



KEVIN M. SCHULTZ

**TRI-FAITH**

**AMERICA**

**HOW CATHOLICS AND JEWS HELD POSTWAR  
AMERICA TO ITS PROTESTANT PROMISE**

TRI-FAITH AMERICA

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AMERICA TO ITS PROTESTANT PROMISE

*Kevin M. Schultz*

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## *Acknowledgments*

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TRI-FAITH AMERICA

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## Introduction

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WHEN A GERMAN U-boat torpedoed the USS *Dorchester* in February 1943, the four chaplains aboard the American vessel—a Catholic, a Jew, and two Protestants—performed their military duty admirably. After the captain gave the order to abandon ship, the four men distributed life jackets to the dozens of young soldiers who had run to the upper decks without grabbing their own vests and then encouraged the young soldiers to take the plunge into the icy Atlantic. Quickly, though, all the extra life jackets were gone, and several soldiers remained unprotected. The soldiers panicked. They hadn't even made it to the battlefields of Europe, but here they were, facing imminent death.

Without hesitation, the four chaplains did something heroic. In a move that came to symbolize wartime sacrifice and interfaith tolerance between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, the four chaplains unbuckled their own life vests and handed them to four young soldiers without giving a second thought to the faith of the recipient. The chaplains knew their decision would likely be their last. Survivors of the wreck last saw the four chaplains praying arm in arm as the ship began its descent to the bottom of the sea. Alexander Goode, a young, bespectacled Brooklyn-born rabbi, was reciting the Sh'ma—the affirmation of the unity of God—just as the waters engulfed the ship forever.<sup>1</sup>

Family and friends mourned the four men immediately, but by the end of the war, the U.S. armed services began to realize the public relations potential of the selfless deaths. Harmony, bravery, sacrifice: the story could touch even the most

stoic citizen. Here were Protestant, Catholic, and Jew praying and dying together, three faiths as one, vital symbols of American unity. Two years after their deaths the armed services awarded each of the four chaplains a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross before a press corps assembled specifically for the event. Later it gave the rights to the story, free of charge, to Warner Brothers, which began production of a film called *Four Men of God*. Before long, a depiction of the Four Chaplains, thereafter always honored with capitalization, became a United States postage stamp. According to one observer, the action of the Four Chaplains “proved the utter uselessness of all . . . sharp religious controversy.”<sup>2</sup> The ethnic, religious, and racial divisions that had been predominant in pre-World War II America no longer had a place in the defining traits of good Americanism. With enemies such as Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito, the ideal of tolerance was sacrosanct, and during the war years the kind of tolerance that was lionized most was that between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews.

After the war, the story of the Four Chaplains was not easily forgotten. Partly this was because the federal government and various other organizations sought to keep the themes of tri-faith religious tolerance in the public eye, and the story of the Four Chaplains was a perfect vehicle. It also helped that the father of one of the fallen chaplains was Daniel A. Poling, a fiery conservative Protestant who edited the influential *Christian Herald* and wrote a religious column for the *New York Post*. When Poling’s son died aboard the *Dorchester*, Poling was able to insert a letter entitled “Americans All” into the Congressional Record. The letter told of how a Catholic clergyman had come to comfort him the night he learned of his son’s death. Poling wrote: “Where the boy was going and where he now is, there are no schisms and no divisions—all are one in the Father of us all.”<sup>3</sup> This kind of interfaith generosity was especially meaningful coming from someone of Poling’s conservative religious pedigree.

In this spirit, in 1947 Poling decided to build a Chapel of Four Chaplains in Philadelphia. To gain some interfaith publicity for his venture, he invited several political leaders, including a young Catholic congressman from Massachusetts, to attend a December 15, 1947, fund-raiser.

John F. Kennedy readily accepted. The Four Chaplains event would emphasize his war record and put him on a national stage with other big-name politicians. But just two days before the event, Kennedy changed his reply. The reasons for his last-minute change of heart remain unclear. Kennedy claimed he had accepted the invitation thinking he had been invited as a representative of veterans or of American political leaders. Only later did he discover that he was invited to serve as the fund-raiser’s representative Catholic. He pointed out he was one of just three speakers, including Herbert Lehman, a Jewish politician from New York, and

Charles Taft, past president of the Protestant Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. Kennedy was not comfortable serving as the “official representative” of a religious organization. “Therefore,” he said, “I felt I had no credentials to attend in the capacity in which I had been asked.”<sup>4</sup>

Poling had a more critical interpretation of Kennedy’s withdrawal. “The record is unmistakably clear,” Poling wrote Kennedy several years later. “You accepted an invitation, and then at the request of His Eminence, Cardinal Dougherty, you abruptly canceled the engagement.” In Poling’s mind, Kennedy had reneged in order to placate Philadelphia’s domineering Dennis Joseph Cardinal Dougherty, who evidently felt it unworthy of a Catholic to attend a fund-raiser for what would be, after all, a Protestant chapel.<sup>5</sup>

Frustrated though he was, Poling let the issue go. His priority was on constructing a chapel to honor his son and his son’s fallen comrades, not on providing bad press to a very junior, if very famous, member of the House of Representatives. The Protestant chapel with an interfaith theme was completed in 1951. The story of the Four Chaplains and the chapel constructed in their honor was cited throughout the 1950s as a symbol of America’s widespread religiosity, and also of its three-pronged religious pluralism. In 1954, President Eisenhower listed the *Dorchester* event as one of the four most significant episodes in American religious history.<sup>6</sup>

Just nine years later, what had been a minor inconvenience for Poling became a portentous sign of a changing America. The tri-faith platitudes of wartime—always made under the watchful eye of the Protestant majority—were now being used to demand that the nation live up to its pluralist creed. Congressman Kennedy was now a senator and on the verge of becoming president, and millions of Americans were truly concerned about having a Catholic in the White House. They read newspaper and magazine stories that questioned Kennedy’s allegiances, most of which suggested that Kennedy would be unable to lead the country without the forceful intrusion of the Pope.<sup>7</sup> One story that seemed to confirm this fear was the fund-raising episode surrounding the Chapel of Four Chaplains. Indeed, Poling breathed life into the story in his 1959 autobiography, *Mine Eyes Have Seen*. “At least once,” Poling wrote in his book, “John Kennedy of Massachusetts submitted, apparently against his own inclinations and better judgment, to [the Catholic Church’s] dictates.”<sup>8</sup> With Poling’s prodding, the 1947 fund-raising debacle gained renewed life in the press.

As the election neared, Poling sent a telegram to his friend the Reverend K. O. White, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. Houston was where Kennedy had decided to confront “the Catholic question” once and for all by speaking to a conference of Protestant ministers. Poling knew White would be invited to hear Kennedy’s speech, so in his telegram Poling asked

White to question Kennedy about the Four Chaplains incident and see if Kennedy would admit to the cardinal's influence.

At the nationally televised event on the evening of September 12, 1960, White listened to Kennedy's keynote remarks, where Kennedy famously said: "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute, where no Catholic prelate would tell the President (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote. . . . I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish—where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source—where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials." Kennedy resoundingly concluded: "If this election is decided on the basis that forty million Americans lost their chance of being President on the day they were baptized, then it is the whole nation that will be the loser, in the eyes of Catholics and non-Catholics around the world, in the eyes of history, and in the eyes of our own people." Kennedy not only put Protestants on the defensive by warning them that they would look like bigots if they preached anti-Catholicism but also affirmed the tri-faith image of the nation by repeatedly mentioning Protestants, Catholics, and Jews together, as Americans all.<sup>9</sup>

When it came time for questions, White stood up and paraphrased Poling's description of the Four Chaplains fund-raising debacle. He asked Kennedy to rebut the accusation or to apologize. "I never discussed the matter with the Cardinal in my life," Kennedy told White and the rest of the audience. With tension in his voice, Kennedy said Poling had misled him about the purpose of the chapel: "The chapel . . . has never had a Catholic service," Kennedy angrily pointed out. "It is not an interfaith chapel. Therefore, for me to participate as a spokesman . . . for the Catholic faith . . . would have given an erroneous impression." Rightly feeling that some Protestants were alleging his blind allegiance to the Vatican, Kennedy asked: "Is this the best that can be done after 14 years? Is this the only incident that can be charged? . . . I have voted on hundreds of matters, probably thousands of matters, which involve all kinds of public questions, some of which border on the relationship between church and state. Quite obviously that record must be reasonably good or we wouldn't keep hearing about the Poling incident."<sup>10</sup>

His rebuff met with sustained applause. Pointing out that a minor incident from more than a decade earlier was the only time Kennedy's Catholicism might have affected his public life played no small part in defusing the whole issue. After the speech, overt anti-Catholicism moved to the margins of the campaign, and less than two months later the American people elected John F. Kennedy president

of the United States. To underscore his election as an achievement of religious pluralism in America, during his inauguration Kennedy flanked himself with a Protestant pastor, a Roman Catholic cardinal, a Jewish rabbi, and a Greek Orthodox archbishop.

The story of the Four Chaplains and the chapel built in their honor sheds light on several significant issues in 1940s and 1950s America. First, it demonstrates the widespread acceptance of a new tri-faith image of America, a national image that was, for the first time, inclusive of both Catholics and Jews in what only recently had been widely referred to as a "Protestant country." By the time of World War II, even a fiery conservative Protestant labeled Catholics and Jews "Americans all." The federal government, the U.S. armed services, and many other Protestants, Catholics, and Jews celebrated the Four Chaplains as emblems of the new tri-faith nation.

But the story also demonstrates how that tri-faith image challenged the nation in unexpected ways, forcing it to alter the way power was meted out, who was deserving of social, political, and cultural recognition, and what that recognition would mean for the way the country conducted its business. Even if the image of America as a tri-faith nation was always something of a sociological myth, it produced very substantive results.

This book is intended to develop these two points. Part I, "Inventing Tri-Faith America, Ending 'Protestant America,'" charts the decline of the nineteenth-century notion that the United States was a "Christian nation" as the country increasingly adopted the tri-faith vision during the first half of the twentieth century. The tri-faith idea had its origins in the 1910s and 1920s, emerging in direct response to the revitalized Ku Klux Klan and the nativism that surfaced immediately following World War I. Several pluralist visions arose in the 1910s and 1920s, but the tri-faith vision took center stage in the shadow of European totalitarianism in the 1930s. By World War II, it had become America's standard operating procedure, and during the first decades after the war, the public religiosity demanded by the Cold War and the numerous social transformations of the postwar era led to widespread recognition of the perceived tri-faith character of the United States. The 1940s and 1950s were the tri-faith image's triumphant years, when many if not most Americans conceived of their nation as being predominately made up of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, much in the same way social commentators had reflected on the divides between capital and labor in the 1930s and between black and white in the 1960s. Indeed, one of the central arguments of this book is that between these two periods—the capital-labor divide of the 1930s and the racial divide of the 1960s—sits another ideological division that has been mostly forgotten, that of Tri-Faith America. Part I charts its birth and maturation.



The second part of the book, "Living in Tri-Faith America," examines the variety of ways in which the tri-faith image allowed certain ideals to gain widespread airing from the mid-1940s to the early 1960s. For instance, the idea that persistent communalism was a good thing first won widespread acceptance in Tri-Faith America. It was negotiated, among other places, in the streets and on the school boards of suburbia, as Protestants, Catholics, and Jews used the inclusive tri-faith ideal to challenge any lingering Protestantism that might still surround the national image. Similarly, the high wall of separation between church and state that conservative Protestants have struggled against ever since was erected in Tri-Faith America too. This was, after all, the time of the second disestablishment of religion in the United States, the result of the labors of Catholics and especially Jews fighting to ensure that their recently proclaimed first-class status in American life remained unthreatened by any residual Protestant superiority. The idea that minority groups should have special rights in a democracy also arose during these years, especially when it came from Catholics and Jews arguing that minority groups should be allowed to discriminate in the name of self-perpetuation. Discrimination, argued postwar Catholics and Jews, had different implications when it came from a minority fighting for preservation rather than from a majority trying to maintain supremacy. The notion that religion was purely a private matter got sanction during these years too, as Americans probed the question of how deeply the federal government could and should learn about one's religious affiliation. Unlike with almost any other social category, Americans of many religious groups fought together to establish a new right of religious privacy. Finally, the pluralism subtly acknowledged in the tri-faith concept helped soften the ground for the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Often this was a happy accident for the leading proponents of the tri-faith idea, such as the leaders of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, who frequently supported black civil rights throughout the twentieth century but whose support was often tepid and hesitant, fearful that pushing too strongly for racial equality might jeopardize their primary objective of religious goodwill. Nevertheless, the tri-faith ideal provided both a language to tap into and an audience ready to hear pluralist arguments, two factors that helped prepare the way for civil rights.

Taken together, the arrival of the tri-faith image and the subsequent development of these pluralist ideals demonstrates that, rather than surfacing in the 1960s or 1970s, anti-conformist and anti-consensus ideas circulated freely during the years following World War II. And it was not race, class, or gender that served as the central provocateur, but religion.

Winning widespread acceptance for the tri-faith ideal and then fighting to give that victory some meaning were no easy tasks. Protestants, as the majority, had to

be convinced that the United States was not a Protestant country, and certain social and cultural differences made some aspects of Catholicism and Judaism truly threatening to an America in the throes of the Cold War. For one, many Protestants saw Catholics and Jews as clannish and divisive. After all, a Catholic in midcentury America was expected to marry a Catholic, participate in Catholic social events, send his or her children to Catholic schools, join Catholic social fraternities, play on or coach Catholic Little League teams, and go to Catholic religious services. Meanwhile, Jews joined Jewish organizations such as Hadassah and B'nai B'rith in record numbers during these years. Their faith often defined whom they socialized with, married, and worked alongside, as well as the lens through which they viewed American society. Furthermore, American Jews were easily identifiable as the group most actively pushing for the creation of a secular state, something potentially threatening when the country was waging war against an atheistic enemy.

There were ecclesiastical divisions as well. During a time when political, economic, and intellectual democracy was hailed as the foundation of the "American way of life," Catholicism operated under a hierarchy that mediated between the laity and "the truth," therefore seeming to limit free thinking. Worse still, the leader of the hierarchy, the Pope, was deemed infallible in matters of faith and morals. To non-Catholics, the act of separating faith and morals from politics and society was simply splitting hairs. In the land of the free, how free were Catholics? Could they think on their own? It did not help that Catholics conducted their worship in a foreign language and that Catholics could be absolved for even their worst actions through the seemingly simple act of confession. Although it was clear that Catholics were not prone to communism (which, after all, wanted to destroy the Church), wasn't it also true that Catholicism frequently thrived under authoritarianism? Wasn't authoritarianism the intellectual and institutional predilection of the Catholic Church and its followers? Was there a place for such tendencies in a democratic society? As easy as it might be to dismiss postwar anti-Catholics as simpleminded bigots, they raised serious questions. With many rational people questioning Catholics' role in a democratic society, American Catholics stood out as being a people apart.<sup>11</sup>

Jews too had to confront intellectual and rhetorical challenges that questioned their place in American society. Although the worst vestiges of antisemitism were declining in the late 1940s and 1950s, many Jews were still worried that their status as the "chosen people," their stereotype for clannishness, and their Talmudic deference to tradition (rather than reason) set them apart from a mainstream that lionized meritocracy, the open society, and rational thought. More important in setting postwar Jews apart from their fellow Americans, however, was the

decision by several American Jewish organizations to challenge the remnants of embedded Protestantism in American society. If Catholics' demands for acceptance challenged the mainstream's proclivities toward democracy, Jews' demands for equality challenged its proclivities toward Christianity. If Catholics were notable for their lack of embrace of the Enlightenment, Jews were notable for reifying that secular tradition. Jews themselves were torn over whether or not equality had to mean secularism. But throughout the middle of the century, Jews were clearly the most prominent advocates of removing Christianity from the American public sphere. This was something plausibly treacherous during a religious revival that had as its context a war against godless communism.

This all suggests that post-World War II Catholics and Jews were using the tri-faith rhetoric to challenge something larger than simple lack of access to neighborhoods, schools, or social clubs. They were challenging the established moral authority in America. Whose ideals should govern the nation? they asked. Whose beliefs about truth, community, and the good society would prevail? Although the Cold War's demand for national unity mitigated the most divisive aspects of debate, all sides were aware of the stakes. This is why some Protestants fought so hard to prevent parochial schools from receiving public funds and public schools from losing their religion. To them, acknowledging this kind of pluralism was the first step on a slippery slope toward the loss of Protestant moral authority in America. This was why, in 1951, *Christian Century* (the de facto voice of established Protestantism) decried pluralism as a "national menace" promoting "instability" and the subversion of "the traditional American way of life."<sup>12</sup> Privately, President Franklin D. Roosevelt put it more bluntly in 1942. The United States was "a Protestant country," he said, "and the Catholics and Jews are here under sufferance." Speaking to two high-ranking members of his administration, one Catholic, one Jewish, Roosevelt added that it was "up to you" to "go along with what I want."<sup>13</sup>

This was the sentiment challenged and overcome in Tri-Faith America. Despite the stakes, or perhaps because of them, not all Protestants resisted this transformation, and these sympathetic folks were particularly important in the success of the tri-faith image, especially as it first developed in the 1910s and 1920s. Despite resistance from many other Protestants, this sympathetic lot fought hard to broaden Americans' concept of their country, expanding it from "a Protestant country" to a "Judeo-Christian" one. It also mattered that the United States was founded, politically and culturally, by Protestants whose central ideas regarding political theory emerged from a dissenting tradition. It is hard to imagine the eventual success of religious pluralism in America if those in the dominant position did not have a history of dissent and toleration. "There is, to be sure, a Protestant accent to the American concept of religious freedom," reported *Life* magazine

in 1955. "Not only did Protestant sectarianism make [religious freedom] prudent, but Protestant enshrinement of the individual conscience made it popular."<sup>14</sup> How the nation left behind the idea that it was a "Protestant nation," how suburbs and courthouses became battlegrounds, and how the recognition of a pluralist ideal forced the nation to change are at the heart of *Tri-Faith America*.

There were, of course, many unforeseen consequences to the arrival of Tri-Faith America. For instance, the promotion of this new national image began a debate about the role of the state in adjudicating religious matters, and the argument that ended up winning was that ethnic, racial, and religious identities should not matter too much when it comes to governance. Ironically, the idea propounded by Jews and some Catholics that religious minorities might best be served by a secular state simply helped institutionalize a larger trend toward secularization in American life. This was especially true in the courts, which, beginning in the late 1940s, debated, steadily limited, and, by the early 1960s, removed both Bible study and school prayer from public schools. The cost of religious diversity was thus an increasingly secular state. This was never the goal of the strongest advocates of the tri-faith image. It was, rather, one of their worst fears. And in fact the long-term consequence of the creation of this more secular state was a slow reconfiguring of America's religious sociology in the 1970s and 1980s, when political conservatives of all faiths put historical antipathies behind them in order to fight what they saw as an emerging secularism. By the 1970s, the primary religious divisions were no longer between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews but between liberals of all three faiths and conservatives of all three faiths.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, it was those very Supreme Court cases of the early 1960s that helped propel the religious right into being, fueled by a mission to "take back their nation," meaning, of course, to take it back to Protestantism.

A second irony was that as the tri-faith idea became largely accepted, many Catholics and Jews were losing some of what made them sociologically distinct. Even though throughout the 1950s religious ceremonies were heavily attended and religious self-identifying was common, the decline of social barriers eventually led to the decline of distinctiveness. Old ethnic neighborhoods melted away as Americans moved into new suburbs. The orthodox requirements of faith seemed onerous to many of those enjoying the fruits of postwar prosperity. For both Catholics and Jews, these changes sparked heated debates about what it meant to be Catholic or Jewish in a society that no longer punished one for claiming such an identity. Thus as religion became central to the nation's very conception of itself, more and more of the congregation was becoming less and less interested in faith. Not only was the nation officially becoming more secular, but so were many of its citizens.

Both of these ironies are explored in the book's conclusion. But neither diminishes the importance of Tri-Faith America, when many Americans put aside the notion that theirs was a Protestant country. The cultural monism of previous decades no longer fit the image the country was striving to project. Although pluralism had been a sociological fact ever since the nation's founding, accepting, embracing, and celebrating that pluralism was something most Americans were not often willing to do. In Tri-Faith America, the country's citizens reexamined themselves, embraced pluralism, tried to figure out what that would mean for the nation, and sent the country on a course it has yet to complete. Tri-Faith America's arrival was never a foregone conclusion, its creation a work of both circumstance and labor, but its existence changed the way people thought of, discussed, and lived in the United States.

PART ONE

Inventing Tri-Faith America,  
Ending “Protestant America”

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# 1

## Creating Tri-Faith America

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IN 1934, EVERETT R. CLINCHY, a thirty-seven-year-old Presbyterian minister, published a short book with a red cover called *All in the Name of God*. America was not a Protestant nation, Clinchy declared in the book. Instead, it was a nation composed of three equal “culture groups”—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish. Each group had its own unique “way of living,” had its own “folkways,” and thought its way of living was superior to the others. But Clinchy contended that in order to survive in the face of the totalitarian demagogues emerging worldwide in the 1920s and 1930s, to beat back the prejudices on which they were capitalizing, to allow the United States to live up to its most cherished ideals, no group could be allowed to proclaim its superiority in American civic life. At a civic and social level, the three groups were equal. There could be no Protestant hegemony in America.<sup>1</sup>

Clinchy, a tall, wiry man with slicked-down hair and serious eyes, wrote the book immediately upon returning from Germany, where he witnessed firsthand the political rise of Adolf Hitler. What had happened there could happen in the United States, he worried. In the United States, many Protestants possessed suspicions about the supposed political ambitions of Catholics and the believed economic leverage of Jews. The Ku Klux Klan had reemerged during the 1910s and 1920s too, specifically targeting Catholics and Jews, not just African Americans. Meanwhile, some Catholics and Jews feared that Protestants were willing to do anything to preserve their social, cultural, political, and economic control, even if it meant resorting to violence. If the Klan “had found an American Hitler,”



Clinchy wrote, "it might have become to America what Hitler's Storm Troopers became to Germany."<sup>2</sup> What was needed to prevent an American embrace of totalitarianism was greater understanding between the nation's "three culture groups." Religious hatred had fueled Hitlerism, and religious goodwill was the antidote.

*All in the Name of God* thus sought to explain the origins of distrust between Clinchy's three faiths of America, and the book detailed the country's long history of religious intolerance. The title, in fact, was a gift from Clinchy's friend Francis Gilbert, who, while reading a draft of the book, grew so flummoxed at the amount of American blood spilled over religion that he threw up his arms and exclaimed, "And all in the name of God!"<sup>3</sup>



In 1928, at just thirty-one years of age, Everett R. Clinchy became head of the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ), the leading organization in a then growing movement to advocate tolerance, something that came to be called the Goodwill Movement. From his perch atop the NCCJ, Clinchy put forward a vision that the United States was not a Protestant nation but a tri-faith one, premised on a newly formulated idea called the "Judeo-Christian tradition." Used by permission of the Social Welfare History Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries.

Parallel to all the bloodshed, though, Clinchy saw an American past that had thrived because of the country's religious diversity. The United States was the first nation in the world to proclaim religious freedom, Clinchy argued. The Founders had paved the way for religious equality. George Washington had reached out to Catholics and Jews. Thomas Jefferson had written the Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom. James Madison had penned "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," which made a case for religious freedom instead of mere tolerance. "The American ideal summons its citizens to regard all forms of inner religious belief and cultural tradition as personal characteristics which enrich and give desired variety" to the nation, Clinchy wrote.<sup>4</sup>

More than just calling for a hollow celebration of diversity, however, Clinchy argued that American democracy had thrived because the nation had accepted its diversity, however unevenly. Without accepting difference, the nation would have fallen into authoritarianism, into "cultural monism," as he called it, "a stream whose source is the idea of the totalitarian state." Clinchy added: "If what has been called the American experiment is to succeed, if we are to achieve at ever higher levels in this country a true and free democracy, with equal rights and opportunities for all, we must learn cordially to accept the fact of cultural pluralism and to adapt our patterns of behavior to it."<sup>5</sup>

As he surveyed the American social and cultural landscape of the 1930s, Clinchy thought the most important battles to be worked out were between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Denominational differences among Protestants had declined in importance since the Second Great Awakening. Catholics and Jews had immigrated in such numbers during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that they could not be ignored. If America was to continue to be a beacon of liberty, it would have to accept its fate as a tri-faith nation.

Advancing this argument became Clinchy's life mission. Indeed, several years before his book's publication, when he was just thirty-one, he had become president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the leading organization in a growing movement to advocate interfaith tolerance, something coming to be called the Goodwill Movement.

At its inception, though, this tolerant vision had a considerable opponent. The 1910s and 1920s had witnessed the return of the Ku Klux Klan, calls for "one hundred percent Americanism," and general widespread nativism. It was Woodrow Wilson who famously said in 1919, "Any man who carries a hyphen about him carries a dagger that he is ready to plunge into the vitals of this Republic." Clinchy's mission was to promote a vision of tri-faith cultural pluralism, all while combating an ascendant drive to keep America "native, white, and Protestant."

## THE DRIVE TO KEEP AMERICA "NATIVE, WHITE, AND PROTESTANT"

One of the most far-reaching and influential visions of early twentieth-century America emerged from Hiram Wesley Evans, the Imperial Wizard of the newly revived Ku Klux Klan. In 1926, in an effort to understand "the Ku Klux Klan and its place among American institutions," the editors of the *North American Review*, a mainstream quarterly, asked Evans to write an essay describing the Klan's vision, aspirations, and methods. In subsequent issues, they published essays on the meaning of the Klan by a priest, a rabbi, W. E. B. Du Bois, and William Starr Myers, a prominent historian. But it was Evans's vision that most interested the editors.<sup>6</sup>

In "The Klan's Fight for Americanism," Evans painted a picture of hearty, freedom-loving frontiersmen sowing the seeds of democracy from which every generation of Americans had benefited. From "Roanoke and Plymouth Rock," he wrote, those who founded America had made an epochal break from Old World hatreds. They had created a society that embraced a panoply of freedom-loving values, including democracy, "fairdealing, impartial justice, equal opportunity . . . acceptance of individual responsibility as well as individual rewards for effort, willingness to sacrifice for the good of his family, his nation and his race before anything else but God, dependence on enlightened conscience for guidance, [and] the right to unhampered development." It was a society that celebrated freedom and personal responsibility, and, Evans argued, when people were free and responsible, they blossomed. A particular interpretation of nineteenth-century America—without the labor struggles, the rise of corporate big business, or increased income disparities—was the prime example of what might be called the Klan's neo-republican vision.

But there was a problem. The millions of immigrants that had come to the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century were beginning to adulterate the nation that Evans loved so much. They were threatening its continued existence as a beacon of freedom. By 1920, nearly a quarter of the people living in the United States were either first- or second-generation immigrants. These newcomers—speaking different languages, following different faiths, perpetuating "Old World" customs, conglomerating densely in urban neighborhoods, seeming to vote in political blocs, smelling of different foods, favoring different social outlets, vying for low-paying jobs—appeared odd, foreign, and threatening to those with longer-standing American credentials. Combined with the internal migration of millions of African Americans from the rural South to the cities of the North and South, many blue-blooded Americans were fearful of what the United States was becoming.

It was this fearful group for whom the Klan claimed to speak. According to Evans, the initial stewards of the American idea were "Nordics" of "white racial