

has contributed to better understanding special economic interest groups and their impact upon the political system in his book entitled *Era of Experimentation*. Carl Lane's *A Nation Wholly Free* is a worthy addition to this growing genre and deserves a place on the bookshelf of any serious amateur or professional historian seeking to better understand American political economy during the Age of Jackson. Most importantly, this book provides poignant observations that apply to our own time.

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Kruse, Kevin M. *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*. New York: Basic Books, 2015. 384 pp.

Kevin Kruse cements his reputation as a “conservative-whisperer” in his provocatively titled and argued second book. Once again, the Princeton historian displays an impressive ability to trace the genealogy of the political culture’s present back through its intellectual, institutional, and cultural roots. In his first book, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2007), he traced the evolution of Southern political culture from one dominated by massive resistance, solid-south

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segregationism to a color-blind conservative politics of suburban avoidance. Through the prism of the Southeast's first corporate boomtown, Kruse reveals the political continuity between the region's segregationist past and its suburban Sunbelt present. In the eight years since its publication, *White Flight* has inspired a new generation of urban and political historians, myself included, to engage in scholarship that builds on Kruse's groundbreaking insights into the political culture of the Sunbelt.

One Nation Under God, by comparison, is a far more problematic work of scholarship. Kruse's reach exceeds his grasp as he tries to show how the idea that America has always been a Christian nation was catalyzed by an elaborate corporate lobbying scheme set in motion by anti-New Dealers during the 1930s. Kruse does not engage the scholarly debate over whether or not the Founding Fathers intended America as a Christian nation. Considering his argument, it should not be a surprise that he expresses a preference for the Jeffersonian "wall of separation" historiographical view of the issue. Instead, Kruse focuses on the question of why so many Americans in the latter half of the 20th century came to see Christianity as the defining feature of their nation's past, present, and future. In an often unflatteringly polemical fashion, he challenges popular assumptions about the relationship between religion and politics in the nation's history.

Kruse makes an excellent case that corporate America embraced increasingly public displays of religiosity beginning in the 1930s as a means of casting the New Deal as un-Christian. Corporate America, though, did not invent this new anti-statist public religiosity, as Kruse's title indicates. Instead, Kruse shows that individual corporate leaders like Fred Maytag and E.F. Hutton, as well as corporate lobbying groups, namely the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, bolstered the efforts of anti-New Deal crusaders that came primarily from the Protestant clergy. Corporate-backed organizations like Congregationalist minister James W. Fifield's Spiritual Mobilization convinced thousands of Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religious leaders in the 1930s and 1940s to help them promote a gospel that treated free

market economics and Christian piety as one in the same, an ideology that Kruse describes as “Christian libertarianism.”

The articulation of “Christian libertarianism” by Fifield and others served as the intellectual starting point for the remaking of popular perceptions of religion’s role in American history. Anti-labor and anti-New Deal Methodist minister Abraham Vareide, the founder of the National Prayer Breakfast, and Billy Graham, whom Kruse portrays as little more than an operative of the corporate wing of the GOP, helped bring “Christian libertarianism” into the political and cultural mainstream during the 1940s and early 1950s. By the time of Eisenhower’s election, a broad consensus that included the majority of both parties’ supporters endorsed what Yale law school dean Eugene Rostow later described as “ceremonial deism,” which Kruse sees primarily as an extension of “Christian libertarianism” rather than an effort by Americans to distinguish themselves from the Communist world, as much of the existing literature suggests. Nor does Kruse put much stock in Eisenhower’s common sense assertion that the religious revival in 1950s America was a product of the public’s desire for stability and tradition after two decades of World War and economic upheaval.

Eisenhower oversaw what Kruse characterizes as the sacralization of the federal government during his two terms as President. Though far from a right-winger on public policy, Eisenhower served “Christian libertarian” ends by reorienting the political culture from one that was self-consciously focused on earthly ends to one that was self-consciously focused on godly ends. Religion took on an unprecedented role in public life during the Eisenhower administration as Democrats and Republicans supported the addition of “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance, the adoption of “In God We Trust” as the national motto, the addition of that phrase to paper money, and the transformation of the National Prayer Breakfast into an annual feature of the Republic’s political life. Concurrently, the reverberations of “Christian libertarianism” found their way into popular culture through Cecil B. DeMille’s Biblical epics, the General Motors-sponsored *Religion in American Life* television programs, and Fred Schwartz’s star-studded Christian anti-communist crusades.

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The vague, ecumenical consensus of the Eisenhower era contained the seeds of its own unmaking, as Kruse demonstrates quite clearly. Local conflicts over the administration of government “under God,” particularly when it came to the issue of school prayer, helped to spark the ongoing culture war that began in the 1960s. The idea that America was “One Nation Under God” was a source of unity during the 1950s. By the middle of the 1960s, it became an engine of national disunity as an energized conservative movement decided that the defense of public religiosity was a cause worthy of going to the mat to protect. Richard Nixon’s “silent majority” consisted primarily of Americans who saw their nation under God as threatened by a liberalism that had left America in chaos and doubt, and unwilling to fight communism. The Nixon administration, aided strongly by the conspicuous support of Billy Graham, tried to monopolize public piety, creating the first successful version of the new Republican majority’s electoral playbook.

Kruse makes a compelling case that corporate America’s embrace of conspicuous spirituality during the New Deal Era helped to kick-start a movement on the right that contributed to the unmaking of the New Deal consensus over the next quarter century. Corporate America, though, did not invent Christian America, even in Kruse’s telling of the story. Corporate America sought the endorsement of the clergy precisely because of their esteem and authority in the culture. Kruse is probably right that the overt popular consensus that Americans were a deeply religious people is of a more recent vintage than previously imagined. Yet judging from corporate leaders’ perceptions of the American clergy’s cultural sway, it is evident that the American people already knew themselves to be a religious people.

Kruse writes beautifully. He combines a great eye for detail with an ability to employ those details evocatively in the service of a story. Kruse’s descriptions of the public displays of religiosity during the Eisenhower and Nixon inaugurations are particularly striking. Despite *One Nation Under God*’s shortcomings, Kruse has made another significant contribution to the historiography on 20th century American conservative political culture. Kruse’s latest work belongs on the bookshelf alongside the those of Donald Critchlow, Rick Perlstein, Darren

Dochuk, and Lisa McGirr, among other scholarly and more popular accounts of the conservative ascendancy.

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Gross domestic product (GDP) is a figure that we see all the time in news reports but rarely pause to think about how we are using it and what it means. Specialized courses, such as those approaching macroeconomics from a critical perspective, discuss the shortcomings of GDP as a measure of output and welfare. A number of organizations concerned with other measures of long-run welfare, such as natural resource sustainability, have devised alternative measures of economic output but none are widely