liberal Protestants trumpeted the virtues of social solidarity and railed against the evils of exploitation, their rhetoric hinted at the prevalent prejudices of the time. While the social-gospel figures were not unique in their antipathy toward immigrants, a critical examination of their views reveals liberal Christianity's failure to practice what it preaches.

First, the thesis will subject Washington Gladden's work to scrutiny and analyze how his attitudes toward the Bible reveal a skepticism toward other religions that can be extended to an apathy for immigrants. Next, the thesis will examine Walter Rauschenbusch's work and how his

views, though more progressive, culminate in the same result. The thesis will then briefly discuss how the social gospel, and Rauschenbusch's thinking in particular, applies to domestic labor issues. Following that, the thesis will delve into how the social gospel's larger aims laid the groundwork for a missionary attitude that diminishes dissimilar countries and their cultures. Specifically, the thesis will assess how the social gospel's ideas remain prevalent in today's discourse around bringing democracy and American values to other nations. It will conclude by discussing how the social gospel could have benefited from an embrace of multiculturalism, and highlight some of the positive impacts the movement has inspired.

The thesis will examine the extent to which the social gospel influenced contemporary American attitudes toward immigration, both directly and through the lenses of closely related issues of labor and foreign policy. This combination of topics is not one that has been extensively covered in previous literature. There is a fair amount written about the social-gospel thinkers' individual racism¹⁴, but no scholar thus far has directly tied their ideas to immigration policy. When immigration is discussed alongside the social gospel, no scholar has made the connection a central focus.¹⁵ Similarly, there is literature linking the social gospel to American foreign policy, but that literature fails to take into account how imperialism and anti-immigrant sentiment are intertwined.¹⁶ Thus, the goal of this thesis is to show that Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch's writings laid the foundation for some deeply problematic anti-immigrant sentiments prevalent today.

Definition and Themes of the Social Gospel

The social gospel movement took shape during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This new way of thinking sought to improve the world by applying Christian, specifically Protestant, morality to potential social reforms.¹⁷ According to the earliest literature, it was also born out of alarm with the rise of class antagonism and large-scale production, which facilitated concentrated control by powerful interests.¹⁸ At first, ministers of the social gospel were in agreement that there was a futility in broaching moral or emotional appeals to change economic policy; the law of supply and demand was unchangeable, and they could no more influence it than they could determine interest rates or commodity prices.¹⁹ Aside from these general themes of religion as a means of engineering social change, scholars differ on the central motivation of this movement. Matthew Bowman argues that the social gospel was steeped in a religiously-oriented rhetoric of spiritual rebirth, and, as such, its evangelical style overrode efforts toward substantive reform.²⁰ Maurice Latta seems to confirm this sense of lackluster achievement by pointing out that not only were the early social-gospel ministers united in opposing socialism²¹, they were also repeating and legitimizing the secular objections against it²², objections which put a high value on self-motivation, competition, and the necessity of selfishness in the functioning of society.²³ Meanwhile, Alfredo Romagosa contends that the social gospel arose out of a sense of dissatisfaction with charity's effectiveness in bettering the lives of the underprivileged.²⁴ The movement's leaders were united in their belief that part of Christianity's mission was to improve the earthly world, and that improving the world held equal importance to achieving personal or spiritual salvation.

Apart from this general consensus about familiar liberal principles, scholars differ on who the key figures of the social gospel were. Gary Dorrien, in his comprehensive study of social ethics, includes Washington Gladden, Walter Rauschenbusch, Josiah Strong, and Harry F. Ward, among others.²⁵ In a study of liberal Protestant progressivism, Richard Wightman Fox cites Henry Ward Beecher, Washington Gladden, and Walter Rauschenbusch.²⁶ Meanwhile, in his history of liberal Christianity, Matthew Hedstrom includes such figures as Rufus Jones and Harry Emerson Fosdick.²⁷ Other scholars contend that the social gospel included mission-oriented ministers who shifted focus away from purely conversion and more toward humanitarian goals.²⁸ This thesis will only focus on the writings of Walter Rauschenbusch and Washington Gladden, as they are the two figures most often discussed in the available literature on this movement. Gladden was called the “father of the social gospel,”²⁹ while Rauschenbusch was one of the movement’s last proponents, its last champion before World War I made its idealism obsolete to many.³⁰ Both also had the common experience of being ministers in urban areas where immigrants and working-class people settled. Gladden was a fixture in Columbus, Ohio, an industrializing city with coal miners and other laborers.³¹ Meanwhile, Rauschenbusch served in New York City’s Hell’s Kitchen neighborhood, which was infamous for its concentration of nonwhite settlers.³² For these reasons, it is clear that Gladden and Rauschenbusch defined the social-gospel movement’s agenda, shape and direction, which make them the best candidates for analysis here.

The social gospel’s connection to immigration policy is not the only connection between religious identity and race relations, however. Scholar Ralph Luker directly examines how the social gospel failed to address or secure racial justice. He notes that in the 1890s, Washington Gladden and Lyman Abbott opposed a bill that would have required elections to be supervised by

federal authorities.³³ Abbott and Gladden opposed this bill because they thought government involvement in elections was dangerous, and lack of federal supervision would allow states the freedom to disenfranchise illiterate voters, who were disproportionately Black.³⁴ Social-gospel leaders were also slow to condemn lynching, instead focusing their energy on debating whether or not it was worse than rape committed by African-Americans. Washington Gladden simply lamented lynching as a “disgrace” that exhibited a “relapse into barbarism.”³⁵ Further, when a deep recession hit in the mid-1890s, the missionary groups that often hosted the early stages of the progressive Christian movement faced massive debt and were forced to shut down, a fate shared by anti-lynching groups who lacked white Southern support.³⁶ Gladden’s submission to the still-widespread opposition to an end to lynching demonstrates the social gospel’s failure to truly carve a path toward social change.

Gladden, Christian Supremacy, and Immigrant Minorities

Washington Gladden’s own writing is revealing of racial attitudes as well. Though he was liberal in theological matters, his reverence for Christianity itself displays a disregard for outside religions. In the final section of his book, “Who Wrote the Bible,” Gladden analyzes why the book is important even though it is not infallible. His arguments center on his view that the Bible is the one true guide to morality. He asserts that “to whom character is more precious than anything else in the world, this book is worth more than any other book can be.”³⁷ He further argues that “nothing else in the world is to be compared with it.”³⁸ Gladden’s words illustrate a belief in the Bible as a roadmap for good morality. Yet the flaw in this argument is that it delegitimizes other religious texts. The implication for immigration policy is that if other religious texts are morally inferior to the Bible, so too, then, are the foreign outsiders who revere

them. This directly ties into his belief that the intervention of Christian America would greatly aid the development of foreign civilizations. During the late 1890s, when the United States was intervening in Cuba and the Philippines, Gladden wrote: “If we have no colonial machinery, we must invent some” to help the nation govern itself after being freed from Spanish rule.³⁹ A year later, Gladden characterized the people of the Philippines as “child races” and asserted, “To expect that such populations will be elevated by governing themselves is unadulterated foolishness.”⁴⁰ He argued that in terms of civilization, “the stronger lift up the weaker,” and since the United States had proven its might in removing Spain from the equation, the United States was justified in exercising dominance.⁴¹ These sentiments are ironic given the United States’ pride in not being a colonial power like Spain. And Gladden’s pride in America’s potential to exemplify leadership over a supposedly inferior race demonstrates his flawed liberalism.

Though some scholars laud Gladden for his ideological flexibility⁴², his inflexibility on the Bible’s position as the ultimate moral compass negates this quality. Gladden deserves credit for being a practical observer of social change and being open-minded as circumstances evolved. He criticized both capitalism and socialism for having “self-interest” as its “sole motive power.”⁴³ This balanced pragmatism made itself known in Gladden’s approach to US intervention in Cuba and the Philippines as well. He noted that the United States’ interference should be “at an end” if the liberated state proved able to govern itself⁴⁴, yet he also believed the United States should take on a leadership role if a newly democratized state failed to pull its act together. While this moderate outlook may appear to be an asset, it points to the heart of liberal hypocrisy: another power oppressing a weaker nation is bad, but if the United States does likewise, it is an act of liberation.

Shifting back to Gladden's rhetoric on the Bible, it is evident that he sees it as a positive influence for the world, which in turn reflects his views about Protestantism's position as a benevolent necessity. Gladden again asserts that the Bible is "the record of ... moral progress in the one nation of the earth to which morality has been the great concern."⁴⁵ The implication here is that the United States is the true model of good behavior because the Protestant understanding of the Bible occupies the mainstream in the popular culture. Gladden holds the view that the Bible expresses "the goal which God has marked for human progress."⁴⁶ While it is true that Gladden could not have foreseen the undermining of cultures which his views endorse, it is also not difficult to imagine that Gladden would not have particularly cared if non-Protestant cultures were effaced. "If you ask for a proof of the existence of God," Gladden writes, it is easy to find him in America's "institutions and its laws, its teachers and its legislators, its seers and its lawgivers, in all the forces that combine to make up the great movement of the national life."⁴⁷ Gladden further comments, "I see God present all the while, shaping the ends of this nation, no matter how perversely it may rough-hew them, till at last it stands on an elevation far above the other nations."⁴⁸

With these sentiments, Gladden engages in an objectification of the Bible that directly ties Protestantism to national identity. The equation of the Bible with America's right to shape other cultures can also be linked to how immigrants feel enormous pressure to assimilate once they are in the United States. They are compelled to speak English, abandon cultural practices that accentuate their otherness, hide their religious beliefs, or a combination of the three. Gladden displays this attitude more directly when he writes: "The Christian church in modern life will be compelled to meet questions raised by the presence of Buddhists and Confucians and Mohammedans, and to prove its superiority to these religions."⁴⁹ While he may not have directly

supported attacks against Asian-Americans or Muslims if he were alive today, it would not be unreasonable to argue that he sees their culture as primitive or unequal. “The best religion is that which worships the best god,” Gladden asserts. “And when we compare the Christian conception of God with the Buddhist conception or the Mohammedan conception, we cannot fail to see which is the highest and the purest.”⁵⁰ For context, it is important to remember that in this time, religion was the very essence of culture. In other words, these two elements were often equated. Many of Gladden’s fellow Protestant ministers took for granted that they lived in a Christian nation, and that assumption carried with it the notion that Christianity could not be separated from government or civic life.⁵¹ Thus, Gladden’s view that a particular form of Christianity constitutes the purest form of religion reveals an underlying mistrust of immigrants. After all, they bear with them religions which are not Christianity, and if their gods are primitive, as Gladden’s reasoning suggests, the outsiders do not deserve a place in American society.

Gladden’s rhetoric also fails to account for the fact that Christianity’s paternalistic aims do not confer a universal benefit upon society. Referring to the 1893 World Congress of Religions, a forum meant to initiate dialogue among the world’s religions, Gladden writes, “Which religion was it that conceived of it, and made provision for it, and set in motion the influences that drew these hostile bands into harmony? It was the Christian religion which gave us this great endeavor after unity.”⁵² First, notice that he refers to all other religious groups as “hostile bands.” This reveals a conception of Christianity as being a religion that is safely exempt from conflicts with other groups. And Gladden’s claim that Christianity initiated an “endeavor toward unity” reflects the paternalism in liberal politics both in his time and in the contemporary era. Gladden sees Christianity as a universal religion, in the same way that contemporary liberalism sees democracy as a universal, uniting value.

Though Gladden does not directly support missionary work, saying that Christians should have a “tolerant temper,” he does note that if Christianity “meets universal human needs more perfectly, we ought not to fear ... a candid comparison” between it and other religions.⁵³ This again is revealing because it positions Christianity as being on an elevated level relative to other faiths, in the same way American exceptionalism elevates its institutions and culture above those in other countries.

Another example can be illustrative. Gladden’s rhetoric about Jewish people in relation to the Bible reflects Christianity’s bias toward itself and, in turn, can demonstrate its low regard for other religions of the world. First, Gladden expresses a view held by many conservative Protestants today, that Judaism’s “worship and its morality were yet far away from the ideal when Jesus came to earth.”⁵⁴ Gladden also sees the Jews of the Bible as “a people slowly rising out of the darkness of semi-barbarism.”⁵⁵ This immediately demonstrates a belief in the superiority of Christianity. Despite the fact that Gladden does credit Judaism for giving the world religion, he quotes a lecturer who is also quick to point out that Jews did not give the world “political life, art, poetry, philosophy, nor science.”⁵⁶ The unspoken implication in this idea is that political life, science, philosophy, and poetry are in fact the hallmarks of a true civilization, and the Jewish people were not sophisticated enough to contribute those elements. Gladden further degrades Jewish people by holding up the Bible as an example of how Jews became enlightened when Jesus arrived on Earth. “Is not every step in the progress of this people out of savagery into a spiritual faith, matter of the profoundest interest to every human soul?” he asks.⁵⁷ Gladden comments that “the dullness and ignorance and crudity of this people,--even the crookedness and blindness of their leaders” are instructive for Christians who desire to see “what materials and what instruments the divine wisdom and patience wrought out this great result.”⁵⁸

By posing Christianity as a form of progression from Judaism, rather than as a religion with equally valid traditions and practices that can exist in tandem with Christianity, Gladden reveals the layer of prejudice propping up his then-liberal views. In this way, the religious arguments against Judaism provide a parallel for immigrants who are praised for assimilating well, for adopting the role of having overcome their previous culture's tendencies and becoming an acceptable American citizen.

Finally, Gladden's belief in Christianity's key role in the progress of civilization also contains an undercurrent of anti-Catholicism. On one hand, Gladden was extremely progressive relative to other Protestants in his views of the religion itself. Gladden strongly spoke out against violent nativist groups like the American Protective Association⁵⁹, and credits Catholics for allowing more poor people in their churches.⁶⁰ Despite these facts, Gladden echoed some elements of anti-Catholic rhetoric and applied it to all immigrants, which overshadows whatever respect he may show for Catholicism as a religion. For example, Gladden asserted that a "great majority" of immigrants was "deplorably ignorant."⁶¹ He believed new immigrants constituted "the lower grades of the peasantry and the refuse of the trades," and, as such, he assumed that they "know little or nothing about the Constitution of this country or its laws."⁶² In making these remarks, Gladden echoes earlier Protestants who felt threatened by the prospect of Catholics voting. In 1852, one politician, Thomas Whitney, wrote of Catholics, "The exercise of the right of suffrage is in its legitimate sense an intellectual act; and the conferring of that right on minds like these—minds incapable of understanding the purport or power of the ballot—seems little less than an act of madness."⁶³ Indeed, one social-gospel scholar argues that Gladden was primarily aiming for Protestant unity in his writings, rather than an embrace of ecumenical inclusiveness.⁶⁴ So while he may have defended Catholics from the most visible bigotries and praised their

stronger openness to diversity, Gladden's prejudice against immigrant civic participation reveals the inflexibility of his outlook.

Further, Gladden's analysis on the Bible's worth, published in 1891, came during a period buttressed by anti-Catholic sentiment throughout the country. Anti-Catholicism had been a powerful force in the United States since the 1830s. Protestants saw Catholics' submission to papal authority as a "threat to intellectual independence."⁶⁵ More alarming, however, was that most of the Catholics flocking to America's cities "were destitute and had little familiarity with American ways."⁶⁶ One of the most comprehensive studies of this subject comes from California. Joshua Paddison explains that from the 1870s to the 1880s in San Francisco, one of America's most diverse cities even then, "conversations about race had a way of turning into conversations about religion, and vice versa."⁶⁷ He notes that in the divided city, Irish Catholics and Chinese immigrants were both targets for racial attacks, but by the 1890s the dynamics were such that Irish Catholics stood in solidarity with white Protestants on the Chinese question, as ethnicity overtook religious denomination as a major concern.⁶⁸ Before this new solidarity materialized, however, there were pro-Chinese white Protestant ministers responding to anti-Chinese sentiments by turning the anti-Chinese rhetoric back on Catholics. Otis Gibson, one of the most prominent, concurred that yes, American values were under attack, but by a different "class of foreigners" whose worship of a pope was "more dangerous to Republican institutions than Paganism."⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Irish Catholics were also bombarded with all manner of crude names. A former California attorney general called them "street Arabs."⁷⁰ A Chinese Protestant convert stressed their purportedly violent nature by asserting that a Chinese man could not walk down a street without an Irishman attacking him.⁷¹ Irish immigrants were blamed for the prevalence of "crime, vices, and misery," and their Catholicism was dangerous because, at the very least, the Chinese in contrast did not "purpose to

intermeddle with our religious rights; they have no hierarchy; [and] they are not sworn to support any religious system.”⁷² Further, the Irish were accused of being “inferior in morality.”⁷³

Taken together, race relations in San Francisco preceding Washington Gladden’s writing support his idea that the Bible is the key to pulling civilization forward. What Paddison examines is a clear picture of how various migrant groups were villainized for not subscribing to the white Protestant’s method of worship. Washington Gladden has constantly reiterated that the Bible “is the one book that every one of us ought to know by heart.”⁷⁴ This is a subtle but nonetheless meaningful dig against Catholics, who Protestants popularly perceived as not reading the correct version of the Bible. What Paddison illustrates in his study is what results when white Protestants similar to Gladden were faced with a deluge of foreign outsiders. Irish Catholics were seen as “degraded” and “burdensome.”⁷⁵ And because of these qualities, Catholic immigrants did not deserve the privilege of voting. Gladden reasoned that an “infusion of . . . ignorance” would be detrimental because it “lowers the average of intelligence” within the voting population.⁷⁶ If this was permitted to happen, Gladden explained, the result would be a government that suffered from an “overload of ignorance and barbarism.”⁷⁷ These views reveal how Gladden’s progressivism did not go far enough in extending a spirit of social justice, as it excluded people who did not fit the mold of either white or Protestant.

Reluctance to let Catholics vote was also directly tied to fierce debates over whose religion would enjoy dominance in public schools. Catholics thought public schools were biased against them and Protestants used the Chinese to counter that changing the curriculum would allow the Chinese to demand the same treatment.⁷⁸ This was not the first time Protestants had fought Catholics over public schools. Just three decades earlier, a nondenominational group

called the Public School Society controlled New York City's public schools, and all the funding that entailed.⁷⁹ Though ostensibly secular, Catholics took issue with these schools because they required children to read the King James Bible (a Protestant translation), and the textbooks the schools used labeled Catholics as intolerant and deceitful.⁸⁰ Responding to Catholic opposition, one politician proposed that school funding be disbursed to individual neighborhoods, which would decentralize the former system and allow autonomy without letting resources explicitly go to Catholic schools.⁸¹ This proposal was rejected by the Protestant majority, but Catholics did gain their desired outcome in 1842, when the Democrats sought to appease Irish voters by implementing a district-based approach.⁸² Even as Catholics won this battle, however, the success came at a cost. Protestants turned to the separation of church and state as a means of defending their anti-Catholic sentiment. In 1845, a group in New York called the American Republicans declared that they were "opposed to ... the incorporation of church creeds into the political compact of our government."⁸³

These examples demonstrate the cascading effects universalist Protestant rhetoric about the Bible's benefits can have. Liberal Protestants like Gladden-and to some extent Rauschenbusch, as will be seen later-were not yet at the point where Christians could amicably agree that they all worshiped the same God in different ways. The era of the social gospel was still an era in which Protestants saw themselves as the champions of individual liberty and, especially, the superiority which comes with that and whiteness. Recall that Catholics only won school funding in New York City because the Democratic Party was unwilling to lose the votes of Irish immigrants. Protestants might not have felt so threatened if those voters were Anglo-Saxon like themselves. But the fact they were Catholic and Irish was alarming. Similarly, as Paddison's study of the 1870s shows, the Irish were scapegoats for all manner of ills plaguing

San Francisco, and their Catholicism merely reinforced that prejudice. Gladden's liberal theology was representative of other Protestants' views on individual freedom and its consequent mistrust of immigrant minorities. His peer, Walter Rauschenbusch, projected similar attitudes.

Rauschenbusch and Immigrants

Walter Rauschenbusch's writing reflected a racial-religious bias, but his was more inward-facing. In other words, he was more concerned with these issues as they arose within the United States. Rauschenbusch was a German-American Baptist minister renowned for preaching that Christian ethics should determine policy, and that the goal of Christianity was to bring God's kingdom to the earthly world. Rauschenbusch does deserve credit for recognizing the evils of capitalism and the United States' elevation of it. He articulates that "when one social class sins, the other classes are involved in the suffering which follows on that sin."⁸⁴ Rauschenbusch also recognizes the role of powerful men, particularly clergy, in "systematized oppression of civilization" and criticizes those "without a consciousness of collective wrong."⁸⁵ Rauschenbusch further criticizes theologians who "live in the social environment of wealth and to that extent are slow to see" the inequalities their congregants face.⁸⁶ This language reflects a sincere acknowledgement that powerful interests stall the progress of society, and the perhaps prescient observation that well-intentioned liberals fail to deliver on their ideals because of their affluence.

He also recognizes that the "sinfulness of one generation is conditioned by the sinfulness of those who preceded."⁸⁷ This quote, it can be argued, articulates his awareness that systemic oppression exists and is difficult to reverse once it has taken hold. Despite this idealism,

however, Rauschenbusch seldom speaks of his experiences interacting with those of lower classes. He does acknowledge the hardships that people in certain areas face, saying that working-class women are overworked, underfed, and, as a result, children are “submerged in poverty.”⁸⁸ Rauschenbusch does also deserve credit for his explicit stance against child labor. He notes that in capitalism’s relentless quest for profit, “children are hitched to the machine for life, and the vitality which ought to build their bodies during ... adolescence is used up to make goods a little cheaper, or ... to make profits a little larger.”⁸⁹ That said, as with the previous examples, he tends to issue generalizations, which do not adequately illustrate which groups are suffering and why. On one of the rare occasions he does talk about his experience interacting with working-class individuals, Rauschenbusch only refers to the story subject as an “elderly workingman, a good Christian man.”⁹⁰ Rauschenbusch recounts that this man sustained an injury after being hit by a streetcar. The man was sent to an “excellent hospital,” after which he was further transferred to two different hospitals, who both claimed the man’s case was not sufficiently serious.⁹¹ The man ended up dying, and Rauschenbusch concludes by saying he is aware of similar cases in which other “charity patients” were transferred to other hospitals without notifying the patients’ relatives.⁹² Rauschenbusch’s recounting of this man’s case raises the question of whether he would have been equally sympathetic if the victim was not Christian. The fact he had to point out that the “workingman” was “a good Christian” underscores what is unsaid: that most working-class people during this time were immigrants. This tendency to be vague about the suffering of specific groups is a reflection of Rauschenbusch’s biases. When examining his work, it is important to recall that his audience was fellow white Protestants like himself. Rauschenbusch likely understood that they would agree with the general principles and examples used to prop up his argument, but if he expanded by discussing who comprised the

working class, the audience would be less receptive. It is also worth pointing out that when he does specifically refer to immigrants, he does so derisively. He asserts that the members of the white working class “suffer by the competition of the immigrants” as they “feel the tightening grip of our industrial development.”⁹³ This sentiment makes clear Rauschenbusch’s view that immigrants are complicit in the stagnation of detrimental social conditions.

At the heart of these issues is the question of whether religion provides any contribution to the formation of social movements. On one hand, Rauschenbusch acknowledged that anti-religious labor movements proved religion was not an essential factor in motivating individuals to improve society.⁹⁴ Rauschenbusch also acknowledged that the wealthy as a whole were generally unwilling to surrender their privileges, but at the same time, the influence of individual wealthy persons was instrumental for achieving progress.⁹⁵ Rauschenbusch’s observation is relevant because it echoes the current dynamics present in the politics of immigration policy. In the 2020 election, Biden won 60% of the college-educated voters who turned out, which is worth noting because college-educated voters tend to be more affluent, and more liberal.⁹⁶ This proves Rauschenbusch’s assertion that wealthy individuals can create a coalition that strives toward some measure of social progress, by voting for politicians who favor more humane immigration policy. Meanwhile, the leadership at large companies like Starbucks, Chipotle, and Amazon retaliate against unionizing workers by closing unionized stores. This proves how powerful wealthy interests are unwilling to relinquish their privileges for the good of low-wage workers, who tend to be immigrants and other minority groups.⁹⁷ In sum, however, religion cannot be attributed to any of these contemporary debates. Even so, Rauschenbusch’s insight about the inclinations of upper-class individuals to support social movements can illustrate how the perspective of a religious

leader is realistic in its depiction of society's appetite for driving social change.

Rauschenbusch viewed wealthy business leaders as tragic heroes who are trapped by circumstance to execute "two incompatible duties," protecting self-interest and upholding the moral imperative to help those in need.⁹⁸ This conflict, again, can be seen in the example discussed earlier concerning global companies like Starbucks who refuse to unionize, and Rauschenbusch deserves credit for calling out wealth's tendency to incentivize selfishness.

That said, it is worth noting that he gives too much credit to business owners who are caught between self-interest and helping people. When anti-Chinese sentiment was ubiquitous in 1870s San Francisco, a wealthy industrialist named Charles Crocker defended Chinese immigration.⁹⁹ One might imagine, however, that he did not do this because he wanted to help them. The seemingly realist perspective on the wealthy which Rauschenbusch articulates also explains his pessimistic perspective on the power of legislation to change human behavior.¹⁰⁰ And he may have a point. Though legislation can codify expectations for human behavior, in practice enforcement depends on whether powerful interests in the society are willing to succumb to the law. Rauschenbusch may be uninformed and insensitive on many issues, but his rare pessimism on this point deserves credit.

One significant factor that influences immigration policy is how immigrants are discussed, especially the question of how elites talk about them. Immigrants are often subjected to animalistic dehumanization, which constitutes discourse that denies immigrants "the ability to reason, think critically," and display other uniquely human functions or traits."¹⁰¹ In post-Civil War California, people were already calling Mexican people lazy, and they belonged to a religious minority then.¹⁰² Though its focus is on conservative rhetoric, Utych's study demonstrates how religious minorities in the United States continue to be villainized, a phenomenon Rauschenbusch

failed to address but which can be applied to his pessimism about the power of legislation to bring about social change.

In fact, Rauschenbusch's pessimism about legislation also contains an irony: Rauschenbusch belittled other people himself. Although it was never to the extreme of dehumanization, he has referred to Catholics as having "an instinctive distrust for democracy."¹⁰³ Again, the notion of Catholics as an inferior religious group reemerges. Given that Catholics were migrating to the United States in large numbers while Rauschenbusch was alive, it can be inferred that he implicitly directed that criticism at Catholic immigrants, not just the Catholic church as an institution.

Rauschenbusch also dehumanized immigrants by describing migrants from places like Poland as constituting "alien strains" who would upset the progress of democracy, which in Rauschenbusch's opinion was most elevated by German and English people like himself.¹⁰⁴ This reflects the narrow-mindedness his idealism conceals. In addition to the examples listed earlier about how other social-gospel thinkers like Gladden opposed full enfranchisement of Black people and uneducated immigrants, it can be argued that the social gospel participated in dehumanization of marginalized groups just as contemporary politicians dehumanize immigrants. Stephen Utych's study on dehumanization effects illustrates why the social gospel's failure to advocate for racial progress is problematic. Rauschenbusch's incendiary language is in line with what Utych describes as the tendency of white Americans to refer to immigrants as if they are contaminants, eliciting disgust in the people who absorb this rhetoric.¹⁰⁵ An earlier study by Garand, Xu, and Davis provides another possible explanation for the social gospel figures' insensitivity toward the importance of racial justice. Garand et al point out that homogenous societies are likeliest to support a welfare state because few outsiders benefit from it¹⁰⁶, and the number of immigrants in the United States was just under 15% in 1910, when Rauschenbusch and Gladden were alive.¹⁰⁷ Given that welfare programs are an anchor of social policy

and a form of rectifying economic injustice, Garand and colleagues' explanation may serve to articulate the implicit in the outlook of the social-gospel figures: social justice was deserved only by those in poverty who were also members of the civilized, European, Protestant in-group.

Along this line, Rauschenbusch's writing is also flawed in that he vaguely points to the importance of social solidarity. Social solidarity, Rauschenbusch says, is "a unity of all places and all times."¹⁰⁸ This platitude is vague and again gestures to Rauschenbusch's implicit expectation that his mission of social salvation should convert the largely immigrant working class. Despite his progressive outlook, Rauschenbusch was still an evangelical, which meant conversion was one of his chief motives. In fact, Rauschenbusch was more evangelical than many of his contemporaries.¹⁰⁹ What this meant was that he was more progressive socially than Gladden, because he wanted the idea of bringing God's kingdom to Earth to persuade others of Christianity's constant relevance. It would not be far-fetched to conclude that the dual motivation of reform and conversion meant Rauschenbusch had an implicit interest in ensuring that immigrants assimilate. Underlying his work is the idea that if liberal Protestantism could prove itself as a force for good, more immigrants would subscribe to it, which would then lead to the decline of the religions they had come to the country with. This domination of other cultures is a theme of liberal Christianity more generally. Gladden similarly said that "Christianity exists to establish in this world the kingdom of heaven."¹¹⁰ Rauschenbusch's progressive brand of Protestantism has problematic implications in both domestic and international contexts.

Rauschenbusch, while acknowledging the powerful temptation to use missionary and conversion as "a trick of subjugation"¹¹¹ nevertheless fails to see the potential negative impacts of this optimism in social solidarity. The flaw with this outlook is that it diminishes other factors. Like Gladden, Rauschenbusch assumes that the Bible is the best framework for saving society. He

is also like Gladden in that he leaves unsaid what he thinks the working classes should do with social solidarity. Rauschenbusch takes for granted an assumption that all the members of the working class have no simmering tensions within and between them.

On one hand, Rauschenbusch's favorable view of social solidarity is meritorious. An emphasis on social solidarity allows dissimilar groups within the working class to collaborate toward common goals without identity politics getting in the way. Rauschenbusch argues, for example, that the working class suffers from a shared "condition of exhaustion," and that "the commercial interests of landowners and liquor dealers" are directly responsible for "creating the weak."¹¹² By making this general statement, Rauschenbusch emphasizes that members of the working class all suffer from the same ongoing problems, and that these ongoing problems derive from a common source on which blame can be placed. The avoidance of identity politics here facilitates a sense of shared understanding.

That said, Rauschenbusch's approach is not as effective as it may first appear. When calls for social solidarity are centered, it is natural for one group's interests to overshadow another's. Unions, for example, historically heed the interests of white workers over those of Black or Hispanic workers. In the same way, Rauschenbusch's appeals for solidarity overlook the fact that white workers' interests will almost certainly be placed above immigrant workers' interests. And this conclusion about certain interests taking precedent over others is confirmed by available literature. Grant Wacker points out that the social gospel, which he refers to as the new theology, "was supported mainly by the middle and upper-middle classes."¹¹³ This is a striking observation given that Rauschenbusch is highlighting the struggles of the working class, yet his words failed to resonate with his intended audience.

Another problematic element is Rauschenbusch's obliviousness to his own racial attitudes. He resorted to racial prejudices when issuing a fundraising letter for his university. He appealed to potential donors' racial fears by asking whether they were confident in "their possession against the blacks of the South and the seething yellow flocks beyond the Pacific."¹¹⁴ Rauschenbusch also holds up other nations against America to show how America's religious homogeneity was more advantageous for keeping the nation united and progressing. "The Balkans are a nest of antagonisms," he opines, "partly because of religious differences."¹¹⁵ While it can be argued that Rauschenbusch's sentiment is incredibly prescient given the Balkan wars that eventually occurred in the late 20th century, Rauschenbusch's observation better reflects the period's commonplace hostility toward Eastern Europeans, who were not yet considered white. Preceding this prejudice toward the Balkan states is Rauschenbusch's assertion that societal evils are clearly rampant in "any nation except our own."¹¹⁶ He also calls upon his audience to consider this: "Will some Gibbon of Mongol race sit by the shore of the Pacific in the year AD 3000 and write on the 'Decline and Fall of the Christian Empire'?"¹¹⁷ These quotes are relevant because such sentiments are echoed when contemporary liberals speak of democratization in other nations. What Rauschenbusch reveals is a nation still unprepared to leave well enough alone. In the early twentieth century, Rauschenbusch was targeting places such as the Jewish territories of Russia and Spain as places from which inferior immigrants came.¹¹⁸ Perhaps it can be argued that if Rauschenbusch were less opposed to war and if the United States had the capacity to do so, the United States would have intervened in Russia as the United States interfered in Muslim-majority Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya a century later. Further, Rauschenbusch's challenge for his reader to consider what a future "Gibbon of Mongol race" would write about the fall of the Christian empire reveals the disingenuousness of his liberalism. If Rauschenbusch were truly interested in

bringing the kingdom of God to Earth, one would expect him to do so for its own sake, rather than as a means of proving the longevity of American superiority. Rauschenbusch demonstrates how the most progressive Christian theologians succumbed to the belief that Christianity, and therefore the white people who espoused it, deserved the highest level of respect relative to foreign nations and their religions.

Historical and Contemporary Ramifications with International Consequences

Looking back throughout America's history, the most obvious manifestation of this relationship between religion, race, and policy is in the concept of a Christian nation, which generally sees members of the white Protestant majority positioning foreigners and non-Christians as an inferior other. "It is nothing new for this nation of immigrants to be resentful toward immigrants," scholar Hugh Heclo bluntly observes.¹¹⁹ Heclo elaborates that in 1885, a law prohibited employers from paying the travel expenses of unskilled immigrant laborers or assisting their entry into the United States in any other way.¹²⁰ This law led to a Supreme Court case that raised the question of whether a New York church had violated the law by paying for the passage of an English cleric who was to become the church's pastor.¹²¹ In the eventual ruling, Justice David J. Brewer wrote that the law was not violated because the intended population was unskilled foreign workers, and it was a matter of common sense that the law would not apply to a Christian church, which represented the majority of America's religious identity as a Christian nation.¹²² The court case demonstrates that even though Justice Brewer was simply describing America's religious makeup, and the fact that the law represented the will of the religious majority, as Heclo argues¹²³, people and establishments who were outside the dominant religious majority paid the price. In this case, Chinese workers were not American and not likely to be

Christian, so it was acceptable for them to be kept away from American soil regardless of what American employers needed.

The law forbidding travel assistance to low-skilled immigrants has had parallel effects in contemporary politics. In a recent case, *United States v. Hansen*, the Supreme Court's justices ruled in a 7-2 decision that encouraging undocumented immigrants to stay in the United States illegally was not covered by the First Amendment's protection of free speech.¹²⁴ And like in the 1880s when the law established barriers to Chinese immigration, in contemporary politics migrants from Latin America are systematically excluded. A June 2023 article in the *Washington Post* cites a bed-and-breakfast owner in an overwhelmingly white Wisconsin county who refused to hire undocumented workers even though his hotel was severely understaffed, and he spent fourteen-hour shifts working.¹²⁵

Though the specifics have changed, the general circumstances share striking similarities. The examples here show how the social gospel is intertwined with issues of labor and conceptions of who is worthy of belonging in American society.

Gladden and Rauschenbusch's sentiments are also realized in the rhetoric of missions to China in the late 1890s. "The task of Christian missions was to introduce a spirit of regeneration," Paul Varg points out in his analysis of the motives of American missionary activities.¹²⁶ He notes that missionaries believed they could bring an end to what they saw as unsavory practices in China, such as female foot-binding and, subsequently, the equality of women.¹²⁷ Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy provides another instructive example. Wilson was president at the same time Rauschenbusch and Gladden were publishing their later work. Like Rauschenbusch, the president also saw Christianity as a means "to save society."¹²⁸ This was accentuated by his high regard for missionaries, who in his view "sacrificed their own

desires to help mankind.”¹²⁹ What Wilson does not contemplate, however, is whether mankind wanted any saving. His rhetoric demonstrates his alignment with missionaries who were largely uninterested in the cultures of the people they were supposedly helping. One missionary wrote to Wilson describing the Chinese as “degraded people” who were “not ... intrinsically lovable.”¹³⁰ Wilson was also close to the Reverend Dr. Samuel Woodbridge, a Presbyterian minister who married a close relative of Wilson’s.¹³¹ Woodbridge was sent to China and in 1912 wrote to Wilson that the missionaries were making strides in introducing the Chinese to “solid thought” by “telling them about God.”¹³² But missionary activity in the interest of spreading the Bible’s influence has had reverberating consequences. In 1929, the Summer Institute of Linguistics, now known as SIL International, was founded to spread literacy, education, and biblical translations to various communities around the globe.¹³³ While literacy and education are undeniably positive outcomes of such work, missionaries have been responsible for the erosion of indigenous cultures throughout the world. First, it is important to note that although SIL’s humanitarian work in remote communities is often welcomed by state governments, the organization enjoys access to certain religious communities where other groups with similar missionary ends would not be well-received.¹³⁴ Thus, SIL’s activities erode the self-determination of indigenous communities.¹³⁵ By attaching humanitarian assistance—in the form of transportation access and vital supplies like medicine—to their religious identity, SIL’s missionaries force upon remote communities a choice between cultural preservation and economic opportunity.¹³⁶ The choice is a complex one, and when remote indigenous communities make space for missionary organizations like SIL, their agency is diminished. Missionary interference in remote communities has led to the death of Damin, an Australian language.¹³⁷ It has also created sharp divisions between generations within indigenous communities, as evangelized believers and those holding onto tradition clash and grapple for influence,

which in turn disturbs the community's well-being.¹³⁸ SIL's involvement has also been borderline manipulative. They often show a realistic film of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection to indigenous tribes in the Amazon, a method particularly effective for conversion because of the communities' unfamiliarity with electronic technology.¹³ This lack of exposure to electronic media is a loophole which the missionaries can take advantage of, as the people watching the film may not realize that everything in it is staged.¹⁴⁰ These assumptions that Christianity was the universal solution to social ills are consistent throughout the social-gospel thinkers' rhetoric and the missionary attitudes that proliferate alongside them.

Protestants with the liberal goals of education and civilization have targeted Muslim-dominated nations in the Middle East as well. In the late 1860s, American missionaries were instrumental in establishing a university in Syria. When it opened, the school's president, Daniel Bliss, declared in part, "I would admit the Pigmies of Central Africa in the hope that after a lapse of a few thousand years some of them might become leaders of Church and State."¹⁴¹ Theodore Roosevelt's administration played a large role in legitimizing American Protestantism's presence in the Middle East, and the United States' intervention on its behalf. In 1903, Roosevelt sent ships loaded with armed Marines to Beirut.¹⁴² This forceful demonstration of US strength was the culmination of two unfortunate events that upset Roosevelt. The first was the kidnapping of a female missionary, which was believed to be committed by Turks even though the perpetrators were actually Bulgarian.¹⁴³ The other offense was the alleged assassination of a minister's son, William C. Magelssen, who turned out to be alive.¹⁴⁴ Despite the facts in these matters, Roosevelt wished to make his displeasure known to the Ottoman Empire, in the same way more recent administrations have forcibly intervened in the Middle East.

Although neither Gladden nor Rauschenbusch had anything to say regarding Roosevelt's Middle East policies, Gladden did make a vague reference to the Ottoman Empire in his justification of the United States' takeover of the Philippines. Recall that Gladden believed in a hierarchy of civilizations in which some nations lifted up others; in this context, he noted that "the unspeakable Turk has done not a little work of this kind In Africa."¹⁴⁵ It can be argued this reveals at least an awareness of Islam's presence in Africa. Recall also that in 1908 Gladden cited "Mohammedans" as one of the religious groups to which Christianity should prove its superiority.¹⁴⁶ With these considerations in mind, Gladden would have likely at least partially endorsed Roosevelt's Middle East policies. His opinion of the Ottoman Empire, coupled with his low regard for Islam, would have made him see Roosevelt's policies as a justifiable means of preserving Christianity's spread.

Following the September 11 attacks of 2001, politicians both conservative and liberal have exaggerated the liberation of women from Muslim countries in order to justify the use of military force against them. Since the attacks, notes anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod, Muslim women have been portrayed as "having a deficit of rights because of Islam."¹⁴⁷ This projection of American benevolence takes the focus away from the voices of real Muslim women.¹⁴⁸ Take the burqa, for example. Abu-Lughod points out that many women view it as the ideal balance between freedom and their religious identity; they use it as an instrument for increased freedom of movement outside of sex-segregated spaces, even as it protects them against male strangers.¹⁴⁹ Just as Protestant missionaries called for the liberation of Chinese women during Gladden and Rauschenbusch's time, Americans of many backgrounds believe white-led democracy is the answer for Muslim women. It would

probably not be a stretch to argue that if Gladden and Rauschenbusch were alive today, they too would call for what they assumed was the liberation of Muslim women. But as Abu-Lughod as shown, the impulse to free Muslim women is misguided. The social gospel's emphasis on democracy and social salvation hides the cruciality of listening to what marginalized communities truly need and want.

Lawrence Freedman notes that among three separate arguments for the Iraq War, only one proved versatile throughout the conflict's duration: the humanitarian argument.¹⁵⁰ Paul Berman concurs that in the United States, people on both the right and the left tend to view threats and conflict through the same narrative lens. "There is a people of God," Berman explains.¹⁵¹ And when they are attacked, violent reactions are justifiable because "pollution is spreading to the people of God"¹⁵² and cannot be allowed to inflict further damage. This formula can be applied more literally to Rauschenbusch, who saw the attack on society as coming from capitalists, whose greed keeps the working class down. But Berman's insight also speaks to liberals who employ their high regard for American values as justification for interventionism. Berman explains that the fallacy with liberalism is, in its extreme, it devolves into "blind faith in a predetermined future ... a fantasy of a strictly rational world ... [and] denial."¹⁵³ In 2002, several prominent Democrats voted for the Iraq war, including Missouri Democrat Richard Gephardt (who served as House minority leader at the time), as well as senators Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, John Kerry of Massachusetts, and Hillary Clinton of New York. Gephardt and Kerry were most direct in their uses of American benevolence to justify the war, while Lieberman and Clinton leaned on faith in rationalism and denial. Gephardt expressed a hope that American intervention would "bring safety and democracy to the Iraqi people."¹⁵⁴ Kerry voted for Iraq because he wanted to see democratic elections in that country, which would ostensibly mitigate the oppression of Iraqi

citizens.¹⁵⁵ Meanwhile, Lieberman asserted that not supporting the war would “undermine the president’s credibility at our nation’s peril,”¹⁵⁶ thus placing the legitimacy of American institutions above concern for foreign civilians. Finally, Clinton blamed the Iraqi government for being uncooperative and the Bush administration for incompetence, rather than critically examining the efficacy of military intervention as a foreign-policy strategy.¹⁵⁷

A similar liberal obliviousness can be seen as recently as 2011, when former president Barack Obama, a liberal Protestant, chose to intervene in Libya and fight for regime change in that country. The intervention proved unsuccessful, and his placing the blame on the Libyan people’s “tribalism” reflects liberal exceptionalism and overemphasis on imposing rationality on the rest of the world while deflecting blame for its failure.¹⁵⁸ As demonstrated here, there is a consistent conviction in the necessity of remaking the world in the Protestant image. Indeed, Thompson and Wellman point out that the Bush administration’s rhetoric of bringing democracy and freedom to “all nations and all societies” echoes Gladden and Rauschenbusch’s sweeping gestures toward American exceptionalism.¹⁵⁹ As long as the rhetoric of American benevolence and exceptionalism remains in the public discourse, the United States cannot truly live up to the values it purports to hold.

Rauschenbusch’s words demonstrate that despite his wishes to model the earthly world on God’s kingdom, it was clear he thought that as a white Protestant, he and his peers were the only ones who were fit to pursue this objective and ponder the answers. All the evidence discussed thus far draw attention to the unfortunate reality that despite the social gospel’s broad attempts to spread progressivism, minority groups were overlooked or looked down upon even as egalitarianism was emphasized. Gladden and Rauschenbusch’s belief in Christianity’s potential

to liberate all the nations of the world unravels when one examines the race relations that contextualized their work.

A Path Not Taken

Given Gladden and Rauschenbusch's exclusionary views on immigrants and outsiders, it is important to note that an alternative view exists. For example, there were less well-known Protestant ministers who clearly condemned American imperialism in a way Gladden did not. In June of 1898, Unitarian pastor Charles Ames articulated that if the United States adopted the habit of forcibly taking foreign lands, the nation would become "one more bully among bullies."¹⁶⁰ Jane Addams was another prominent progressive figure during the social-gospel era. Unlike Rauschenbusch and others, who spent significant amounts of time writing about the social gospel, Addams was consumed by doing. Before she opened her settlement house, Hull-House, in 1889, most of the charity provided to needy individuals was economic, meaning it was conditional and distinguished between worthy and unworthy recipients.¹⁶¹ Jane Addams transformed this model by making Hull-House a center of the community surrounding it. Addams did this by emphasizing a reciprocal relationship between the higher classes and the impoverished¹⁶², which probably helped, if only slightly, to mitigate some of the class antagonism that defined this era. It was not just the residents in poverty who were helped; the elite also benefited by becoming more aware and educated about what the less privileged in their city needed.¹⁶³ Addams also made Hull-House more valuable to the community by establishing a kindergarten and day care there, which greatly helped working mothers who could be assured their children were fed and attended while they were at work.¹⁶⁴ Hull-House also provided meal tickets for children who needed to be fed while their mothers went to work, cooking and sewing classes for girls, a rotating selection of books from the Chicago Public Library for boys to read, and laundry facilities for

women in the neighborhood to use.¹⁶⁵ Later, Addams incorporated a coffeehouse into Hull-House so neighborhood residents could buy hot lunches.¹⁶⁶ What all these elements have in common is Addams' willingness to listen to those she was helping, rather than simply calling for social change or assuming she was above helping nonwhite Americans. Addams represents an outlook of multiculturalism which her male peers lacked. For example, she was very vocal about her opposition to a quota for Mediterranean, Slavic, and Polish immigrants instituted in 1921. She was exasperated that the government was "determined to discriminate against southern and eastern Europeans because they were swarthy or Catholic, or for some other illegitimate reason."¹⁶⁷ She was also astute in observing that Italians began adopting white attitudes toward African-Americans "and applying them to Mexicans as well."¹⁶⁸ Addams was the daughter of an abolitionist¹⁶⁹ and baptized as a Presbyterian.¹⁷⁰ Yet, despite her membership in the white Protestant majority, she managed to see beyond a centering of the Bible or an emphasis on economic class. Instead, she focused on the humanity and needs of the outsiders who surrounded her, and advocated for their acceptance as they were.

Having examined all the harmful links between the social gospel and immigration, it is important to remember that it did achieve some level of good. The most monumental achievement the social gospel inspired was the construction of the New Deal. Although the New Deal was most heavily influenced by Catholic ideas of social justice, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a liberal Protestant as well, and the views of Gladden and Rauschenbusch played a small role in FDR's most well-known policy. Gladden believed there was a point at which "the exercise of the power of the state" was essential for achieving common goals for the public good.¹⁷¹ Gladden also asserted that "although it is not the business of the church to furnish to the world an economic programme, it is her business to see that no economic programme is permitted to exist under which injustice and oppression find shelter."¹⁷² Further, in 1912 Rauschenbusch endorsed the work of John Ryan, the

Catholic theologian most credited with inspiring the New Deal.¹⁷³ The social gospel also influenced Martin Luther King's commitment to social justice. King read Rauschenbusch's work while he was in seminary, and he credits Rauschenbusch for providing a framework for social justice that he expanded upon in his leadership of the civil rights movement.¹⁷⁴

Finally, it is important to point out that as flawed as Gladden and Rauschenbusch's perspectives were, they did not espouse the worst elements of anti-immigrant sentiment or condone the most problematic excesses of imperialism. Josiah Strong is a Protestant pastor often associated with the social gospel who has purposefully been excluded from this thesis precisely because his racism is so openly virulent. For example, he believed there would one day be a "*final competition of races, for which the Anglo-Saxon is being schooled.*" When this occurred, Strong believed "this powerful race will move down upon Mexico, down upon Central and South America," and into Africa until Anglo-Saxons fulfilled their destiny of dominating the world, in turn proving Darwin's theory of "survival of the fittest."¹⁷⁵ Further, even though Gladden and Rauschenbusch's ideas about the benefits of spreading American civilization were problematic, there were anti-imperialists who used similar arguments for nonintervention. For example, Samuel Gompers, who led the American Federation of Labor, opposed American annexation of the Philippines because he wished to prevent "immigration from the hordes of Chinese and the semi-savage races coming from what will then be our own country."¹⁷⁶ An unwillingness to coexist with foreign outsiders betrays an antipathy for nonwhite individuals which is as problematic as the paternalistic desire to model another nation after one's own.

As the evidence has shown, Gladden and Rauschenbusch's work are tied to both historical and contemporary policies that illustrate liberal Christianity's failure to embody the ideals it proclaims. While today's anti-immigrant sentiments are directed toward Muslims, liberal Protestants of the early 20th century echoed demeaning attitudes toward Catholics, Jews,

Muslims, and other foreign nations. Gladden and Rauschenbusch's writings about Christianity and the superiority of American civilization also continue to resonate in foreign policy and contemporary liberals' attitudes toward it. In spreading the post-millennial attitude that God's kingdom should be brought onto Earth, the social gospel's proponents indirectly endorse the same missionary practices favored by their pre-millennialist peers. The link between social-gospel thought and its proponents' views of outsiders helps to contextualize the paternalism found throughout contemporary liberal thought, and its far-reaching consequences. Noting the anti-imperialist and multiculturalist attitudes of other Progressive-era figures also contextualize how the social gospel fell short in its social-justice advocacy. Taken together, one can clearly observe that Gladden and Rauschenbusch's blind spots on immigration, imperialism, and Christian supremacy harbor revealing lessons for the importance of inclusiveness in social-justice movements.

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