Struggle for the Soul of the Postwar South: White Evangelical Protestants and Operation Dixie by Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf (review)

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more Harvey Schwartzes to tell the true story of that which surrounds us.

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Elizabeth Fones-Wolf and Ken Fones-Wolf, *Struggle for the Soul of the Postwar South: White Evangelical Protestants and Operation Dixie* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2015)

Elizabeth and Ken Fones-Wolf have written an engaging book that explores the post-World War II labour movement in the US south through the lens of religious culture. *Struggle for the Soul of the Postwar South: White Evangelical Protestants and Operation Dixie* examines the competing and changing Protestant creeds in the South and how the white working class navigated them. With the sacred as its backdrop, the book offers a new evaluation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations' (CIO) Southern Organizing Campaign.

The authors provide a nuanced description of the religious landscape of the US south from the 1930s through the early 1950s, overturning the myth of a monolithic, ahistorical "southern religion." The first two chapters examine the religious, political, and social turmoil during the Great Depression and World War II years, which set the stage for the CIO's organizing campaign in the 1940s. The authors argue that a "religious depression" in the 1930s "reshuffled the spiritual makeup of the South." (37) Charismatic religious activity and restorationist denominations developed and began to transform the religious landscape, appealing especially to working-class southerners, and mainline denominations adopted fundamentalism. Alongside these premillennial religious cultures, postmillenial traditions persisted, especially as southern Methodists moved toward unification with the northern branch of the church and as young radical prophets organized throughout the South. Chapter 3 examines the faith of southern workers. By culling the oral history interviews of dozens of workers, the authors glean how they navigated and enacted spiritual belief. These rich sources underscore the importance of popular religiosity in the lives of working people. As the authors explain, popular religiosity "provided the framework within which working people assessed unions, employers, politics, and conflict." (6)

Chapters 4 and 5 examine how, as evangelical Christianity surged in the South in the 1940s, two wings of evangelical Protestants – promoters of Christian free enterprise and pro-labour Christians – fought for the devotion of the white working class. Perhaps the most important organization for pro-business Christians was the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), which spread a conservative evangelical, free enterprise message in newspapers, over the radio, and through lobbying efforts. While the NAE formed in New England, its messages—including the idea that unions were anti-Christian and communistic—appealed to southern boosters who reaped the benefits when manufacturers relocated in the nonunion South. Yet, pro-business Christianity was not "an uncomplicated tool manipulated by business." (96) For many conservative evangelicals, liberalism and modernism seemed to threaten religious freedom. If the government could regulate business, the argument went, it could also control religion, leading to a totalitarian, Godless state. For others, models of unionism did not resonate with and sometimes even contradicted religious beliefs that forbid membership in political and social groups. The majority of southern evangelicals agreed that liberalism and modernism – represented by

a bureaucratic government and unions – threatened religious liberty or were signs of approaching end times. Pro-labour Christians were a diverse group made up of the Fellowship of Southern Churchmen, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, the Highlander Folk School, and the industrial department of the YWCA. Most important for the CIO, their own Christian ambassadors sought to build relationships with southern ministers, who could share pro-labour messages from the pulpit. Although the CIO understood the importance of religion in the Southern Organizing Campaign, it faltered in two fundamental ways: first, responding to anticommunism, the CIO distanced radical prophets on the left, even though they had the most knowledge about southern religious traditions; second, the CIO did not build support among African American ministers (or workers), whose theology was more amenable to collective action. Nonetheless, as the authors show, anti-unionism among individual ministers, churches, and workers was not a foregone conclusion, and the CIO's organizers saw building support among southern ministers as vital to success.

The final two chapters trace the "struggle for the soul of the postwar South" by examining the CIO's sacred message during Operation Dixie and evaluating the relative successes and limitations of that message. The Community Relations Department led the charge in securing support from southern clergy. While they had significant successes, building support among individual ministers who were committed to social justice, they faced an uphill battle over all. Employers and conservative religious groups had many resources at their disposal, such as radio programming hosted by popular religious (and virulently anti-union) personalities who countered pro-labour messages whenever the CIO arrived in a community. Moreover, many of the CIO organizers were tone deaf to the religious values of southern ministers and workers. For example, one organizer touted his membership in the Federal Council of Churches, an ecumenical group, with little understanding that the affiliation undermined his success in southern communities, where ecumenicism often went against religious traditions. The authors also emphasize the complex circumstances in which southern ministers weighed the value of unions: Would unions promote or hurt congregational harmony? Did the labour movement promote materialism, consumerism, and bureaucratization, which contradicted individual agency and undermined belief in the Spirit? Was personal salvation or collective action more important for church members? Ministers also lived and worked in communities where employers held the purse strings and controlled law enforcement, making a pro-union message from the pulpit a risky one indeed. Lastly, the ease at which proponents could draw connections between the CIO and communism or socialism, as well as the CIO's rejection of Jim Crow segregation undermined the CIO's efforts among white working people. The authors argue that "Communism, racial advancement, the CIO, and modernist religion" could be "easily linked in the minds of many evangelicals," proving a major hurdle to success. (179)

This book takes up two debates in southern labour history. First, the authors offer a new perspective on the question of southern exceptionalism. They argue convincingly that, at least during the labour movement of the 1940s, "evangelical Protestantism was a critical factor" that intersected with race and class and "distinguished the southern white working class from the northern industrial workers who built the CIO." (209) That does not mean, however, that the white,

southern working class was predisposed to anti-unionism, but that religion should be fully considered in any evaluation of Operation Dixie. Second, the authors argue that evangelical Protestantism is important for understanding the CIO's anticommunist stance. Historians have argued that anticommunism cut off civil rights unionism, ultimately weakening the organizing campaign before it even began. The authors offer a different angle, showing how a difficult campaign would have become impossible among the white working class without a professed anticommunism. Moreover, anticommunism cannot be separated from another key flaw in Operation Dixie: the CIO's failure to fully grasp and develop a movement that spoke to the religious values of the white, southern working class. A major intervention in southern and labour history, this book promises to influence how historians understand and analyze the intersections of religion and class in social justice movements and in the lives of working people.

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***Trumbo,* Directed by Jay Roach, Written by John McNamara,** ShivHans Pictures, Everyman Pictures, Groundswell Productions, 2015

It is a rare occasion when the film industry produces a historically-based movie in which the protagonist is a Communist. Of course Warren Beatty set the mark in 1981 with *Reds,* which received a dozen Oscar nominations, three of which won. Denzel Washington's 2007 *The Great Debaters* did not do as well. Often, films that explore left history obscure the role of Communists. A recent example is *Pride* (2014), in which the screenwriter failed to mention that the hero of the story was in fact the Secretary General of the Young Communist League of Great Britain. Jay Roach's *Trumbo* is a welcome addition to this genre. Although highly fictionalized, it tells the story of a Communist novelist and screenwriter who survived McCarthyism, bloodied, and perhaps unbowed, and reclaimed his place in Hollywood.

The film begins with an exposition explaining that in response to the Great Depression at home, and the rise of fascism abroad, many Americans joined the Communist Party. Dalton Trumbo joined in 1943. With the end of the war, however, and with the Soviet Union no longer an ally, the Cold War "cast a new light on Communists." The camera first takes us to a room in Trumbo's farmhouse north of Los Angeles in 1947, where it pans over a collection of his achievements up to that time, including a poster for his 1940 Oscar-nominated *Kitty Hawk*, and a copy of his National Book Award-winning *Johnny Got His Gun.*

As Red Scare hysteria rises, we are introduced to Hedda Hopper (Helen Mirren). She is a hard-nosed, high society Hollywood columnist whose scurrilous and virulent anticommunism permeates the press and film industry. She is joined in her mission by the anticommunist Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals and its President John Wayne (David James Elliot). If there are evil villains in this film, they are Hopper and Wayne. Unfortunately, they lean more towards caricature, giving the impression that at the heart of anticommunism were right-wing eccentrics, rather than much larger political forces.

The conflict begins when Trumbo and nine of his colleagues are subpoenaed to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, often known as HUAC. Trumbo leads the Hollywood Ten in a spirited, but unsuccessful, defense of their First Amendment rights, resulting