

## Acknowledgments

**D**espite growing up in the 1990s, I was raised on 1970s television. Programs such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *MASH*, *Taxi*, and *All in the Family* served as our weekly entertainment day after day, month after month, and year after year. Because I was born well after these shows originally aired, much of this upbringing unfolded against the popularity of *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, and other national ratings giants on network TV. More importantly, these viewing practices took place deep in the woods of Montana, at the base of Big Mountain, where our closest neighbors were bear, moose, mountain lion, and deer. My family and I also watched innumerable televised sporting events including the World Series, the Super Bowl, and the NBA Finals. Without fail, someone would inevitably thank God or Jesus Christ for the strength to hit the game-winning home run, make the game-winning basket, or conduct the final drive to the end zone before time expired. Soon after, my parents would begin lambasting the television—confused and angered by the “out-of-place” theology articulated upon the highest stages of competition. Why were they so upset? Why were there “appropriate” places for such utterances? Were they otherwise “inappropriate,” these voices of Christian witness in the public square? It has taken most of my academic life to figure out a series of answers to such conundrums. In many ways, this book represents the best answers I have been able to come up with thus far.

Chronologically speaking, the first person to ever place my name in the same sentence as “an ivy” was my high school American history teacher, L. Mark Sweeney. His classes were brutal, but they gave me a sense of what rigor was like at that level and what it could be like moving forward. I then met the likes of Mark Montesano, Tisa Wenger, Ken Morrison, and Karen Bruhn while attending

Arizona State University as an undergrad. Reading *I and Thou* for an entire semester left an indelible mark on my intellectual development and my ability to parse out challenging lines of prose and text. The following years led me to Claremont School of Theology and Yale Divinity School. My mentor to this day, Gaston Espinosa, introduced me to the fine arts of argumentation, documentation, and elaboration all within the confines of the “single-spaced page.” Later, Tisa Wenger would again provide me with indispensable advice about the academy and how best to think about my various writing projects. In fact, it was Tisa whom I first told about my thinking on Norman Lear, American liberalism, and the study of religion. She could not have been more supportive. Combined with the theoretical freedom of courses with Kathryn Lofton, such an education laid the proverbial groundwork for what was to come during my coursework at Drew University. My time as a student at Drew gave me the space to pursue my analytical passions to the highest degree and the funds to do research at the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley in the archives of People for the American Way. Kathy Brown stood by me through thick and thin—even when it came to my all-important stipend as her longtime student assistant and colleague in the classroom.

I have been fortunate enough to be able to share my work with countless centers, universities, and colloquia. In many ways, my time in front of students and faculty at Princeton University, Yale University, and Columbia University went a long way toward sharpening and honing my prose and overall argument both within and across the manuscript. In particular, my time in Columbia’s Religion in America seminar as part of the University Seminars gave me the confidence and funding needed to pursue the project I truly wanted. For this I will be forever grateful. In addition, Jason Sexton and Ed Blum awarded me with the Best Student Paper Award as part of the Symposium on Religion in California at UC Berkeley. In 2007, I attended my first AAR (American Academy of Religion) conference in sunny San Diego. Not only did such a world forever wed me and my interests to the scholarly pursuit of religion, I was also able to taste what being part of a such a community would mean for the foreseeable future. Like many, I could never do justice to the countless hallway conversations and late-night debates I have had with close friends and colleagues since. While the following list is not meant to be exhaustive, it nevertheless speaks to how grateful I am for the time and energies of such a group of scholars. Without the consistent feedback by the following individuals, this book would have turned out completely different: John Modern, Finbarr Curtis, Chip Callahan, Tisa Wenger, K. Healan Gaston, Paul Harvey, Randall Balmer, Wallace Best, Judith Weisenfeld, Mark Edwards, Edwin Aponte, Laura Jakubowski Aponte, David Watt, David Walker,

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The Rise and  
Fall of the  
Religious Left

