

**“God, Country, and Christian  
Conservatives: The National  
Association of Manufacturers, the  
John Birch Society, and the Rise of  
the Christian Right”**

by

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## Abstract

According to the First Amendment of the United States of America, religion is to be separate from the State, yet the heart and faith of voters cannot always be separated from their choices in the polling booth. Media, social groups, and emotions such as fear can impact an individual's choice for a political candidate. This dissertation examines a historical timeline, from the 1930s to the early 1980s, of the interactions of corporations, wealthy individuals and religious leaders. These individuals created a strategic plan to politically mobilize a percentage of conservative Christians, through a Christian libertarianism that reflected a Christianity in support of free enterprise and limited government. In particular, I highlight the influence of the National Association of Manufacturers on the John Birch Society, and the Society's impact on the Moral Majority and the Council for National Policy. In essence, this dissertation argues that the John Birch Society was foundational in the creation of the rise of the Christian Right in America.

Through the use of conspiracy theories linked to Christian apocalyptic thought, the JBS, which was at the time under the leadership of Robert Welch, was able to use morality issues and a perception of declining American morality to incite fear into the hearts and minds of some conservative Christian voters. These morality issues would become the foundation for "culture wars" in the coming decades and a basis for the Moral Majority to instigate a voting bloc for Ronald Reagan in the 1980s.

Previous scholarship on the JBS has not included its important role in the rise of the New Christian Right, nor its role in the creation of culture wars issues prior to the late 1960s. This dissertation highlights the role of the overlapping belief systems of conspiracy theories and apocalyptic thought in the mobilization of conservative Christians by corporations, wealthy individuals, and religious leaders to elect "truly conservative" candidates supportive of a Christian America that is representative of a Christian libertarian state.

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my parents, Jean Keetch and Pasquale Celestini for their endless belief, support, and love. You are never truly gone if you exist in a memory, a word, or an act of kindness.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Best known for its conspiracy theories, anti-communism, and far right political stances, the John Birch Society (JBS) is a conservative membership organization that was founded in 1958 by Robert Welch. The size of the JBS at any point in its history, including today, is unclear as the Society does not release any membership information. The power and influence of the JBS peaked in the early 1960s, a time when many Americans united around the Cold War. During the early years of the JBS, Welch founded the magazine *American Opinion*, two publishing houses, and franchised numerous American Opinion bookstores across America. The JBS was much more than a simple anti-communist membership organization, it was a political movement. The focus of this movement was the election of a “truly conservative” nominee for the Presidency of the United States, and this individual was Senator Barry Goldwater. During the Republican Party nomination, the JBS membership came out in full force to help select Goldwater as the GOP nominee. After Goldwater’s crushing defeat, the JBS was marginalized politically. However, its

strategy of linking opposition to the Welfare State, apocalyptic thought, warnings against a generalized moral decline in America, and conservative Christianity was taken up by others, including some leaders of the conservative Christian movements in the 1970s and the Christian Right in the 1980s.

Scholars have dismissed the JBS as a group of conspiracy theory devotees that influenced the 1964 election, specifically the defeat of Goldwater. It has been studied by scholars in political science and behavioural science, but not from a religious studies perspective. The Society is important to religious studies research because the leaders of the JBS promoted a “Christian libertarianism” that promoted a form of Christianity in support of personal freedom, free enterprise, and limited government. The JBS also linked conspiracy theories to apocalyptic thought by creating a hidden enemy, specifically “The Insiders” (Welch’s name for the Illuminati), that was allegedly attacking the United States, Christianity, and freedom. Leaders of the Christian Right, such as Phyllis Schlafly and Rev. Tim LaHaye, looked to Welch’s strategies to affect political change. The JBS, led by Robert Welch, was able to construct a political movement that influenced not only the 1964 presidential election, but also the American political system as a whole for decades later.

To understand the JBS one must begin with NAM, and therefore my research begins in the 1930s. Originally my thesis was to focus on the time period between the founding of the JBS in 1958 and the conclusion of the 1964 presidential election. As I conducted my research it became apparent that links between NAM, the JBS, and the rise of the New Christian Right—and especially the Moral Majority—existed. Hence I looked at some of these connections in the 1970s and early 1980s. What I found through this work was

that NAM created a public relations campaign to influence American voters through what they referred to as opinion shapers, specifically women, youth, and religious leaders. NAM created a public relations campaign to promote free enterprise and social conservatism to these opinion shapers. These influential and wealthy NAM members worked closely with religious leaders such as Rev. James Fifiield and Billy Graham to spread a type of Christian libertarianism.

Robert Welch also emerged from the NAM board of directors, and adopted NAM's research on the opinion shapers to construct a two-tiered, conservative movement that was funded by the wealthy but aimed at the middle-class. NAM had predominately focused its public relations campaign on the upper-middle-class, whereas Welch wanted to mobilize the larger block of middle-class voters. Welch pointed to current events and what he saw as a sense of declining morality in America to substantiate his argument that the ultimate battle between good and evil was occurring. He encouraged the JBS membership to rise up and save God, country, and family. Welch and the JBS movement had an influence on Tim LaHaye, one of the founders of the Moral Majority and the sole founder of the Council for National Policy (CNP). What my dissertation argues is that the JBS played a significant role in uniting apocalyptic Christianity, economic libertarianism, and social conservatism (focusing on so-called culture war issues) as a catalyst to political activism for some conservative Christians prior to the late 1960s. The JBS indirectly helped to form the New Christian Right of the 1980s through connections to both leaders and funders, who built upon a variety of backgrounds to affect political change. The JBS grew in prominence and influence from its founding in 1958 to 1965, declining rapidly after the defeat of Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential race. The Society is still in existence, but its reputation

as an extremist organization that peddles conspiracy theories has relegated it to the fringes of right-wing organizations. However, Welch's strategy continues to influence politics in America.

As I was becoming interested in this line of research, Barack Obama was elected the 44th President of the United States. His two terms in office were clouded by questions about his religion and place of birth. Some on the political right did not focus on his political policies but chose to understand his politics through a conspiratorial and apocalyptic lens. One of the public figures espousing these theories was Donald J. Trump, who was elected the 45th President of the United States in November 2016. During his campaign and the early days of his presidency, Trump often indulged in conspiracy theories, white nationalism, and fear mongering. Appealing to an overarching sense of moral decay, which Trump supporters articulated through conspiracy theories and culture war issues, Trump's campaign was able to mobilize a percentage of the American conservative populace. These conspiracy theories and culture war issues, which focused on issues such as LGBTQ2SA rights, Black Lives Matter, abortion, feminism, and immigration, were simultaneously disseminated through conservative Christian news sources and "conspiracy news sites," such as Breitbart News, InfoWars, and the Drudge Report. Trump, a thrice married businessman, who was accused of sexual assault throughout the campaign, and publicly espoused conspiracy theories, became the political choice for 81% of white, born again/evangelical Christian voters.<sup>1</sup> Conservative Christian leaders such as Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell Jr., and Franklin Graham publicly endorsed Trump. Watching the 2016 presidential election confirmed for

1. Gregory A. Smith and Jessica Martinez, "How the Faithful Votes: A Preliminary 2016 Analysis," 2016, accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/>.

me that religion and conspiracy theories remain potent elements in American politics.

## **1.1 Religion and the Rise of Conservative Organizations**

### **1.1.1 Introduction of Welfare State and Resistance by Free Enterprise Defenders**

To understand how American politics arrived at this current junction, I decided to look at the historical influence of religion and conspiracy theories. My initial research found that the concept of free enterprise was often entangled in religion and politics in America. I decided to focus on the era after the Great Depression and the start of the New Deal, given that it was an era in which the free enterprise system in America had come under intense criticism. An influential group during this time period was the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM). NAM had been founded in 1895, with 600 manufacturers as members. Its initial purpose was to develop a strategy to protect American industry from foreign imports.

After World War II, NAM launched a campaign in reaction to the public fears of communism taking hold in America, as well as in reaction to the public support of unions against corporations. NAM wanted to appeal to Americans by showing the “heart” of corporations. To accomplish this, NAM conducted research that revealed the opinion shapers in society: women, youth, and religious leaders. NAM created public relations



campaigns that were directed at these three important groups. Under this campaign, NAM members were encouraged to convey the views of NAM and the manufacturing industry to women, religious leaders and youth through the NAM members' involvement in various organizations.

In my analysis of NAM and its political influence, which I undertake in chapter two, I argue that NAM's influence as well as having a direct effect on the American public, also extended past its own public relations campaign. Individuals who were involved in NAM's board of directors and privy to NAM's research and strategies also acted on their own and used their personal wealth to influence American politics. For example, individuals such as J. Howard Pew and Jasper E. Crane financed a Christian movement headed by James Fifeild, the Spiritual Mobilization movement, to create a Christian pulpit for conservatism and free enterprise. Pew and Crane not only financed Fifeild's movement they also provided a social network of potential financial supporters and acted as mentors for Fifeild. With their help, Fifeild was able to connect Christian faith to support for corporations and free enterprise in what historian Kevin M. Kruse refers to as "Christian libertarianism," that is "a conflation of faith, freedom, and free enterprise."<sup>2</sup> Pew and Crane eventually retracted their support of Fifeild, but not their vision of a conservative Christian movement in support of free enterprise. They then put their support behind an emerging Christian leader, Rev. Billy Graham. Pew eventually became a partner with Graham in the magazine *Christianity Today*. With Graham, Pew hoped that a conservative movement of voters and Christian leaders could be influenced through linking religion to free enterprise.

2. Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 7.

Simultaneously, Robert Welch, a candy manufacturer and a NAM board member, was building his own movement, which eventually became the John Birch Society (JBS). The JBS arose in the 1950s, an era defined for many Americans by the Cold War. The 1950s is an era in which Christianity acted as a weapon against communist encroachment. President Eisenhower promoted this “religious revival.” In his inauguration ceremony, Eisenhower set the role that religion would play in his administration. His inaugural parade included a float called “God’s Float,” which was embossed at both ends with the words “In God We Trust.” Religion had always had a role in the inaugurations of America’s presidents, and Eisenhower continued the tradition of taking his oath of office on the Bible—in fact, Eisenhower used two Bibles: one used by George Washington in 1789 and a personal Bible that he called his “West Point Bible.” New, however was what happened after taking the oath. Instead of kissing the Bible and then having a minister offer a prayer, as had been the tradition, Eisenhower asked the people gathered at the Capitol to bow their heads in prayer: “My friends, before I begin the expression of those thoughts that I deem appropriate to this moment, would you permit me the privilege of uttering a little private prayer of my own. And I ask that you bow your heads.”<sup>3</sup>

### **1.1.2 Presidential Examples**

While Eisenhower’s open religiosity, which married politics and religion, marked a pivotal period in the history of church-state relations in the United States, prior presidents had invoked Christianity at various times. For example, during the New Deal era, Franklin

3. Hubert Eisenhower, “1953 Presidential Inauguration,” Accessed: 02/04/2018, 1953, [www.dwightdeseisenhower.com/449/1953-Presidential-Inauguration](http://www.dwightdeseisenhower.com/449/1953-Presidential-Inauguration).

D. Roosevelt did not ignore the power of American religion either and often drew on religious imagery, allusions, and teachings. He spoke before many of the nation's religious conferences, and he used the Bible to explain his reforms.<sup>4</sup> In March 1947, President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9835, an anti-communist loyalty program for the executive branch. In the summer of that same year he wrote a letter to Pope Pius XII proposing an alliance of moral and religious forces against communism. "Truman pledged America to the cause of bringing about the kingdom of God on earth, a divine reformulation of the communist equation he battled. He argued that basic acceptance of Christ underlay all of secular society."<sup>5</sup>

Eisenhower developed a conception of religion in the Cold War based on three ideas: "that American democracy depended on religion, that Communism was at its heart a dangerous religious creed, and that successful nations balanced both material and spiritual strength."<sup>6</sup> In the years 1954-1956, under Eisenhower's leadership, the US government took important steps to announce this new orientation. First, the US post office released a new eight cent stamp that bore the words "In God We Trust" over an image of the Statue of Liberty. Then the words "under God" were added to Pledge of Allegiance (1954). Finally, in 1955, the motto "In God We Trust" was added to American currency, announcing to the world through every transaction that America was the religious leader in the battle against communism.

Libertarians, supporters of the free market, and social conservatives of this time were

4. Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 32.

5. *Ibid.*, 78.

6. *Ibid.*, 95.

united in a battle against the growth of social welfare, and the growing intrusion of the American government into the lives of citizens. These conservative movements mounted a concerted effort against those who did not join in on the Christian war against communism.<sup>7</sup> They often levelled their protests against churches and religious institutions as they saw these institutions as the custodians of social morality. These sentiments were reflected in the JBS literature, which often focused on supposed communist infiltration into American institutions such as the government, the Protestant clergy, the National Council of Churches, and the American educational system.

### 1.1.3 Pop Culture Examples

The 1940s and 1950s saw public relations campaigns, celebrity endorsements, radio and television shows promoting religion as central to the campaign against communism. American leaders in industry, including members of NAM, in politics, and in pop cultural industries created a complex network of initiatives to re-endow religion with cultural, social, and political meaning.<sup>8</sup> National events promoted faith in the heart of American cities and towns. Programs such as the Freedom Train, the Religion in American Life (RIAL) campaign, the Crusade for Freedom, the Committee to Proclaim Liberty, and the Foundation for Religious Action asked Americans to develop or strengthen the religious aspects of their lives.<sup>9</sup> Most of these programs were organized by committees comprised of businessmen and

7. R. Schmuck and M. Chesler, "On Super-Patriotism: A Definition and Analysis," *Journal of Social Issues* 19, no. 2 (1963): 35.

8. Jonathan P. Herzog, "America's Spiritual-Industrial Complex and the Policy of Revival in the Early Cold War," *Journal of Policy History* 22, no. 03 (2010): 338.

9. *Ibid.*, 341.

funded by corporations, not by religious leaders. It was against this backdrop that Welch created the JBS.

In American popular culture, the strongest purveyor of religion as a weapon against communism was Hollywood. One such endeavour involved celebrities and the moguls of the film industry working closely with business leaders in the Committee to Proclaim Liberty. This program sought to connect the Fourth of July, the most secular of American holidays, with religion and made July 4, 1951, a day of religious observation, when church leaders would take to the pulpit to preach the connection between religion and Americanism.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, Hollywood promoted Christianity, through the production of some of their biggest budget films, including *The Ten Commandments*, *The Bible*, and *Ben Hur*. Sales of the Bible doubled compared to the previous decade, seminaries were at full capacity, and religious titles accounted for up to half of the national bestseller list.<sup>11</sup> This cultural effervescence presented Christianity as the best weapon against communism and promoted the notion that America represented a bastion of faith to the world in its battle against communism. It contributed to the societal environment that led to the creation of and success of the JBS. Religion was, as Kruse argues, becoming a cultural product of America. For Welch, and some leaders of the Right, religion, economics, and politics were interwoven as an accepted expression of “Americanism,” which Welch understood to be “the philosophical antithesis of communism.”<sup>12</sup> I discuss Welch’s use of this term in greater detail in in chapter three.

10. Herzog, “America’s Spiritual-Industrial Complex and the Policy of Revival in the Early Cold War,” 347.

11. *Ibid.*, 351.

12. Robert Welch, “One Man’s Opinion,” *One Man’s Opinion* 1, no. 2 (April, 1956): 11.

I argue in this dissertation that individuals such as Tim LaHaye and Phyllis Schlafly developed and strengthened conservative Christian movements, such as the Moral Majority, to coordinate conservative Christians, including many members of the JBS as well as to its predecessor, NAM, the Spiritual Mobilization movement, Billy Graham's movement, and like-minded movements in the 1940s to the 1960s. In the early days of my research, I had a working thesis that the JBS was essentially a religious organization. However, after looking more deeply into the Society, I realized that many of the leaders and funders of the JBS seemed to be true believers in Christianity while others had an instrumental approach to religion. What became clear through my analysis of the JBS was that Welch interwove conspiracy theories with religion as a tool of political, social, cultural, and religious mobilization. He was able to create a continual sense of impending disaster at the hands of an "evil cabal" whose end goal was to eradicate religion and to create a new world order in which free enterprise would be replaced by socialism. The response to this crisis required a political movement centred on electing "conservative" politicians, a social renewal centred on strengthening the American family with its traditional gender roles, a cultural revival centred on re-committing to American business values, such as hard work, freedom, self-reliance, and self-responsibility, and a religious revival centred on Christian conservatism. The JBS was not a religious organization per se, but its activities cannot be understood unless one examines the religious aspect of its ideology and strategy.

## 1.2 Scholarship on the John Birch Society: Religion, Economics, and Politics

I returned to university in the fall of 2007 to pursue a degree in religious studies. Through my undergraduate years I fluctuated between topics and religions to study. The commonalities in my interests were religious communities on the margins of society and the role of religion in politics. During my master's degree, my interest in religion and politics was enhanced by a directed studies course on apocalyptic thought and American politics, in which I was introduced to the work of Dr. Michael Barkun on apocalyptic movements and how conspiracy theories melded with religion and politics. I had an interest in the Christian Right, but I wanted to know how conspiracy theories influenced their faith and their political activism. Barkun referred to Richard Hofstadter's *The Paranoid Style of American Politics* in his research, and that led me to read Hofstadter's work. Throughout his book, Hofstadter made reference to the John Birch Society (JBS), a group I was not all that familiar with at the time. I began to do some initial research into the JBS and found the use of Christianity and apocalyptic thought interesting. I discovered, however, that scholars had not examined the Society as an organization that drew on religious themes or borrowed from evangelical religious movements, particularly Christian revivalists in the 1940s and 1950s, to mobilize conservatives. Instead, the scholarly literature tended to focus on the sociological and political aspects of the Society. My interest in the JBS as part of a burgeoning movement of politically conservative Christian leaders laid the foundations for this dissertation.

However, in scholarship to date, the religious aspect of the JBS has been ignored both

by political scientists and historians as well as by scholars of religion. Social scientists ignore the religious orientation of the JBS, because they tend to assume that its real goals were political and economic, and that religion was not essential to the movement's ideology, appeal or success. Scholars of religion seemed to have agreed; the goals of the movement were essentially political and economic and hence not "religious,"—and consequently not worthy of their attention. I argue that in the JBS politics, economics, protest against social change, and religion were united in a single movement that meant different things to different participants. However, the religious element was always present and central to the movement. That being said, the JBS should be studied not as a religious organization, but as an organization, rooted in a particular Christian ethos that became influential in the development of the Christian Right and an integral part of the history of conservative politics in the US.

The other reason the JBS has not received sufficient scholarly attention is its reliance on conspiracy theories. Many came to believe that it was not a serious social movement because they believed that many of the pronouncements of its leaders (the idea, for example that Eisenhower was a communist agent, or that Chief Justice Warren should be impeached) were ludicrous. However, current events in American politics should remind us that even outlandish conspiracy theories can serve as powerful motivators to political activism and electoral choices. By dismissing the Society, an integral aspect of the rise of the Christian Right has remained insufficiently researched. The conspiracy theories promoted, and in some cases created, by Welch were integral to conservative political movements since the 1960s. In fact, this linking of conspiracy and Christianity became foundational for Tim LaHaye in the coming Moral Majority movement on the 1980s.



To say that religion was essential to the JBS is not the same as saying it was an essentially religious, i.e., Christian, organization. The Society differed from openly Christian anti-communist organizations such as Billy Hargis's Christian Crusade and Dr. Fred Schwarz's Christian Anti-Communism Crusade. Still, the JBS, using apocalyptic thought, conspiracy theories, and fear mobilized a percentage of conservative Christians during the 1950s and 1960s. The JBS relied on Christianity and its imagery, leaders, and hierarchy to motivate members to mobilize for conservative politicians—especially during the 1964 presidential elections. Robert Welch conceived the JBS on a solid foundation of Christian apocalyptic thought. Scholars focus on the JBS members as fervent anti-communists, self-perceived ultra-patriots, and “extreme” in their right-wing approach to governance, not acknowledging the Society's Christian foundations. This dissertation will show that an important aspect in the mobilization of JBS members was an overlapping belief system in Christian apocalyptic thought and conspiracy theory in what political science scholar Michael Barkun has called “improvisational conspiracism.”

While I argue that religion played a significant role in the JBS and that this role allows us to see the historical connection between the JBS and the New Christian Right of the 1980s and even the Tea Party and similar movements of today, most scholars have ignored religion in their discussion of the JBS. Martin Seymour Lipset, one of America's greatest sociologists is typical.

### 1.2.1 Martin Seymour Lipset and Edgar G. Engleman

Throughout his academic career, sociologist Martin Seymour Lipset researched the role of class structure in American politics. He was interested in why the Socialist Party had not succeeded in making an impact in America. His research eventually led him to contemplate the role of religion in politics within the context of class structures. His work, until the mid-1950s, had been predominately on left-wing politics, but after the mid-1950s, he began to look at right-wing movements. Lipset recalls in his memoir that, with this turn in his work, he began to focus on “McCarthyism and the John Birch Society in the 1950s and the early 1960s, and stressed their traditionalist and populist antielitist character.”<sup>13</sup> In his 1970 book *The Politics of Unreason*, Lipset turned to the subject of right-wing extremism. The book provided a historical timeline of the rise of extremism from the end of the 18th century to 1970. He concluded that there were two sources of the extremism: Protestant sectarian moralism and “status insecurity derivative from mobility.”<sup>14</sup> The JBS was the focus of two chapters in this book, in which Lipset dismissed the religious influence on the JBS and focused on the economic insecurities of its membership.

The data used by Lipset as well as details concerning its collection and analysis can be found in the undergraduate honours thesis of Edgar G. Engleman, Lipset’s student at Harvard in 1967. Engleman ran word searches through a computer as a form of content analysis of JBS newsletters and the JBS monthly magazine, *American Opinion*. From the data collected, he drew conclusions regarding the membership of the JBS. Engleman wrote

13. Martin Seymour Lipset, “Steady Work: An Academic Memoir,” August, 1996, 21, accessed July 14, 2017, <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.1>.

14. Ibid.

that the businessmen of the JBS National Council were a “moderating and broadening”<sup>15</sup> force on Welch, that they moderated his communist conspiracy theories and brought the focus back to “domestic political and economic issues.”<sup>16</sup>

As we will see in chapter three, my interpretation of the influence of the National Council deviates from that of Lipset and his student. This is due in large part to the fact, that almost fifty years after this initial research, we now have access to the personal papers and correspondence of the Council members, which provides researchers with a broader perspective and understanding than would have been available to Lipset and Engleman. I conclude that members of the National Council, in their speeches, written work, and radio appearances, all spoke openly of the communist conspiracy and the importance of Christianity in this fight against communist atheism. They, like Welch, promoted a religious faith in terms of a Christianity that supported free enterprise and limited government.

Engleman’s undergraduate thesis also looked at the rise in the topic of economics in the JBS literature. He noted that by the end of 1964 there had been a dramatic increase in the frequency of topics such as progressive taxation, the right to work, anti-unionism, and economics as a whole. He argued that the rise in the frequency with which these topics arose was an attempt by the JBS to gain more legitimacy with the general populace.<sup>17</sup> As a result of his word search analysis, Engleman argued that the message of the JBS in its major publications had shifted from anti-communism to broader economic topics.

15. Edgar G. Engelman, “The Changing Appeals of the John Birch Society,” Harvard University Thesis Collection (Harvard University, 1967), 22.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Based on this simple word search Engleman argues that the JBS publications had shifted from communism to economics, without further discussion.

My research builds upon this initial content analysis and broadens the scope to include a cultural analysis of the time period. In addition, having had access to the personal papers of individuals such as James W. Clise, a businessman and activist in libertarian political movements, has provided a different understanding of the overall political goals of the Society and Robert Welch. By 1964 the JBS was focusing on the election of Goldwater. Communism was still a relevant threat, but with Welch's plan, the full weight of its membership needed to be placed on the political scales, and economics alone could not get the membership there. There needed to be additional motivation, which involved a mix of fear, conspiracy, and religion. As we will see in chapter six, Goldwater did address social issues and economics in his platform, but morality in society was integral to his campaign. The JBS never faltered in connecting social change and cultural conflict to politics, economics, and religion, and focus on any specific topic found in the JBS literature was aligned with these mobilization efforts.

Engleman's undergraduate thesis was an important source in Lipset's scholarly analysis of the emerging right in the 1960s. The word search content analysis was foundational for the social scientific study of the right, and it provided a useful point of reference for the research presented in this dissertation. Economic topics were integrated into the JBS from the start, but they appear more frequently over the years. Through an analysis of the subtle use of religion to mobilize people, we can see from the initial campaigns of the JBS and its associated organizations that building fear of a communist takeover was paramount. From 1958 until the election year of 1964, the campaigns of the JBS developed from simple petitions to stop support of the UN, or boycotts of products from communist countries, to more overtly political actions such as the campaign to impeach Supreme Court Judge Earl

Warren.

The word-search content analysis performed by Engleman was also the basis of Lipset's assumption that the JBS was not a religious organization. To look for religious content, he used only one word, "anti-clergy," in his data search. Anti-clergy—derived, one assumes, from anti-clericalism—is rarely used by the JBS, or anyone else for that matter. Perhaps Engleman and his teacher thought that it was an appropriate choice for content analysis given the JBS's frequent condemnation of the National Council of Churches.

However, the Society was not anti-clergy either; in fact, religious leaders including Ezra Taft Benson, the Catholic Bishop of Boston, and *Left Behind* author Tim LaHaye were involved with the JBS in some degree. What the JBS focused on was the left-leaning clergy they believed existed in all religions and major institutions—but especially in liberal Christian churches. Religion was a motivational factor for the JBS, religious themes were used as a fear tactic for the middle-class, and as a rightful inheritance for "God's Angry Men." Religion provided a framework for the JBS to stoke fear and, simultaneously, provide a way to overcome those fears. Essentially religion, was used by the JBS, to motivate people, in conjunction with conspiracy theories in the middle-class and these overlapping conspiracy theories and religious themes provided a rationale to fight against something. For the wealthy, religion provided a rationale to fight for something, in this case their socio-economic position in America. Atheism was not welcomed within the JBS, and the Society actively ensured that those without faith were not amongst its numbers.

## 1.2.2 Richard Hofstadter

Another prominent sociologist who focused on the JBS was Richard Hofstadter, who observed in 1965 that the JBS membership (in the 1960s) continued to climb the socio-economic ladder. He argued that the JBS did not make appeals to the economically deprived. He wrote:

It is primarily an organization of well-educated middle- and upper-status Republicans who are deviants among the educated strata in several ways — including a greater disposition to ethnic prejudice than the population as a whole. As an elite corps, the John Birch Society is, of course, much better educated than the members of other right-wing groups. It has also brought out an interesting polarity within the educated upper classes of American society, which is related to party affiliation. Among Democrats, increasing education is correlated with increasing disapproval of the Birch Society; but among Republicans, increasing education is correlated with increasing support for the society.<sup>18</sup>

The JBS appealed to all economic strata for fundraising, but understood the majority of the funds would come from the wealthy. These wealthy individuals provided the seed money for the JBS. Members of NAM made up the majority of the National Council of the JBS as well as the Advisory Board for Welch's first monthly publication prior to founding the JBS, *One Man's Opinion*. The majority of the cash came from these individuals, but the general membership did send donations as well. The upper-middle class professionals

18. Richard Hofstadter, "Fundamentalism & Status Politics on the Right," *Columbia University Forum* Fall, no. 8 (1965): 19.

donated \$1,000 donations for their lifetime memberships. Doctors and lawyers who sent in donations to the JBS justified the expense by citing the battle against communism. The wealthy rarely mentioned a justification for their donations to the JBS.

Hofstadter and Lipset differed in their appraisals of the JBS members' educational background. Hofstadter referred to the members as well educated, but deviants amongst the educated. Engleman's thesis, which provides much of the data for Lipset, stated that the members' level of education, while high, was inadequate:

they are well educated in the sense of having achieved a substantial level of formal education. In most cases, however, they have not had the kind of education which would make them feel adequate to compete in an increasingly bureaucratized society in which educational quality is becoming very important for occupational success and prestige.<sup>19</sup>

With a median age of 44, a majority of these JBS members had some college training or a bachelor's degree. For the most part, men were more highly educated than the women, with 66.6% of the men having a college degree or more, and 38% had some sort of graduate training; only 31% of the women had a bachelor's degree, and none had received graduate training.<sup>20</sup>

Engleman, however, contended that the quality of the schools attended were of a lower educational quality. He based this on the only membership survey of the JBS membership that had ever been conducted. This survey was conducted by Fred W. Grupp Jr. The

19. Engelman, "The Changing Appeals of the John Birch Society," 138.

20. B.S. Stone, "The John Birch Society: A Profile," *The Journal of Politics* 36, no. 01 (1974): 189.

published data from Grupp does not include which schools the members attended and Engleman himself does not list the schools. From Grupp's survey, we know that the members of the JBS were predominately college educated, and that the JBS members were predominately middle-managers and professionals. Yet, without clear data on what schools were attended, we cannot confirm they were lower-tiered educational facilities.

According to Hofstadter, the membership of the JBS was from two basic social groups. The first was the affluent, or newly affluent, suburban educated middle class. He pointed out that they resided predominately outside of the more economically and socially established northeastern areas of the United States. He argued that the newly affluent were supportive of the grass roots ultra-right movement because it "responds to ultraconservative economic issues as well as to militant nationalism and anti-communism, and which seeks to win a place in the political structure proportionate to the secure place it has won in society."<sup>21</sup> The second social group was a large lower middle class; Hofstadter states this group was less educated, less concerned about economic issues, and motivated primarily by a fear of communism. This group, Hofstadter wrote "perceives [communism] rather abstractly in the light of a strong evangelical-fundamentalist cast of thought."<sup>22</sup> Hofstadter largely attributed the religious aspects of right-wing political mobilization to the lower-middle-class members of the JBS while attaching the economic aspect to the more affluent. Grupp's survey of the JBS membership reflected that, out of the respondents 18% were "High Class,"<sup>23</sup> 64% were "Middle Class," and 19% were defined as "Low

21. Hofstadter, "Fundamentalism & Status Politics on the Right," 20.

22. Ibid.

23. Grupp defined the classes in the following terms: "High: business and professionals with family incomes (1964) in excess of \$15,000; Medium: all other white collar workers; Low: blue-collar workers" (F.W. Grupp Jr and W.M. Newman, "Political Ideology and Religious Preference: The John Birch Society



Class.”<sup>24</sup> Grupp’s and Hofstadter’s data reinforce the idea that the JBS focused on mobilizing a large percentage of the middle-class, which, as we will see in chapters three and four, was certainly the case. But because both Grupp’s and Hofstadter’s data and analysis concentrate on the JBS membership broadly, they missed the leadership and the small group of wealthy individuals who financially supported and benefited from the JBS. These wealthy individuals were also advocated various religious concepts to increase support for the JBS and JBS-backed candidates. My study is an attempt to address this gap in the JBS research.

My research focuses on the affluent leadership and funders of the Society, but I can only extrapolate information from these individuals’ archived personal papers and correspondence. As I argue in chapter four, this correspondence indicates that religion did play a significant motivational factor for the individuals such as J. Howard Pew and Jasper E. Crane. What is also revealed is a two-tiered marketing approach that used fear to inspire action among the middle-class members while reflecting the concerns and interests of the affluent backers. This marketing approach by Welch and the connection to NAM are not factored into the data presented by Grupp and Hoffstadter. The connection of religion and economics created by NAM, James Fifiel, and Billy Graham prior to the founding of the JBS is not a factor in their data.

Through the work of NAM, conservative ministers, Fifiel and Graham, Christianity had been interwoven into economics and free enterprise. A certain kind of Christianity had

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and The Americans for Democratic Action,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1973, 408)

24. Grupp Jr and Newman, “Political Ideology and Religious Preference: The John Birch Society and The Americans for Democratic Action,” 408.

become a pillar of support for corporate America. The wealthy supporters of the JBS, such as J. Howard Pew, William Grede, and Frank Masland all spoke openly of their religious beliefs. They also took a very hardline against socialism and any kind of compromise with it when speaking of free enterprise. F. Gano Chance, a leading businessman, and member of the JBS put it succinctly when he wrote “It is true, we cannot inject politics into the church, but we can try to inject the church into politics!”<sup>25</sup> The JBS aspired to do just that. While the scholarship of Lipset, Engleman, and Grupp provide substantial information of the composition of the membership, this work examines how the leaders of the JBS, the powers behind the scenes, and Welch himself shaped messaging to the membership. Welch and the JBS leadership strove to attract Christian middle-class members by shaping the JBS message to appeal to and affirm the memberships’ Christian belief systems. Refusing to draw a hard line between the religion and the secular spheres of life (such as economics, politics etc.), they combined religion with political and economic ideas. This religious messaging would have an influence decades later through the movements led by Tim LaHaye and others, as I argue in chapter seven.

### **1.3 Religion, Big Money, and the Rise of Conservative Christian Political Movements**

Part of the argument of this dissertation is that the JBS was part of a broader pattern of sponsorship of conservative groups—especially groups that refer to religion—by wealth-

25. Gano F. Chance, Letter from F. Gano Chance to Lem Jones (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., October 5, 1964), 1.

ier Americans in order to promote the agenda of the free market system. Some recent scholarship has begun to explore this theme in American history.

### 1.3.1 Free Enterprise and Religion

Kevin M. Kruse in his book *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, argues that “the postwar revolution in America’s religious identity had its roots not in the foreign policy panic of the 1950s but rather in the domestic politics of the 1930s and early 1940s.”<sup>26</sup> Kruse states that corporate leaders worked with conservative clergymen to promote political ideas to defeat Roosevelt’s New Deal and the Welfare State it created. Organizations such as NAM and the US Chamber of Commerce in the 1930s and 1940s, in Kruse’s words, “won converts” with religious leaders such as Billy Graham and Abraham Vereide.<sup>27</sup> Kruse outlines the relationships between corporations and religious leaders and groups. With chapters dedicated to James Fifiield, Billy Graham, and Rev. Fred Swartz, he examines the role of “Christian libertarianism” and corporations in each of the religious leaders’ movements. Kruse connects this time period to the 1980s’ rise of the Christian Right and the election of Ronald Reagan. Kruse’s main argument is that corporations have used slogans such as “one nation under God,” and ideas of America as a Christian nation to mobilize grassroots movements of Christian conservatives in support of “conservative,” that is, classical liberal ideas such as the free market, limited government, and personal responsibility. Kruse reminds readers that these mottos and pledges were not

26. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, xiv.

27. Vereide initiated the National Prayer Breakfast, initially known as the Presidential Prayer Breakfast, in 1953.

handed down from the Founding Fathers but instituted in the 1950s during the Eisenhower administration.

Kruse's work was instrumental in my research because it highlighted the many links between American business interests, the JBS, and the emergence of the Moral Majority in the 1970s. As with many scholars interested in the rise of the politically conservative Christianity in twentieth century America, Kruse focuses mainly on religious leaders and self-proclaimed religious organizations. My research complements Kruse's in that I look to the JBS and other organizations that never claimed to be religious, and yet have used religious beliefs, apocalyptic thought, and conspiracies to mobilize wealthy business leaders and later members of the middle classes. In other words, I work with the thesis that the storytellers of America's religious nationalism were not just religious leaders and organizations who spun a gospel of Americanism but also business leaders, politicians, purveyors of popular culture, and political organizations such as the JBS, all of whom targeted audiences with stories of injustice and of heroes who felt duty-bound to protect America from godless ideologies such as communism and Welfare State liberalism.

I share this thesis with the historian, Jonathan P. Herzog, who, like Kruse, argues that corporations and wealthy individuals in the late 1930s and 1940s played a significant role in a religious revival in America. In his book, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War*, Herzog argues that the use of religion as a weapon against communism in this era had a profound influence on American politics, society, and Christianity. Herzog constructs a timeline of the involvement of individuals, political institutions, and national security institutions in creating a top-down revival, through the educational system, media, voluntary associations, and pop culture

entertainment. According to Herzog, this spiritual-industrial complex had faded by the beginning of the 1960s, but it had provided a foundation from which the far right of the 1950s emerged. Herzog's work has informed my research because it has provided evidence of how corporations were heavily involved in the religious revival during the early Cold War. My work concentrates on NAM's involvement but also expands on the implications of this top-down revival to the current era. In this regard, I do not share Herzog's conclusion that the sacralization of opposition to communism or redefinition of the Cold War as a quasi-religious event had waned by the beginning of the 1960s; rather, I take the position that political conservatives after the 1960s defined new "enemies" in this religious battle to save America. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the enemy was still communism and liberalism, though they had taken different forms, as well as humanism,<sup>28</sup> which was running rampant in American schools. For many politically conservative Christians, communism, Welfare State liberalism, and humanism were linked in a campaign to destroy religion, free enterprise, and the "American way of life"—as evidenced by immorality in society captured under the nomenclature of "culture war issues."

In his book *God in the White House: A History: How Faith Shaped the Presidency John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush*, historian Randall Balmer re-creates the timeline of how American politics and politicians went from Kennedy, asking voters to separate a candidate's faith from their policies when voting, to George W. Bush, when a candidate's religion played a critical role in voter's choices. Unlike Kruse and Herzog, Balmer does not focus on the role of corporations in the political process. Instead he examines the

28. In the books authored by Tim LaHaye he uses the term "humanism" and not "secular humanism" throughout this dissertation, I have used humanism as well.

role of Billy Graham, the Moral Majority, and culture war issues in the change in the role of religion in the campaigns for the American presidency. Balmer argues that abortion and other culture war issues, although the focus of research into the rise of the Christian Right as a political force, is not the rationale for the movement. He cites the case *Green v. Connally*, not *Roe v. Wade*, as the catalyst to the Moral Majority movement. The 1971 decision by the District Court for the District of Columbia *Green v. Connally* stated that any charitable organization that engaged in segregation would be denied tax-exempt status, as would any contributions to these organizations. In response to this ruling, the Internal Revenue Service in 1975 revoked Bob Jones University's tax-exempt status, retroactively to 1970. According to Balmer, this was the rallying call for evangelical leaders "who banded together politically in the late 1970s [who] saw themselves as defending the integrity of evangelical institutions against governmental interference."<sup>29</sup> Further, Balmer argues that, throughout the early 1970s, conservative activist Paul Weyrich had been trying to rally evangelical leaders under the umbrella of culture war issues (such as abortion, school prayer, equal rights etc.) to no avail, but that the tax ruling on Bob Jones University was Weyrich's opportunity.

My research differs from Balmer in that I look at conservative movements not only from religious leaders' motivation, but also the motivating factors for conservative Christian voters. *Green v. Connally* may, as Balmer argues, be the moment that motivated religious leaders to join the Moral Majority, but for many of the laypeople within the right-wing, culture war issues and economics were linked together in Christian libertarianism long

29. Randall Herbert Balmer, *God in the White House: A History: How Faith Shaped the Presidency From John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 96.

before. I argue that it was the linkage that existed for decades preceding the 1970s that provided a foundation for religious leaders in the Moral Majority and as utilized by them as a framework for the formation of the movement in the 1970s.

### **1.3.2 The Koch Brothers**

Jane Mayer, in her book, *Dark Money The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right*, focuses on the role of the Koch family in right wing politics in America. Fred Koch was one of the original eleven members of the JBS, and served on its National Council. Mayer, an investigative journalist, acknowledges the obvious links of the Koch brothers to the JBS, and argues that brothers, Charles and David, used the JBS as the model for their political grassroots movements. According to Mayer, the Koch brothers insisted that any model for a grassroots movement should copy the JBS level of secrecy. In addition, their political enterprise should use the same motivational and sales techniques as Welch did with the JBS, which meant “transforming fund-raising into exclusive, invitation-only social events held in luxurious settings.”<sup>30</sup> Most importantly, the Koch brothers wanted to ensure the stigma attached to JBS members not be an aspect of any member of their political enterprise. Charles Koch also argued that to gain adherents they needed to appeal to youth. Mayer focuses on the role of the financial support of the Koch brothers in the Tea Party and Citizens United, and the connections of these movements to the JBS. My work also focuses on the role of wealthy individuals, and their attempt to swing the American government and the Republican Party to the far right. Wealthy individuals may have

30. Jane Mayer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (New York: Anchor Books, 2016), 67.

the financial capacity and social capital to influence politics, but what is needed in a democracy is voters to elect conservative representatives. To do this, wealthy individuals need to create movements to engage voters. I highlight the important role of religious belief, apocalypticism, and conspiracy theories in mobilizing conservative voters for these organizations funded and founded by individuals such as the Koch brothers. I also link these right wing movements to one another to build an argument that, from NAM's original public relations campaign, an overarching conservative movement emerged.

American historian Nancy MacLean builds upon Mayer's work in her book, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*. MacLean provides the history of economist James McGill Buchanan's and Charles Koch's secretive plan to change the rules of American democratic governance to disempower the majority. According to MacLean, Koch made a temporary "peace" with the religious right and its leaders, including Rev. Jerry Falwell, Ralph Reed, and Tim Phillips. Maclean bases this argument on the idea that libertarians are predominately atheists, and that religious leaders do not represent libertarian viewpoints. The religious leaders, MacLean argues, were seen by the libertarians as "entrepreneurs in their own right, so a common cause could be made."<sup>31</sup> MacLean notes that the religious leaders were "happy to sell libertarian economics to their flocks"<sup>32</sup> While MacLean focuses on the rise of the right in the 1960s to present day, I argue that this conservative movement has consciously linked Christianity to free enterprise and the Republican Party as the party that could deliver on political and economic objectives since the 1940s and as far back as the 1930s.

31. Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America* (New York: Viking, 2017), xxvi-xxvii.

32. *Ibid.*, xxvii.



MacLean's premise is that Buchanan founded an economic school of political economy at the University of Virginia to create a future cadre of individuals who could limit majority rule in Virginia. Once Charles Koch became involved, the school began to apply these theories nationally. MacLean refers to this as a fifth column, that is, a stealth movement that functions below the radar to assault the American democratic system. Koch brought to the fold numerous wealthy individuals to back this educational approach. The goal of Buchanan, according to MacLean, was to separate the "takers" from the "makers" in American politics. Some scholars have been critical of MacLean's work for misinterpreted quotations, while others say that it is lacking academic merit.

MacLean states that Buchanan created the school of economic policy to attain liberty,<sup>33</sup> a term that has been used as a calling card for all of the movements discussed in the right-wing scholarship. What is also apparent from the work of Kruse, Mayer, Herzog, and MacLean is that wealthy individuals are the architects of a conservative political movement, and that movement has many incarnations existing simultaneously all with the same goal. MacLean's historical recounting of this movement is premised on the idea that the "majority" would be silenced in the political process, and in her presentation of history of this movement she ignores the influence of societal change or cultural conflicts. My work does include the influence of the changes to American society and culture on the rise of the conservative movement. Central to my research is the politicalization of moral issues, sometimes called "culture war" issues, from the 1940s to the 1980s, which members of the JBS interpreted in terms of nefarious conspiracies and apocalypticism to build a political

33. MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*, xxxii.

movement.

## 1.4 The Religion of the JBS

### 1.4.1 Apocalyptic Thought

Apocalyptic thought, the belief that we are living in the “end times,” can inspire social action, and it can also inspire passivity in the form of withdrawal from society. Those who believe in apocalyptic thought believe that, despite the chaos and conflict they see around them, the universe is guided by a purpose or destiny, and the current events within their time period are unfolding specifically for this purpose. According to communications scholar Barry Brummett, apocalyptic discourse is designed to give people a sense of purpose and control. The theme of apocalyptic thought gives people the sense of having control over their difficulties and gives a cause for celebrating them. It not only provides a sense of understanding, but also how these difficulties will be resolved. Believers see these difficulties as temporary and with the coming golden era after the apocalypse, surviving through the difficulties will provide a “reward.”<sup>34</sup> According to Brummett, this belief in the coming end has three commonalities: (1) a disenchantment with the present, (2) an expectation in the coming apocalypse, and (3) the vision of a wondrous, and peaceful time period following the apocalypse. Together, these create a sense of meaning, purpose, identity, and community.<sup>35</sup>

34. Barry Brummett, “Premillennial Apocalyptic as a Rhetorical Genre,” *Communication Studies* 35, no. 2 (1984): 84–93.

35. *Ibid.*

Michael Barkun argues that apocalyptic thought offers believers a sense of control and meaning over what is transpiring through the discovery and interpretation of signs and symbols. These signs and symbols<sup>36</sup> allow the believers to gain enough control to corroborate their belief system with the phenomena they are facing in a crisis-ridden world, which typically leads to a cataclysmic end and the coming golden era.<sup>37</sup>

Apocalyptic thought explains what is happening now by reference to the past (i.e., history) and the future (i.e., the imminent end of times). Apocalyptic thought often arises in response to anxiety brought about by rapid or dramatic social change. In any case, believers feel they are separated from society, either by their own doing, or by actions of others; they feel marginalized. Apocalyptic thinking is a response to feelings of meaninglessness, marginalization, disenfranchisement, and a loss of understanding within the society as a whole. It is often a response to what believers see as a rise in immorality. There is a perception that the world as they understand it, including its values and morals, is collapsing around them.<sup>38</sup> Fundamentally, apocalyptic thought is a process in which people can make sense of the turmoil around them. It is not an answer to the crisis itself, be that crisis human-made, or a natural disaster. It is a way to cope with the situation by providing hope. The oppressors will be defeated and punished, and there will be peace for those who

36. For Christians, the signs of the coming end are indications of the coming of Christ. The Bible contains prophetic signs of the coming apocalypse such as religious apostasy, war, national revolutions, earthquakes, famines, and natural disasters. But for the secular, the signs are harbingers of a time of national devastation which leads to martial law, a collapse of society, a time when the disenfranchised will rise up in labour strikes, a lack of food, and food riots. For those who believe in apocalyptic thought, it is too late to stop the trajectory of doom and chaos. They believe that a third World War will come that will ensure the collapse of the world as they know it. However, this war is given meaning through apocalyptic thought. (Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, vol. 15 [Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2003])

37. Ibid.

38. Brummett, "Premillennial Apocalyptic as a Rhetorical Genre."

have suffered.

Given that apocalyptic thought involves reading the signs of the coming of the end times, it readily lends itself to conspiracy theories. Believers interpret what is happening in society in terms of the story of the apocalypse. When these apocalyptic ideas are tied into conspiracy they become what Barkun describes as “improvisational conspiracism.” Barkun argues this form of conspiracism is “wildly eclectic.”<sup>39</sup> Improvisational conspiracism can only be in “existence of significant subcultures far outside the mainstream. Surfacing in times of crisis and bound up with heterodox religion, occult and esoteric beliefs, radical politics, and fringe science, they have had a long standing sometimes potent influence on American life.”<sup>40</sup> Binding these different ideas together is what Barkun calls “stigmatized knowledge,” which is the belief that secret hidden evil forces are controlling human destinies.<sup>41</sup>

### 1.4.2 Conspiracy Theory, Millenarianism and Politics

These conspiracist ideas help to stimulate and support millennialist thought. A millennialist worldview is one based upon a continuing struggle between good and evil that will persist to the end of history, which comes with evil’s defeat.

Barkun argues that movements that are millennial in nature are characterized by the following:

39. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, xi.

40. *Ibid.*, 2.

41. *Ibid.*

intense emotional expression; aims so sweepingly comprehensive that outsiders regard them as impossible to attain; claims to esoteric knowledge and some measure of control of basic social and historical processes; dependence upon charismatic leadership; blanket condemnation of the existing social and political order, coupled with a total renunciation of its claims to legitimacy; association with periods of disaster, change, and social upheaval; breach of accepted norms, laws and taboos; high risk-taking; and withdrawal from conventional social, political, religious and economic relationships. In short, millenarian movements lay claim to a total all-encompassing truth and make concomitantly broad demands upon their members. Membership is neither nominal nor clearly demarcated from other areas of life and thus differs from traditional conceptions of, say, political party membership or interest-group affiliation. The movement enfold its members in a belief system that provides meaning and explanation for virtually all problems and in a round of activities that allays feelings of personal insecurity and builds a new and strong sense of identity.<sup>42</sup>

As we will see in chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7, both Robert Welch and LaHaye created this atmosphere or environment for their followers.

According to Barkun, millenarianists are drawn to conspiracism for two specific reasons. The first is that a millenarian movement without a large following or membership can blame hidden forces on its lack of popularity. Secondly, when the end times appear to be elusive the blame can be laid upon secret powers, such as a conspiratorial group or the minions

42. Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 18-19.

of Satan. Conspiracy theories can explain failure for the group and developments in the world at large.<sup>43</sup>

For Welch, the rise of communism, the Civil Rights movement, and society turning to greater Welfare State liberalism, posed a fundamental threat to the existence of free enterprise, Americanism, and religious freedom. For Welch, communism was simply a tool being manipulated by a “conspiracy of ruthless and powerful criminals, in the very top social, economic, educational, and political circles of their respective countries and of the whole world.”<sup>44</sup> He believed that these powerful elitists wanted to “increase their own power”<sup>45</sup> and eventually control the planet. This belief is an example of what Barkun has called systemic conspiracies, which are conspiracies that “are believed to have broad goals, usually conceived as securing control over a country, a region or even the entire world.” He observes, “While the goals are sweeping, the conspiratorial machinery is generally simple: a single, evil organization implements a plan to infiltrate and subvert existing institutions.”<sup>46</sup> Welch saw communism as infiltrating into almost every aspect of American life and institutions. He traced the Civil Rights movement, the decline of traditional gender roles and sexual morality, the rise of the Welfare State, and other dramatic social changes to this one cause and used the fear of communism to mobilize a percentage of conservative Christians.

43. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, 3.

44. Robert Welch, “Two Revolutions at Once,” (John Birch Society, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, 1960), 2.

45. *Ibid.*

46. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, 6.

## 1.5 Moral Crusade and Culture Wars

To support his improvisational conspiracism, Welch developed a system of “proof” that involved interpreting contemporary events by exposing the putative real forces, i.e, the Insiders or communists, that were controlling them. To show how effective these forces were in undermining the American way of life, Welch developed a narrative that America was in a steep moral decline. America’s declining morality was a particularly important weapon in Welch’s arsenal to mobilize women to become politically active for “truly conservative” candidates. To understand Welch’s appeal to social morality, I use Prothero’s work *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When they Lose Elections)*. Prothero argues that battles over culture war issues are really “battles over symbolic worlds”<sup>47</sup> that have helped to shape many American values.<sup>48</sup> Prothero’s research found that in culture wars the first “shots” were fired by conservatives.<sup>49</sup> My research shows that Welch created a worldview entrenched in conspiracy and persecution of Christians and “patriots,” as evidenced through an escalation in the declining morality of America. Welch did indeed “fire some of the first shots” in the coming culture wars that shaped conservative politics in America.

For Welch, America’s declining moral standards provided a way to link the religious to the economic while creating an “other,” (liberals and communists) conceived as an enemy to the nation. Fundamental to Welch’s mobilization was presenting these social morality

47. Stephen Prothero, *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When They Lose Elections)* (New York: HarperOne., 2016), 2.

48. *Ibid.*, 3.

49. *Ibid.*

issues as an attack on Christian values. Welch, through presenting social morality issues in terms of assaults on “traditional American/Christian values,” was able to bring a wide variety of conservative Christians together as one movement, despite whatever dogmatic difference they might have.

In chapter six I argue these issues and the sense of a “moral crisis” in America became the foundation of the Goldwater political campaign. While Goldwater and his campaign attempted to distance themselves from the “extremism” and “conspiracy” of the JBS, the campaign also focused on the social morality issues that the JBS had fostered since its founding. While some conservative Christians interpreted social morality issues as being indicative of the communist and atheist control of America, the majority of Americans did not.

With the landslide defeat of Goldwater in 1964, conservative movements grappled with how to proceed. The JBS had been successful in mobilizing Christian conservatives in support of Goldwater, but the stigma attached to the JBS inevitably led to its decline. From 1965 until the early 1980s, America was in a time of political and social turmoil, which led to the rise of the Moral Majority. A key player in the leadership of the Moral Majority was former JBS member Tim LaHaye. LaHaye having been involved in the JBS, understood both the successful tactics of the JBS mobilization and those tactics that played a role in its downfall. In chapter seven I show there are four commonalities for a successful mobilization using fear, apocalyptic thought and conspiracy as motivation for conservative Christian mobilization. Using LaHaye’s publications and his founding of the Council for National Policy (CNP), my analysis shows that LaHaye used these commonalities in the mobilization of the Moral Majority in the 1980s, and that these tactics remain in attempts



to convince the conservative Christian electorate.

## 1.6 Conclusion

This dissertation examines how the JBS brought together conspiracy, apocalyptic thought, and conservative Christianity, American nationalism, and free enterprise and suggests that it influenced a larger conservative movement in American politics. What was conceived of in the 1940s has evolved into a strong political movement that through various incarnations has motivated and mobilized some Christian conservatives, and has dramatically changed the Republican Party.

The research reflected in this dissertation was conducted through a historical analysis of archives from collections housed in Delaware, Atlanta, Arizona, Wisconsin, Rhode Island and other American states. I travelled to some of these archives and collected images from the files. From these images I found the important connections between various business leaders, the JBS, and eventually Tim LaHaye's CNP and his work in the Moral Majority.

To build this argument each chapter of this dissertation highlights important connections, strategies, and outcomes. Chapter two begins with NAM's influence through its public relations campaign to the opinion shapers. I began with this chapter because previous scholarship has not made the connection between NAM and the JBS. Without understanding the influence NAM had on individuals such as Pew, Crane, and Welch, it is not possible to understand the role the JBS and its wealthy funders have had on the rise of the JBS, and later, a number of influential leaders in conservative Christian movements

in American politics. Chapter three argues that Welch began his mobilization through the creation of a two-tiered organization. As argued in this chapter Welch originally focused on wealthy investors to not only fund the JBS but also to mobilize as the “inheritors of the American dream,” and as God’s Angry Men. Once having secured funders and supporters from the wealthy class, Welch created the JBS to mobilize middle-class conservative voters. This two-tiered socio-economic hierarchy required separate marketing approaches, one for the wealthy class based on the American dream, the second for the middle-class based on fear, conspiracy, and the moral decline of America.

Chapter four highlights the relationship between the JBS and Christianity. JBS publications promoted the notion that the National Council of Churches and mainline churches had been infiltrated by communists and supporters of the Insiders. This notion helped to destabilize the JBS members’ relationships and connections to their religious institutions and positioned the JBS and Welch himself as an institution the members’ could trust. Welch created a sense of persecution against both the Christians and the religion itself within a narrative of coming end times at the hands of the Insiders. As I argue in this chapter, Welch was able to create a form of improvisational conspiracism as a motivational tool to save God, country, and family—and free enterprise. This chapter also highlights the response from the religious institutions to the JBS and its message.

Chapter five highlights the specific marketing Welch and the JBS engaged to motivate women voters within the conservative voting public. Foundational to this marketing was a focus on private sphere issues, namely individual and social morality, communism’s attack on the family, and the declining influence of religion as a social and political force. This moral decline was always seen in religious terms. These private sphere issues were the

beginnings of what became known as culture war issues in the coming decades. This chapter sets the foundation of the role of women as opinion shapers, the role of a “moral crisis” as a political platform, and through the use of women writers the JBS mobilized women on the right.

Chapter six is the beginning of my argument regarding the influence that the JBS had on the American political system. This chapter highlights the role of the JBS and their use of moral issues in the Goldwater election campaign of 1964. The JBS provided an electorate in support of Goldwater, but the JBS’s reputation as “extremists” and conspiracy theorists also put the Goldwater campaign in jeopardy. The campaign had to minimize the damage that a connection to the JBS could do, while not alienating the voting membership. Many of the wealthy funders and supporters of the JBS were also the funders and supporters of the Goldwater campaign. Goldwater’s platform addressed the “moral crisis” facing America. This moral crisis was evidenced through the same moral issues that the JBS had been promoting as symbolic “proof” of the coming end times and the success of the Insiders. What becomes evident from this chapter is the role of “culture war issues” in mobilizing voters. It also highlights the role that Christian libertarianism played in creating the division within the Republican Party between moderates and the far-right. After the resounding defeat of Goldwater in the 1964 election, the right in America was in disarray. Chapter seven highlights the growth of the Moral Majority movement and Tim LaHaye’s use of some lessons learned from Welch’s mobilization. LaHaye had been involved in the JBS and used four important elements from the JBS in this new Christian movement. I argue that through the use of culture war issues understood through an apocalyptic lens, the creation of a nebulous enemy, an established infrastructure, and a political candidate

who could be the voice of this movement, LaHaye built upon Welch's strategy to help develop a political movement through the Moral Majority and, more importantly, through the CNP. The Moral Majority may no longer be a political movement in American politics, but the CNP remains a significant power in mobilization of Christian and non-Christian conservatives in America.

However, before we can understand how the JBS's mixture of support for free enterprise, personal liberty, and conservative Christian values influenced later developments in American conservatism, we need to understand the nature and culture of the Society. To do this we must trace the origins of the JBS to the efforts of the National Association of Manufacturers to resist the New Deal and the expansion of state influence in the economy and society. NAM served as a model for the JBS on how to reach targeted audiences and begin the political mobilization. To understand the role of religion in the JBS and its later influence in the rise of the Christian Right, we begin with an explanation of the JBS's beginnings in the National Association of Manufacturers.

## Chapter 2

# Religion, Politics and the Defense of Free Enterprise

Judith Butler, in the book *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, argues that the connection between time and place can lead to a sense of nostalgia and be a motivating force for political action. She contends that political action motivated by nostalgia is not the result of people seeking a return to a long lost past; rather, it is an attempt “to grasp and work with the fragments of the past that break through into a present where they become provisionally available.”<sup>1</sup> To help make her case, Butler turns to the Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin and his 17th thesis in *Illuminations*, where he theorizes that flash points in history are really breaks in time that transpose the memory of suffering into the future of justice.<sup>2</sup> This imagery of an opening in time and people seeking not an idyllic picture

1. Judith Butler, *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (Columbia, MO: Columbia University Press, 2011), 82.

2. *Ibid.*

of the past but a cessation of suffering should help the reader better understand the story of the John Birch Society (JBS) and its relationship to various contemporary movements that attempt to mesh religion and politics, for the JBS was an organization established to defend America and its wealth producing classes from forces that its members believed continuously and relentlessly attacked freedom and the free market economy in America. In this regard, the JBS was not a conservative advocate longing for some bygone age but a nationalistic movement oriented to the future, promoting the value of economic growth when engaging the wealthy and speaking with the populist language of defending American values when reaching out to the middle class.

To understand the formal official creation of the JBS in 1958, and how a segment of conservative Americans became engaged in a battle to save God, country, and family, we begin in the 1930s and 1940s, with the rise of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) an organization founded to influence society's perception of conservatism and the free market. As I will show in this chapter, NAM, embarked on a public relations campaign that focused on reaching out to religious leaders, women, and youth — the leading “opinion molders” of the day. It was a strategy to shape public opinion by appealing to segments of society that had the social capital to influence society on a broader scale. Among this directly engaged by NAM were Rev. James Fifeild and his Spiritual Mobilization and Rev. Billy Graham, who used Christian media and his revivals to advance NAM's objectives. Due in part to the fact that many of the key leaders at NAM also played integral roles in the creation of the JBS, I will argue in this chapter that NAM effectively served as a model for the JBS on how to reach targeted audiences and begin the process of mobilizing those audiences for political action. Without its connections to NAM, the JBS would not

have had a proven plan in place to link religion and free enterprise or an already existing network of like-minded business leaders who would bring both access to power brokers and the requisite funds to spread the JBS's message.

To help make this argument, I begin with a discussion of NAM and its public outreach strategy. I then turn to the influence of J. Howard Pew and Jasper E. Crane, two wealthy business leaders who funded initiatives that attempted to effect social and political change by wedding religion with free market capitalism. The next section examines the role of James Fifield, and his organization Spiritual Mobilization, funded by Pew and Crane. Next I examine the partnership of Billy Graham and J. Howard Pew. In the final section I examine the influence that the preceding individuals had on Robert Welch, and the formation of the John Birch Society.

## 2.1 National Association of Manufacturers

In the 1930s and 1940s corporations and free market supporters found their ideological foundations under threat due to a surge in liberalism<sup>3</sup> and President Franklin Delano

3. For a definition of “liberalism: see John Gray his book *Liberalism - Second Edition*: “For, whereas liberalism has no single unchanging nature or essence, it has a set of distinctive features which exhibits its modernity and at the same time marks it off from other modern intellectual traditions and their associated political movements. These features are all of them fully intelligible only in the historical perspective given by the several crises of modernity — the dissolution of the feudal order in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the events surrounding the French and American Revolutions in the last decade of the eighteenth century, the emergence of democratic and socialist mass movements during the second half of the nineteenth century and the near-eclipse of liberal society by totalitarian governments in our own times. . . . Common to all variants of the liberal tradition is a definite conception, distinctively modern in character, of man and society. What are the several elements of this conception? It is individualist, in that it asserts the moral primacy of the person against the claims of any social collectivity: egalitarian, inasmuch as it confers on all men the same moral status and denies the relevance to legal or political

Roosevelt's domestic reform program known as the New Deal. With liberals and New Dealers having access to the bully pulpit via the Roosevelt White House, corporations and free market advocates engaged in a public relations campaign to win over the American public and to influence the policies of the American government.

A major player in this public relations campaign was NAM. Founded in January 1895, during the depression of the 1890s, NAM started with 600 manufacturers, who joined together to formulate a recovery plan and to develop a strategy to protect American industry from foreign imports. With the election of FDR in 1932, NAM became one of the leading business organizations opposing the New Deal and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Roosevelt's New Deal was built upon the conviction that changes could be made to ensure no citizen would be denied a basic standard of living. In broad terms, he wanted to instill a sense of security into the American social and economic system in order to save capitalism and the free market.<sup>4</sup> For the members of NAM, the New Deal was an invasion of government into the realm of business and the free market. The thinking was: if people were not motivated to compete, then the free market system would collapse. In this sense, members of NAM thought the New Deal was an enemy of business and economic growth

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order of differences in moral worth among human beings; universalist, affirming the moral unity of the human species and according a secondary importance to specific historic associations and cultural forms; and meliorist in its affirmation of the corrigibility and improvability of all social institutions and political arrangements. . . . It owes something to Stoicism and the Christianity, it has been inspired by scepticism and by a fideistic certainty of divine revelation and it has exalted the power of reason even as, in other context, it has sought to humble reason's claims. Again, the liberal tradition has sought validation or justification in very different philosophies. Liberal moral and political claims have been grounded in theories of the natal rights of man as often as they have been defended by appeal to a utilitarian theory of conduct, and they have sought support from both science and religion. Finally, like any other current of opinion, liberalism has acquired a different flavour in each of the different national cultures in which it has had a persistent life." (John Gray, *Liberalism* [London, UK: Open University Press, 1986], xi-xii)

4. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War*, 33.



in America.

To coordinate a full-scale public relations plan in response to the rise of spreading anti-business sentiments, NAM organized its National Industrial Information Council (NIIC) during the mid-1930s. As the specter of World War II began to rise and dominate the public discourse, NAM and the NIIC focused their branding on the portrayal of American business and industry as being an integral partner in the war effort, in order to counterbalance organized labour's appeals to patriotism. NAM also turned to Hollywood during this time period to make films designed to promote the free enterprise system and workplace discipline.<sup>5</sup>

The anti-communism movement in the late 1930s was bolstered by the creation of the Dies Committee, chaired by Texan Democratic Congressman Martin Dies. Later known as the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), the committee called on witnesses to give testimony revealing communist activities in America, including those who testified to the anti-religious nature of communism.<sup>6</sup> In his book *The Trojan Horse in America* published in 1940, Dies asserted that communism itself was a religion whereby materialism was substituted for religious faith. He predicted that communism would not resort to conventional weapons to engage in warfare but would instead use a psychological invasion to accomplish a takeover of America.<sup>7</sup>

5. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War*, 7.

6. *Ibid.*, 49.

7. Martin Dies, *The Trojan Horse in America* (Stratford, NH: Ayer Publishing, 1977).

### 2.1.1 Identifying the Opinion Molders

After World War II, NAM refocused its public relations from the war effort to defeating communism and highlighting the importance of industry and the free market in protecting the American way of life. To overcome public sentiment that industry was selfish and cared only for profits and not for people, NAM attempted to create an image of industry as an integral weapon to be used against communism and collectivism in America. Corporations and free markets were presented as good for Americans. In 1946, NAM's public relations department commissioned a poll through the Opinion Research Corporation to discover what groups of people did the most to shape public opinion. The polling firm found that ministers were the most important "molders" of public opinion of any American group. NAM interpreted this finding as being potentially harmful to the American people because, according to NAM, ministers tended to be on the very left, both socially and fiscally.<sup>8</sup> NAM members decided to take on the responsibility to halt a broader American swing to the left that was led by clergy influenced by the social gospel of the early twentieth century. Robert Wilson, the board chairman of the Standard Oil Co. at the time, wrote:

Unless the practical-minded men of business take the time and trouble to point out the facts of history, and the serious flaws in these widely touted old-world systems that have failed so miserably in practice, church leaders are likely to be swung to the left. They will hear only one side of the questions from the left-wingers who *do* take the time to work with them — and *on* them.<sup>9</sup>

8. J. Howard Pew, Letter to Jeremiah Millbank (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., June 20, 1957).

9. Robert Wilson, "Business' Duty to the Church," (*Trends Magazine*, The National Association of

Wilson's reference to working *on* the church leaders was indicative of NAM's plans to work *on* the ministers and religious leaders in America because they were viewed as a means to spread the good news of the free market and the anti-welfare-state agenda.

In 1947, NAM conducted a second poll to establish the most effective opinion shapers to strategically effect public opinion in the support of free enterprise. This second poll by the Opinion Research Council reported the following:

opinion research clearly defines the targets for NAM's public relations work:

Basically, of course, whatever it has to say is for all people. Fortunately, however, there is a 'balance of power' within this great public. It is composed of:

The great, unorganized, inarticulate, so-called 'middle-class';

The younger generation—which contribute almost  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million new voters a year; and,

The opinion-makers of the nation.

It is obvious, therefore, that NAM's public relations program should appeal especially to ambitious young people; to the great majority of Americans who still cherish ideals; and to those who, by their leadership or work, help to form public opinion.<sup>10</sup>

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Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., 1950).

10. National Association of Manufacturers, "The Challenge and the Answer. The Public Relations Program of the National Association of Manufacturers," (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., 1947), 3.

By 1949, NAM had a full-scale public relations campaign—using radio, print, television, and billboards—to mobilize Americans by appealing to their spirituality. Similar to this campaign, an initiative was led by Charles E. Wilson, General Electric’s President, under the Religion in American Life (RIAL) committee, which was a religious public relations campaign sponsored by corporations, religious leaders and the American government. As historian Jonathan P. Herzog described this successful ten-year (1949-1958) campaign used “celebrity endorsements<sup>11</sup> to convince Americans that religious participation was a normative act.”<sup>12</sup>

Taking advantage of the Taft-Hartley Act, which allowed employers to educate their employees about social and political questions<sup>13</sup> as well as the findings in the poll, NAM took a three-pronged approach to get its public relations message out to the American public. The first prong of the public relations strategy was internal and intended to “provide inspiration, information and leadership for NAM members.”<sup>14</sup> Using information from this

11. Including Jackie Robinson and Norman Rockwell

12. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America’s Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War*, 152.

13. In the 1930s, the Wagner National Labor Relations Act put a number of restrictions on the materials that businesses and corporations could use to “pressure” employees related to political and economic issues. Taking advantage of this initiative, unions in the 1940s used information campaigns to promote workers’ rights. Interpreting these actions as anti-business, and because the government was providing materials promoting the New Deal, the corporations and businesses came together in support of the Taft-Hartley Act. Having been given tacit permission by the government through Taft-Hartley to educate their employees in economic theory, by the late 1950s, 84% of the 500 largest corporations in America were offering economic and political educational programs. (Alan F. Westin, “Anti-Communism and the Corporations,” *Commentary* 36, no. 6 [1963]: 486) The act was initiated in part by Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft, who was an outspoken opponent of Roosevelt’s New Deal and a leader in a conservative coalition against Roosevelt’s domestic reform program. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 was a result of the business community’s pressure on the government to counteract what business leaders saw as “anti-business” pressure by the government and unions on their employees.

14. National Association of Manufacturers, “The Challenge and the Answer. The Public Relations Program of the National Association of Manufacturers,” 8.

poll to assist NAM members spread a message of free enterprise and industry to the public, their employees, and community groups of which they belonged in a clear way that resonated with individuals that were not necessarily in business. The second prong was external and was “designed to convey the views of NAM and manufacturing industry direct to the general public.”<sup>15</sup> This second prong, aimed at the general public, sought to increase name recognition and validity for NAM as a champion of America innovation and against creeping communist forces. The third prong was indirect communication “designed to convey the views of NAM and manufacturing industry (with the help of members and NIIC affiliates) to the opinion-molding segments of the public—teachers, clergy, veterans, youth, heads of women’s organizations and farm leaders throughout the country.”<sup>16</sup>

### **2.1.2 Targeted Outreach: Youth, Women, and the Clergy**

Directed by their 1947 poll, NAM’s public relations campaigns and community outreach focused on three main opinion shapers: youth, women, and the clergy. Using their knowledge of branding and public relations, NAM utilized film, radio programs, pamphlets, books, newsletters, press releases, and a speakers’ bureau to spread its message to these opinion shapers. NAM’s report, *The Challenge and the Answer*, released during their public relations campaign in 1947, noted that in its mission to influence the youth, NAM had produced booklets with a distribution of four million to teachers and school children.<sup>17</sup> In addition, NAM had six films produced specifically for its public relations and community

15. National Association of Manufacturers, “The Challenge and the Answer. The Public Relations Program of the National Association of Manufacturers,” 8.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, 14.

outreach, resulting in over 15,000 cumulative showings. The report states, “About 80 per cent of the showings of these films are now in city and country schools. By this method, as well as by related classroom literature, a knowledge and love of American ideals and traditions and a high regard for American business principles are developed in the youth of the land.”<sup>18</sup> Because of the sheer volume of material distributed, NAM’s public relations program targeting youth was successful in reaching its designated market.

As part of its strategic marketing plan to women, NAM’s public relations department wrote, “Women with their natural interest in homes, jobs and the preservation of stable free government represent one of the greatest single forces in our society. Their growing interest in the problems of industry has led NAM to the creation of a Women’s Division to concentrate on intensified activity in this important field.”<sup>19</sup> In its marketing to women, NAM published a newsletter called “Program Notes” for women’s groups across America. A woman’s Republican club member in Indiana said of NAM women’s newsletter that it “[g]ives women helpful, timely programs for action. Also recognition of our great American heritage and some steps we need to follow to preserve our freedoms and republic form of government. I like the viewpoints and appreciate material and kits.”<sup>20</sup> NAM’s Women’s Division regularly sent its publications to women’s groups across the nation, and representatives from NAM participated as speakers at women’s groups’ luncheons and events.

To address the third area of outreach to opinion shapers, NAM sought to develop a

18. National Association of Manufacturers, “The Challenge and the Answer. The Public Relations Program of the National Association of Manufacturers,” 14.

19. National Association of Manufacturers, “Reselling the American Way to America,” (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., Undated).

20. National Association of Manufacturers, “Program Notes, 1963 Annual Report Edition,” (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., 1963), 1.

relationship with the clergy in America. In a press release dated March 22, 1959, NAM announced the formation of the Clerical Advisory Council to advise the “Clergy-Industry” department of NAM. According to its terms of reference, “This program has a dual objective: (1) To alert the association’s members to major trends of thought in religious circles regarding the moral and ethical problems affecting American business, and (2) to present industry’s point of view on such questions to the clergy and lay people of the nation’s churches and synagogues.”<sup>21</sup> The department was guided by a committee of 43 executives representing NAM member companies, while the advisory council consisted of 18 clergymen representing the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish faiths. The committee and the council met for three two-day sessions each year.<sup>22</sup> This council of clergymen was pivotal to NAM’s outreach strategic goals because it provided a direct relationship to religious leaders—and therefore an indirect relationship to their congregations. NAM took great care to show how both clergy and business leaders would benefit by forming a strategic partnership with one another. In a 1957 report entitled *A Vital Factor in Community Relations: The Local Clergy-Industry Council*, NAM stated:

From the clergymen’s Point of View: For its clerical membership, the council can be the means for the securing of first-hand information as a basis in providing more helpful guidance and counsel. It can foster a greater knowledge and appreciation of the spiritual elements in community life. It can furnish a vital reserve of assistance toward the attainment of specific church and syna-

21. National Association of Manufacturers, NAM Press Release (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., March 22, 1959), 1.

22. National Association of Manufacturers, “Clergy-Industry Relations,” (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., Undated), 1.

gogue program objectives for community betterment. From the businessmen's viewpoint: For its industrial membership, the council can provide an avenue of up-to-date information to the clergy so that their counseling on matters relating to local industry will be based on current fact. It can be a means of fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of business problems and objectives among clergymen. Where deserved, it can build up a reservoir of understanding in anticipation of emergencies involving local business which almost inevitably arise in practically every industrial community. Such a council fosters growing recognition of the mutual interests of productive local clerical and business management.<sup>23</sup>

In other words, NAM pitched a renewed relationship with religious leaders by appealing to mutual self-interest. The religious leaders benefited from the name, the organizational skill, and the established networks of businessmen, while the business leaders gained access to the pulpit and its opinion shaping influence.

### **2.1.3 The Role of Religion in the Public Relations Campaign**

To further the "economic education of the ministry," NAM founded the NAM Clergy Economic Education Foundation in 1959 to provide workshops on industrial economics for clergy across America. There were five original sponsors of the Foundation: the Iron and Steel Institute, the Petroleum Institute, the Consumer Finance Institution, the AFL-CIO,

23. National Association of Manufacturers, "A Vital Factor in Community Relations The Local Clergy-Industry Council," (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., 1957), 1.



and NAM, each contributing \$5,000 in annual dues.<sup>24</sup> These workshops and meetings were open only to religious leaders, and seminary students. This was due to NAM's belief that inclusion of representatives from labour movements would cause partisan discord. NAM suggested to ministers that if they wished to exchange views with the union officials or labour, they ask the unions to organize their own clergy-labour meetings.<sup>25</sup> Connecting the ideology of free market and God, NAM executives in the meetings focused on the how God's word was reflected in the actions of the manufacturing industry as well as government laws and policies. For example, at a luncheon meeting of the Clergy-Industry Council, NAM member Charles R. Sligh Jr., said, "Our nation's economic system is based on the principle that the Lord helps those who help themselves, so long as they don't help themselves to anything that is rightfully somebody else's."<sup>26</sup>

NAM worked hard to inform and educate ministers of the importance of the free market and industry. Believing that parishioners and laypeople turned to their religious leaders not only for religious guidance but also for advice on their daily lives, including their work, NAM wanted to be sure that the clergy were well versed in the message NAM wanted spread. NAM began creating local clergy-industry groups in towns and cities with significant industry, and in a move to introduce the clergy to industry, they began plant and factory tours for the religious leaders. NAM realized that to appeal to the ministers they had the tours focus on people rather than technological process. In a NAM inter-

24. National Association of Manufacturers, "Clergy Economic Education Foundation," (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., Undated), 1.

25. National Association of Manufacturers, "A Vital Factor in Community Relations The Local Clergy-Industry Council," 3.

26. Charles R. Sligh Jr., "Toward Clergy-Industry Understanding," (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., October 10, 1957), 5.

nal memo regarding the Clergy-Industry group, William R. Darragh, of the NAM Public Relations Department, wrote, "Let's keep at it until we get every minister in every task force city through some plant that they might understand clearer the functions of industry as production, taxes, labor relations, distribution, service of industry to community, how the ministers can help etc."<sup>27</sup> As NAM stressed the importance of focusing on people who worked in their factories to the ministry, its own focus internally was on conversion to NAM's message through repetition: "Keep hitting on this one day in and day out, and let it be our major activity in the field of clergy-industry relations."<sup>28</sup>

As part of its internal strategy NAM encouraged its members to become involved in their various religious communities and committees, which resulted in increased attendance and committee-level participation on the part of business leaders in churches and synagogues.<sup>29</sup> NAM believed that the more involved its members became the further their message would be spread across the country. However, NAM and the businessmen met with resistance, as some did not believe in the sincerity of their involvement. *Fortune* magazine writer Duncan Norton-Taylor expressed this doubt regarding businessmen and their seeming religious revival, when he wrote in October 1953:

But if one asks, city by city, who are the lay leaders in the resurgence of religious interest, the names of businessmen repeatedly turn up. There is, however, a more difficult question to be posed. It goes into an area of deep controversy,

27. William R. Darragh, NAM Interoffice Memo to Mr. John Harmon (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., May 25, 1953).

28. Ibid.

29. Duncan Norton-Taylor, "Businessmen on Their Knees," (*Fortune Magazine*, The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., October, 1953).

where voices are seldom raised but are edged and intense. The evangelizing in which some businessmen are now conspicuous has been described as at best superficial and at the worst arrogant and materialistic in its methods and motives. Are businessmen merely promoting religion as a useful tool and God as a good partner to have in the firm? Or are American businessmen, while putting their religion to daily ‘practical’ uses, also experiencing a spiritual awakening that is indeed genuine?<sup>30</sup>

To combat the negative implications of these kinds of questions, NAM promoted clergy-industry relations in articles and interviews they provided to magazines and newspapers. Utilizing the successful men of business within their membership, they promoted the importance of the continued relationship between religion and business. One of the businessmen often quoted on behalf of NAM was Robert Wilson, Board Chairman of the Standard Oil Co. In an article entitled “Business’ Duty to the Church” for *Trends* magazine, Wilson stated that businessmen owe a twofold obligation:

To the church first, because business owes an enduring debt to the church for the climate of honesty and fair-dealing, and individual freedom, in which we in America do business; and second, because we want the church to be sound and practical in its approach to economic matters which properly concern a body of Christians.<sup>31</sup>

NAM’s spokespersons in these articles and interviews stressed the importance of the

30. Norton-Taylor, “Businessmen on Their Knees.”

31. Wilson, “Business’ Duty to the Church.”

spokesperson's relation with the promotion of ideals of freedom and free enterprise, always emphasizing that the relationship was reciprocal.

NAM's mission to *educate* and inform the clergy and opinion shapers was balanced with the idea that industry needed to have a heart. The public relations department continued to stress that NAM's approach to these groups first and foremost had to be articulated in terms of caring for the community, for women, and for the ministry and their flocks. Business had to show its heart to counterbalance the image of being powerful profit-making monopolies that cared little for anyone. The public relations department at NAM came to the conclusion based on the data from the Public Opinion Index that "it is apparent that clergymen need to be convinced that industry's heart is in the right place before they will readily accept the economic information with which we will supply them or the specifics of any NAM program."<sup>32</sup>

It is impossible to determine the actual impact NAM's public relations campaign had on public opinion, but it is evident that within NAM the undertaking was considered a success.<sup>33</sup> NAM was satisfied with its efforts to connect with women's groups, schools, and religious institutions and it was confident that the campaign would effect social and political change, as well as lead the public to a more positive perspective toward industry, big business, and the free market. An integral part of this strategy was that the calls for change and renewal needed to be encountered by the public as initiatives and ideas

32. Public Relations Division of the National Association of Manufacturers, "Review of NAM's Clergy-Industry Program and Suggestions for Strengthening The Associations's Activities in This Area," (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., June 1, 1956), 6.

33. *Ibid.*

emanating from the opinion molders—that is, those recognized as leaders among the general public—and not from the upper echelons of corporate America, even though it was wealthy business leaders who were promoting their agenda. Moreover, this campaign used various types of media including radio, TV, newsletters, and a speakers' bureau. Market research conducted by NAM revealed which media had the greatest influence for spreading its good news message about the free market.

As I will show below, Robert Welch, as a member of NAM, learned from NAM's market research and various media exercises and used them as part of his plan to convert public opinion into votes for conservative, pro-business, and pro-America candidates. The opinion shapers identified by NAM would also be the target audience for Welch and the JBS. For Welch, once women, the youth, and the clergy embraced the message of American prosperity, and the need to defend America from those, especially communists, that would seek to attack her freedom, the political climate would dramatically change in the United States.

## **2.2 J. Howard Pew and Jasper E. Crane**

While NAM was concentrating on opinion makers, some of its wealthiest members were focusing on other ways to promote the connection between business and religion in order to spread the message of the free market to the American public. Two such members were J. Howard Pew and Jasper E. Crane.

Pew was the President of Sun Oil Co. from 1912 to 1947. After 1947 he became a

director of both Sun Oil and Sun Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Co. By 1957 Pew was recognized as one of America's 76 richest men by *Fortune* magazine, having an accumulated wealth estimated to be between \$75 and \$100 million (about \$640 to \$850 million in 2016 USD). Throughout his career, Pew leveraged his wealth and influence to support organizations promoting economic conservative ideals to the American public. For example, he contributed \$125,000 (\$2,171,115) to the 1936 Republican campaign, and he was on the National Executive Committee of the American Liberty League, contributing at least \$20,000. Other anti-New Deal organizations he supported included the National Economy League (\$5,000), the Crusaders (\$4,600), the Independent Coalition of American Women, the Foundation for Economic Education, and the Sentinels of the Republic (\$5,000). He was the Chairman of NAM's National Industrial Information Committee and, from 1939 through 1942, he was a regular speaker at NAM's annual Congress of American Industry. In 1957 he created the J. Howard Pew Freedom Trust, a philanthropic trust that has the purpose of warning against "Socialism, Welfare-stateism, Marxism, Fascism, and any other like forms of government intervention . . . to acquaint the American people with the values of the free market—the dangers of inflation—the need for a stable monetary standard."<sup>34</sup>

Pew's interest also extended to initiatives with Christian churches and organizations. He was, for example, the chairman of the National Laymen's Committee of the National Council of Churches. This committee consisted of 219 people, with the most significant group being Pew's 34-member Executive Committee, which included such right-wing notables as Olive Ann Beech, a trustee of the Foundation for Economic Education; Jasper

34. Group Research Inc., "Biography of J. Howard Pew," (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., 1963), 1-2.

E. Crane, of DuPont; Stanley High, from *Reader's Digest*; B. E. Hutchison; and Henning Prentis, former Vice-Chairman of Americans for Constitutional Action. Additionally, Pew was a leading financial supporter of Howard Kershner's Christian Freedom Foundation, which sought to "teach economics from a Christian point of view and to show the relationship between Christianity, freedom and economics."<sup>35</sup>

Jasper E. Crane was a wealthy E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company (later duPont) executive. He was a plastics expert who, like Pew, was a graduate from Princeton University. Late in his life he established the Curran Foundation, which donated to organizations advancing conservative principles in education. He was involved in Princeton University and the Princeton Theological Seminary. Crane donated large sums of money to *The Freeman*, a right-wing magazine, and to the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE). He was also a member of the libertarian economist Ludwig von Mises's Mont Pellerin Society, along with Pew. According to Crane, he became involved in causes driven by what he referred to as "life-saving institutions," which were, he wrote:

those activities that were concerned with trying to save ourselves—all of us being a part of the American public—from the pit-falls inherent in the fanciful and fascinating dogmas of New Dealism. . . . when questioning the effectiveness of various 'life-saving institutions' as contrasted with what could be accomplished by way of example at the grass-roots of our society. In this it is not merely a matter of extending understanding attention to the human needs of those within a local community; even more, there is required a recognition of

35. Group Research Inc., "Biography of J. Howard Pew," 1-2.

the basic essentials of preserving character, integrity and self-dependence as a commanding sense in the mind of the individual.<sup>36</sup>

Crane's financial involvement in organizations focused on institutions that preserved the ideals of individualism and morality in society, and primarily involving himself in religious and anti-New Deal programs and organizations.

Then President of FEE, Leonard E. Read, clearly expressed the mission behind the various movements, some of which Pew and Crane were members or financial supporters including NAM and FEE, when he said:

The problem: State interventionism—properly called Socialism, Communism, Fabianism, Nazism, the welfare state, the planned economy or whatever—grows rapidly here in the U.S.A. and elsewhere not because this 'progressive' ideology lacks opponents but because there are so few opponents who adequately understand and can competently and attractively explain interventionism's opposite: the free market, private property, limited government philosophy and its moral and spiritual antecedents. Many have forgotten the real reason for the freedom and the outburst of creative energy that has marked America.<sup>37</sup>

NAM's three-pronged public relations approach and their clergy-industry committee were designed to articulate clearly the ideas of the free market, and its moral and spiritual antecedents. Simultaneously, Pew and Crane through their financial support of conservative

36. Donaldson Brown, Letter to Rev. James W. Fifield Jr. (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., February 21, 1949), 1.

37. Leonard E Read, A Brief Resumé of FEE's Activities (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., April 9, 1947), 1.



movements, attempted to provide a connection between God and the free market in an attempt to be the very opponent of communism called for by Read.

Pew and Crane were both wealthy industrialists and active Christians. Both men worked constantly with their churches and the church leadership, espousing the need for the churches to stay out of politics, especially, since in their estimation, the churches were leaning too far to the left in their political involvement. Pew's work with the Layman's Council for the National Council of Churches (NCC), tried to influence the institution to remain free of politics, again because of the left-leaning political stance (in Pew's estimation) of the NCC. Crane agreed with Pew's stance on the NCC, and wrote to Rev. Donald G. Wilson:

This Nation—Under God, was the slogan of the National Council of Churches when it was organized, and I have always felt that it was an incomplete quotation that has been improperly used in some quarters. What Lincoln said was 'This nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom.' That is sound and magnificent, for liberty comes from God and freedom, its environment, is maintained by the state. The United States of America, dedicated to freedom, effected the separation of church and state, but that in no way threw over the doctrine that this nation is under God's governance.<sup>38</sup>

In other words, Pew and Crane through their involvement in various right-wing organizations were attempting to ensure that their vision of liberty, derived from God and freedom,

38. Jasper E. Crane, Letter to Rev. Donald G. Wilson (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., October 30, 1953), 2.

was maintained by the state. Crane's statement also reflects the intermingling of religion and politics in which Pew and Crane were active participants. On one hand, they opposed the direct political involvement of the NCC but on the other could not separate church and state. The men were against the church's involvement in politics when it furthered the ideologies of the left, but they understood the influence the clergy could have as "opinion shapers" to further the ideas of free enterprise. Pew's public involvement in the Layman's Council contrasted with his behind the scenes involvement in furthering support of free enterprise and conservative view points. In other words, publicly Crane and Pew were not in support of the mingling of church and state, but through their actions behind the scenes they supported the indirect use of religion to support conservative ideals.

When Pew realized that he was having minimal influence, and that the NCC was going to continue to be "left-leaning," he disbanded the council and resigned. What emerged from reading Pew and Crane's letters to each other was an adherence to their faith that motivated them both to save America from communism, from liberalism, and most importantly from a loss of Christian faith. According to Crane, America existed:

with ensuing bewilderment and terror, mounting crime, juvenile delinquency, sin, suffering, and sorrow. As the different manifestations of Socialism have spread across the world—Communism, Fascism, National Socialism, Interventionism, Fabian Socialism, the New Deal, the Welfare State—the danger becomes acute. Civilization, with liberty and human dignity, seems doomed. The only hope, a thought in which Harold Dodd [then President of Princeton University] agreed with me emphatically three years ago, is to seek and happily

find God’s guidance. The trend may be reversed and the move forward taken up again in the illumination from the cross of Christ.<sup>39</sup>

To Pew and Crane, America’s cultural decline was the result of bad economic decisions and decaying morality and was directly related to collectivist economic policies and programs, such as the New Deal and other social welfare initiatives. Spurred on by a left-leaning liberalism, New Dealers, Roosevelt Democrats, and anti-free-market advocates were leading America toward economic, political, and moral doom. Pew and Crane sought to use their connections and financial means to save American society from the abyss of socialism. Similarly, they believed that Americans needed to be brought out of their moral depravity—their “sin, suffering, and sorrow”—with spiritual direction. The challenge facing Pew and Crane was that, while they had the social capital and monetary means to affect like-minded persons and organizations, they still needed to mobilize the American public to effect political change; that is, they needed Americans to vote for leaders committed to capitalism and America’s Christian foundations. To that end, they turned to religious leaders to create a revival based on what they perceived to be a Christian understanding of society, economics, and politics.

## **2.3 Rev. James W. Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization**

James W. Fifield Jr. became the conduit and champion of Pew and Crane’s hoped for conservative spiritual movement. Fifield’s Spiritual Mobilization was a movement aimed

39. Jasper E. Crane, Letter to Rev. Frank L. Janeway (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., March 23, 1959), 2.

at conservative religious leaders to preach conservative thought linking free market and religion. Both Pew and Crane provided the financial backing that Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization movement needed. Fifield originally hailed from Chicago, and was recruited in 1935 to be the minister at the First Congregational Church in Los Angeles. When Fifield became the minister of the church, he realized the church had incurred a substantial debt of \$750,000 (\$13,216,861). To address the church's debt, he launched a campaign to raise the profile of the church, both locally and nationally, and he instituted an adult education series called College of Life, which employed 14 professors from universities throughout California. He also began broadcasting five radio programs and initiated a speaker series club.<sup>40</sup> His public relations talents soon paid off, as the church was out of debt by 1942. That same year First Congregational became the single largest Congregationalist church in the world, and became known as the church of the elite.<sup>41</sup> His advisory board was a Who's Who of the wealthy and powerful, including Dr. Robert A. Millikan, President of the California Institute of Technology; William D. Braash, member of the Board of Directors for the American Medical Association; De Witt Emery, founder of the National Small Businessmen's Association; Alfred P. Haake, an economist; Rufus B. Von Kleinsmid, Chancellor, University of Southern California; Felix Morley, the editor of *Human Events*; and Leonard E. Read of FEE.<sup>42</sup> Pew and Crane were not members of this advisory board; however, they were important financial supporters of Fifield and his programming.

Fifield had spoken at the NAM annual meeting in New York in 1940. There he presented

40. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, 8.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Rev. James W. Fifield Jr., "Strength Makes Responsibility," *The Living Church* CXVII, no. 1 (July 4, 1948): 4.

his plan to connect religion and business to develop a form of “Christian libertarianism.”<sup>43</sup> Fifield wanted to put sermons into the hands ministers containing ideas and materials that promoted free enterprise and the freedom ordained by God and represented by the free market. In this view, communism, socialism, and all forms of collectivism were seen as the mechanisms to the end of the God given freedom in America. Fellow Princeton alumnus, the banker John McWilliams, a member of the Chamber of Commerce in California (and, coincidentally, father of Julia Child), wrote Crane a letter dated December 16, 1940, regarding Fifield. In this letter, McWilliams stated that Fifield was considered in high esteem by the people with whom McWilliams interacted. He pointed out that Fifield had a significant following throughout the country due, in large part, to “in his efforts to bring about a realization of the principle of free enterprise in this country.”<sup>44</sup> According to McWilliams, Fifield “is entirely sincere and earnest in his work and . . . he is not seeking personal publicity but trying to get before the people ideas which he believes are of vital importance to the welfare of the country.”<sup>45</sup> Fifield not only preached the symbiotic relationship between business and God from the pulpit of his own church, but also influenced the sermons in churches across America.

Fifield was successful at creating a powerful movement with his Spiritual Mobilization. Through his newsletter and radio programs he reached out to ministers across the country to help them spread his gospel of Christian libertarianism. Much of that work was financed by Pew and Crane and the individuals they approached in their fundraising efforts for

43. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, 7.

44. John McWilliams, Letter to Jasper E. Crane (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., December 16, 1940).

45. *Ibid.*

Fifield. The two men believed that the work Fifield was doing was the correct path for the free market, freedom, and Christianity. In the fall of 1947, Crane wrote to Wilbur LaRoe Jr., a lay member of the Presbyterian General Council and a nationally recognized lawyer:

They [Spiritual Mobilization] have simply stood for Liberty of man as a son of God, created a free being in the image of God. Now the insistence on Liberty as a fundamental principle for mankind may be termed controversial because it is a revolutionary concept. So is Christianity. Liberty is being attacked and called lots of things which it is not by the fellow travellers and even by many who lack understanding of the truth and indulge in idolatry of the State, a pagan philosophy.<sup>46</sup>

Both Pew's and Crane's papers in the Hagley Museum contain numerous letters to industrialists asking for monetary support for Fifield's work in Spiritual Mobilization. The correspondence consistently reflects the message of the church being a conduit to spreading the message of saving liberty for Americans.

In 1947 Fifield and Spiritual Mobilization planned a program called "Freedom in Peril." The plan was to send out the manuscripts of more than 15,000 copies of sermons on the subject of freedom. Ministers across the country were to preach them in October that year. All they had to sign was a return postcard indicating their willingness to preach on the subject of freedom.<sup>47</sup> There were built-in incentives in the plan. For example, if they

46. Jasper E. Crane, Letter to Wilbur LaRoe Jr. (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., October 29, 1947).

47. Rev. James W. Fifield Jr., Letter to Jasper E. Crane (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., May 1, 1947), 1.

preached one of the sermons on a specific date, ministers would be entered into a contest for substantial prizes. In a telegram dated October 13, 1947 Fifield wrote to Crane that 25,066 pastors from a wide spectrum of denominations preached his sermon on the Perils to Freedom as a part of Spiritual Mobilization's Crusade.<sup>48</sup>

In December 1948, Fifield sent a letter to Crane outlining the approach the Spiritual Mobilization needed to take. Fifield wrote:

I am believing more and more that we will not win our fight for liberty by laying the principal emphasis on the material accomplishments of our American civilization. We must stress the spiritual and cultural accomplishments, the greater justice, and the increase in solution of social problems. The results of voluntary corporation should be set forth as against the dire consequences of compulsion. The argument is clinched by the amazing material wealth, aesthetic enjoyments, and the greater opportunity for the pursuit of happiness. I think following this line of thought, we are in a stronger position to combat the attack of the collectivists.<sup>49</sup>

Fifield echoed the sentiments of Pew and Crane, and through his programming and sermons he championed the accomplishments of American free enterprise as well as the potential for greatness of America with the continuance of support for freedom, liberty, and God.

Utilizing his connections, Fifield planned a four-day conference in 1950 composed of 25

48. Rev. James W. Fifield Jr., Telegram to Jasper E. Crane (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., October 13, 1947).

49. Rev. James W. Fifield Jr., Letter to Jasper E. Crane (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., December 3, 1948).

leading ministers, along with business leaders like Crane, as well as economists from the Free-Market-oriented Austrian school Friedrich von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises. The group was, according to Fifield to “define the conflicts in this critical period of civilization and to establish freedom’s answers to these problems.” He continued, “Tentatively, the agenda will cover such subjects as the relationship of liberty to Christianity equality and morality; competition and corporation; and the application of true Christian principles to present day problems.”<sup>50</sup> Spiritual Mobilization created a committee in 1951 called the Committee to Proclaim Liberty. The committee, which included former President Herbert Hoover and General Douglas MacArthur was originally struck to create a program for the 175th anniversary of American independence. The committee initiated a national broadcast, called “Freedom Under God,” featuring General Matthew B. Ridgway.<sup>51</sup> Fifield also established a monthly magazine *Faith and Freedom*, which featured the writings of von Mises, Leonard E. Read (FEE), Clarence Manion (who later became a well known conservative radio talk show host and a leading member of the JBS), and Rose Lane Wilder (the daughter of Laura Ingalls Wilder of *Little House on the Prairie* fame and, along with Ayn Rand, one of the founders of American libertarianism).

Fifield’s outreach was not only to the ministers of the various Christian denominations but also to their congregations. Fifield wanted to motivate parishioners to vote in elections. Fifield wrote to Crane, “now that we have our organization built we propose to be very much more diligent about this matter.”<sup>52</sup> Crane was supportive of this political mobilization

50. Rev. James W. Fifield Jr., Letter to Jasper E. Crane (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., June 7, 1950), 1.

51. B.E. Hutchison, Letter to Jasper E. Crane (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., June 25, 1951).

52. Fifield Jr., 2.



of church members. Although, Fifield was not the only one considering this mobilization. In 1947 Crane had been approached by the American Christian Alliance about this very topic. The American Christian Alliance's mission was to defend religious liberty by concerted prayer, and Fifield had suggested to Crane that this mission should be extended:

by every church member realizing the importance of voting. He [Dr. William H. Anderson] claims that he can take this message to all the ministers in the land. I can see that that might be a mighty force, if ministers exhort their hearers before election days and impress on them the vital necessity of everyone voting. As we know too well there is a large percentage of people who do not bother to go to the polls. If they were told it was their duty to vote but not how to vote and there was a proper response to this appeal our elections might be remarkably influenced for good.<sup>53</sup>

The idea of mobilizing Christian conservatives in the voting booths was beginning to be discussed amongst the various spiritual conservative groups. In 1948 Fifield did attempt a voter registration campaign to register five million new voters across America. Having realized that this goal was not going to be reached prior to the election, Fifield appealed to the members of Spiritual Mobilization to submit ideas of what should be the "next great emphasis for this powerful organization [Spiritual Mobilization] which has been developed to champion capital Freedom?"<sup>54</sup> While, at this point, no effective mobilization had been established, organizations such as the American Christian Alliance and Spiritual

53. Jasper E. Crane, Letter to Rev. James W. Fifield Jr. (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., April 9, 1947), 1.

54. Fifield Jr., "Strength Makes Responsibility," 4.

Mobilization began to acknowledge the importance of this idea.

Pew and Crane continued to support Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization throughout the 1940s and well into the 1950s. Fifield gained sponsorship not only from the wealthy industrialists but from their companies as well. Pew's Sun Oil and Crane's former company duPont, were sponsors of Spiritual Mobilization. Companies, many of which were members of NAM, purchased copies of Fifield's films, television shows, and radio broadcasts to show to their employees. In a letter to Crane from James Ingebretsen, a staff member of Spiritual Mobilization, Ingebretsen stated that the Chrysler Corporation would be increasing its contribution to Spiritual Mobilization to \$12,500 (\$125,221), thereby matching the contributions of General Motors Corporation and the Ford Motor Company.<sup>55</sup> Many of Fifield's letters to both Pew and Crane ended with a request for funding. Fifield continuously presented himself as selfless, and living a simple life even though both his church and his Spiritual Mobilization were perpetually in a state of need.

As Fifield asked for donations and monetary interventions to save himself financially, he and his staff directed very few funds or outreach initiatives to the poor. Edmund A. Opitz, an employee of Spiritual Mobilization, sent Crane a copy of a letter he wrote in response to John C. Bennett, a professor and dean at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Opitz wrote in June 1953:

Basic to your thought in this area, is the concept of vast majorities who cannot take care of themselves. They are too foolish, too weak, too gullible. You, and a few others who really care, feel the need to scurry around and get government

55. James Ingebretson, Letter to Jasper E. Crane (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., November 15, 1950).

to force somebody else to do something for these poor folk. Tolstoy made an observation that bears directly on your little crusade. He said, ‘People will do everything for the poor except get off their backs.’ This is the job for government in libertarian thought, to destroy parasitism by pulling people off their victim’s back. For this we need a strong government, strong enough to do the job.<sup>56</sup>

A few years later, Fifield himself would be pulled off the backs of the wealthy, as they began to withdraw their support of him in light of his bad business decisions.

One of these bad business decisions is laid out in some detail in a letter from July 1957 by Charles P. Sloan, the President of General Motors from 1923 to 1956. Fifield had approached Sloan to ask for money to help pay off a loan Fifield had received to purchase a farm. An unidentified (in the correspondence) person had lent Fifield a large sum of money for the farm. Sloan became annoyed with Fifield for this request and cut off all his funding. Sloan did not think this was a sound investment by Fifield’s friend, and that this person should just accept the loss of cash as a bad investment and not be bailed out by Sloan and other investors. Sloan believed that this mortgage and any additional loans all were examples of bad business judgment by the lender, by Fifield, and a trustee in the church who agreed with the plan.<sup>57</sup> The loan was used by Fifield, who had mortgaged the farm to the amount of \$160,000 (\$1,374,679) to use the money for a Spiritual Mobilization television program entitled “Lighted Window.”<sup>58</sup> The program was

56. Edmund A. Optiz, Draft Letter to John C. Bennet (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., June 30, 1953), 5.

57. Alfred P. Sloan, Letter to Charles R. Hook (Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., July 29, 1957), 1.

58. *Ibid.*

essentially a bust. The loaned money being used by Fifield to produce an unsuccessful television show added to Sloan's interpretation of Fifield's lack of responsibility for the money being invested in his Spiritual Mobilization and him. Pew's company, Sun Oil, and his Foundation declined to donate money to distribute the film. Fredrick Pew, J. Howard Pew's brother, wrote "that Dr. Fifield had given no strong message or solution; had said little if anything about Christianity and God; his presentation was weak; his delivery was poor; and the sound recording was not distinct ...and while he might not create animosities, neither was he creating any strong believers in anything."<sup>59</sup> After viewing the program Fredrick Pew contacted Paul Litchfield, the chair of the board at Goodyear, and they too decided that the film was weak, and declined to sponsor the film or use it in their company radio or television religious broadcasts.<sup>60</sup> Fifield, unable to secure financial support, retired from Spiritual Mobilization in 1954 which resulted in the organizational lead being handed over to James Ingebretsen. In spite of the tumult surrounding Fifield, he and Pew remained close friends, corresponding often via letters long after he retired.

## 2.4 Rev. Billy Graham

While Fifield's influence with the wealthy businessmen and corporations was waning, another religious leader, Billy Graham (1919-2018), was benefitting from their support. Pew, and to a lesser extent Crane, funded much of Graham's evangelical work. The mission to spread the free market conservative message through religion had only just begun, and in

59. Fredrick Pew, Letter to J. Howard Pew (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., January 9, 1957), 1.

60. *Ibid.*, 2.

many ways, Graham further nuanced its delivery. As Graham himself put it to J. Howard Pew, “God has given to me the ear of millions. He has given to you large sums of money. It seems to me that if we can put these two gifts of God together, we could reach the world with the message of Christ.”<sup>61</sup> As a business proposition, supporting Graham was a win-win. Graham’s ministry would flourish, business interests would be advanced by a key opinion shaper, and, unlike Fifield, Graham would not continually pester Pew about his dire financial situation and the need for more funds.

Graham was a public figure who ingratiated himself into the politics of America, promoting political involvement at his revival meetings. He had preached from the steps of the US Capitol in 1952, and he also had a close relationship with President Eisenhower.

Pew partnered with Graham to create *Christianity Today*, a magazine for ministers, which continued with the theme of connecting religion and conservative politics. In Pew’s own words, “*Christianity Today* is a magazine, conservative in its theology and beamed directly to the ministerial mind. Those of us who have given years of study to this problem, realize that it is just as important to have conservatism in theology as it is to have conservatism in economics and sociology, if America is to remain great.”<sup>62</sup> When the magazine first came out, many believed that Pew’s involvement was simply a vengeful forum for Pew to attack the NCC. In May 1956, Graham wrote Pew to assure him that Pew’s involvement was not due to “a vindictiveness” toward the National Council.<sup>63</sup> In spite of this assurance,

61. Rev. Billy Graham, Letter to J. Howard Pew (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., September 27, 1956), 1.

62. Pew, 2.

63. J. Howard Pew, Letter to Billy Graham (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., June 1, 1956), 1.

Graham did raise concerns about two rumours swirling around the origins of *Christianity Today*. To tamp down these rumours, Graham suggested a short-term, pragmatic solution. He wrote:

I have been giving a great deal of thought to *Christianity Today*. I have also discussed it with leaders in various parts of America during the past few weeks. It is certainly the talk of the entire Protestant world. Everywhere a group gathers they are discussing it. Naturally, many people are prejudging it. Some are violently for it; some adopting a 'wait and see' attitude; others are equally violently opposed to it. There are two rumours that are quite prevalent; one is, that you founded this paper in order to lash back at the National Council. The other rumour is that I have founded the paper in order to promote my own interests. We both know that these are untrue. However, I have come to the conclusion that it would be better for the first year if we could say that neither one of us are on the official board. We could both meet with the board as we have done in the past and have just as much voice and influence without being officially on board. I think this would be a very excellent thing to be able to say to people that neither one of us are officially identified with the magazine. . . . After the first year, it doesn't make any difference and we will have settled down to normal operations.<sup>64</sup>

Being attacked for their magazine was a reality both Pew and Graham had to accept.

64. Rev. Billy Graham, Letter to J. Howard Pew (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., May 29, 1956), 1-2.

They were in this enterprise to provide a new way to spread the free market ideals—and the gospel. Pew wrote to Graham:

If, as we all hope, *Christianity Today* is effective in carrying out the philosophy in which we believe, there will be tremendous pressures brought to be on all of us who have been associated with the enterprise. Some will be subjected to character assassination; others will be threatened with the loss of their positions and standing in the contemporary world. It will be little short of a miracle if there are not some defections from our ranks.<sup>65</sup>

Pew's active effort to remain in the background is also revealed in a letter he wrote to Roger Hull, the Chairman of Graham's New York Crusade, immediately following the 1957 broadcast of Graham's New York Revival. Pew commented that it would be unfortunate if it would become public knowledge that his foundation had made a large contribution to make the first program a reality.<sup>66</sup> Pew wanted to be involved, but he did not want his involvement to be public out of concern that his presence might undermine shared objectives. He was, for example, not on the revival committee, but he financed it. This type of arrangement was not new for Pew. He had arranged a similar relationship with Fifield's Spiritual Mobilization: he chose not to be on the board in an official capacity, but he was the financial supporter that kept the initiative afloat. Both Pew and Crane, in their letters to those requesting financial assistance, consistently asked not to be publicly

65. J. Howard Pew, Letter to Billy Graham (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., October 1, 1956), 2.

66. J. Howard Pew, Letter to Roger Hull (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., June 15, 1957), 1.

recognized for their donations, but always asked before giving if the donation would be tax exempt.

The direction of *Christianity Today* was constantly up for debate by Pew, Graham, and the executive editor, Dr. L. Nelson Bell, who was Billy Graham's father-in-law. Pew wanted it to provide an exclusively conservative perspective for readers, while Bell often advocated for a wider range of views. Pew, however, was relentless. In a letter to Graham, Pew complained about the direction Bell was taking the journal:

Dr. Bell seems to think that he can keep controversial economic, social and political questions out of the paper by limiting its content to theological discussions. My own thinking is that you cannot take life and divide it into separate compartments—one for your Christianity, another for your economics, another for your social relations, etc. If you attempted to do this, your paper would lose its reader interest. The real policy decision that must be made for *Christianity Today*, it seems to me, is where the line should be drawn.<sup>67</sup>

Graham seemed more concerned with the length and scholarship of the articles. Writing to Pew in 1956, Graham responded, "I think one thing we must suggest is shorter articles and even more simplicity. It is all right to have one or two articles in each issue that are rather heavy scholarship, but the average minister is a little lazier in wanting things more pre-digested for him than perhaps we realize. It is unfortunate, but true."<sup>68</sup>

Pew's insistence that the content in *Christianity Today* reflect the many overlaps be-

67. Pew, 2.

68. Graham, 2.



tween church and state marked a change in his thinking. For many years, he had been using his influence to keep the churches out of political matters largely because he believed the political engagement of the churches was too liberal. With *Christianity Today*, however, he saw an opportunity for a politically conservative Christian message to reach a wide audience.

In early 1958 J. Howard Pew hired Opinion Research Bureau to conduct a survey on the reception of *Christianity Today*. The survey found that the ministers in the major denominations classified themselves in the following ways: Fundamentalist 35%, Conservative 39%, Neo-Orthodox 12%, Liberal 14%.<sup>69</sup> In March of 1958, Graham wrote Pew about the survey, which he had been analyzing since the *Christianity Today* Board meeting where Pew had presented the survey findings. He wanted a copy of the survey to be given to the major newspapers to promote the breakdown of the ministers' perceptions of themselves. Graham wrote:

I believe this poll should be widely publicized. So many of our liberal ministers are liberal only because they think it's the popular thing to be. If they could understand that the vast majority of the American clergy are conservative, it should swing hundreds of others over to the conservative position. It would also probably have a great impact on our seminaries if properly distributed.<sup>70</sup>

Graham seems to have believed that the social climate surrounding the ministers had more

69. Unknown, "Minutes of the Board of Directors of *Christianity Today* meeting January 6, 1958," (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., January 6, 1958), 2.

70. Rev. Billy Graham, Letter to J. Howard Pew (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., March 19, 1958), 1.

of an impact than the “facts,” as he and Pew interpreted them. Liberalism and the left were influencing society; rather than interpreting this change in society for the good, Graham simply felt that the ministers were acting for the good of their popularity and not for the good of their flocks. Had the ministers known other ministers who were conservative, Graham surmised, perhaps the liberal tide would turn and conservatism in the ministry could be saved. Ultimately, Graham’s plea failed to convince Pew, and the findings of the survey were not released to the public.

In sum, Pew and Graham’s establishment of *Christianity Today* was part of an ongoing effort on the part of politically conservative and pro-corporate Christians to show how well free-market capitalism fit with religious values in America. As Barry Goldwater wrote to President Ronald Reagan in 1983, it served both to use “the Lord for their own good and, at the same time. . . really trying to help people understand the Lord better.”<sup>71</sup> Pew worked diligently against the NCC’s involvement in politics, yet he was a catalyst, through his financial support, in spreading the conservative viewpoint through religion. It is important to consider that this confluence of religion and politics was not unique to NAM initiatives or the programs co-ordinated by Graham and Fifield. The experiences that Pew and Crane had with NAM, Spiritual Mobilization, and Graham’s ministry, were to become important to Robert Welch as he reached out to Pew and Crane about forming an organization, the JBS, to mobilize Americans behind a new conservative political movement.

71. Barry Goldwater, Letter to Ronald Reagan (The Personal and Political Papers of Senator Barry M. Goldwater, FM MSS #1, Arizona Historical Foundation, May 5, 1983).

## 2.5 NAM and the Formation of the JBS

Robert Welch was a successful businessman, holding the position as Vice-President at the candy manufacturer James O. Welch Company, the company responsible for Junior Mints, Sugar Daddy's and Sugar Babies.<sup>72</sup> He was also a leading figure at NAM. He served for three years as a regional vice-president, chairman of its Educational Committee, and for seven years as a member of its Board of Directors. As a board member, he was privy to the public relations campaigns, the data from NAM's purchased surveys and data regarding the success of their public relations campaign. Welch also had the opportunity to interact with other corporate leaders and develop strong financial backing and important connections.

As we will see throughout the following chapters, many of the themes from NAM's research, and "educational" topics are the focus of JBS materials. Much like NAM's clergy-industry tours and the public relations materials they supplied to the NAM member companies, the JBS provided materials and courses for employees and the customers of corporations as well. At the Coleman Corporation in Wichita, Kansas, NAM Board Member<sup>73</sup> and President of the Coleman Company, Sheldon Coleman, offered Birch anti-communism courses in his factory. Coleman was also a leading Bircher in the state.<sup>74</sup> The film *Communism on the Map*, written by Bircher Herbert Philbrick and produced by Harding College, was screened at Goodyear Tire, Minnesota Mining, Aluminum Corpora-

72. James O. Welch and Robert W. Welch, Jr. were brothers. The Welch Company was purchased by the National Biscuit Company (currently Nabisco) in 1963, with James Welch becoming a director for Nabisco from 1963 to 1978. (Unknown, "James O. Welch Dies at 79; Founder of Candy Company," 1985, accessed March 31, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/02/01/us/james-o-welch-dies-at-79-founder-of-candy-company.html>)

73. Steve Netherby, "It Started With a Lantern," *Field & Stream* LXXXI, no. 8 (December, 1976): 127.

74. Westin, "Anti-Communism and the Corporations," 479.

tion of America, Boeing Airplane Co., Joans & Laughlin Steel, Revere Copper & Brass, Convair, Arkansas-Missouri Power Co., Texas Power & Light, Schick Safety Razor, and North American Aviation.<sup>75</sup> Most of these companies were members of NAM.

In 1956, prior to starting the John Birch Society in 1958, Welch created his own newsletter *One Man's Opinion*, which focused on many of the topics that would be the focus of the JBS literature. Welch wrote about important figures on the right, current politics, communism, religion, the free market, freedom, anti-stateism, and anti-welfarism. In 1957 Welch unveiled a new editorial advisory board for *One Man's Opinion* and introduced the members in the following terms:

These good citizens represent no organizations in this endeavor, and stand on no feet but their own. Each one is joining the others in lending us his most important possession, his name, and in giving us of his energy and time, because they all have one thing in common. They believe it is extremely important: (1) To make our fellow-Americans aware of the fact and the evil of our head-long plunge toward national socialism; and (2) to make them more aware of the nature, the methods, and the terrifying progress of the Communist conspiracy.<sup>76</sup>

While Welch claimed that members of the advisory board were independent of collective interests, there is little doubt that all were put on the board because of their positions in corporate America and their right-wing politics. Moreover, many members of the *One*

75. Westin, "Anti-Communism and the Corporations," 481.

76. Robert Welch, "Opening Cover Material," *One Man's Opinion* II, no. 8 (July-August 1957): Opening Cover.

*Man's Opinion* advisory board also served on the board of NAM or on the National Executive Committees of NAM, including John U. Barr, a wealthy industrialist from New Orleans; William J. Grede, from Grede Foundries Inc., which was one of the largest producers of iron and steel in the United States; Robert W. Stoddard, who was the President of a metal component manufacturing company, Wyman-Gordon Inc., and owned numerous newspapers and radio stations; K.G. Bentson, of Union Rock and Minerals Corporation; James L. Coker, President of Sonoco Products, an international packaging manufacturer; Martin J. Condon, Chairman of the chewing tobacco and snuff producer, Conwood Corp.; Ernest G. Swiggert the founder of Hyster Co., a heavy equipment manufacturer; and Frank E. Masland, President of CH Masland and Sons, carpet manufacturers. Perhaps most importantly, in terms of the making the connection between NAM and the strategy to mobilize religious leaders and the churches, the list also included J. Howard Pew. Pew was also a member of the advisory committee. Pew's involvement with Fifield helped Welch to secure two other important people on his board: Ludwig von Mises and Clarence Manion. In addition, Fifield's Freedom's Clubs, which he established in 1950, became associated with the JBS.<sup>77</sup>

As *One Man's Opinion* set in motion the basis for the JBS, Welch brought some of these individuals along with him. For example, NAM President William J. Grede was one of the original eleven people at the initial meeting in Indiana for the creation of the Society, and he became a member of the JBS Council. Robert W. Stoddard, President of Wyman-Gordon, an industrial manufacturer who built forging for automotive and aerospace industries; Cola

77. Unknown, "Subversion of the Right," (The Christian Century Foundation, Tom Anderson Papers, University of Oregon Archives, March 29, 1961).

G. Parker, President of Kimberly Clark Inc. and former President of NAM; John T. Brown, Vice President of the Falk Corporation, former President of J.I. Case, and former NAM Board member; Robert D. Love of the packing supply manufacturer Love Box and former NAM Board member; and Frank E. Masland all joined him on the JBS Council.<sup>78</sup>

Understanding the connection between Pew and Welch is hindered by the fact that the archived papers of J. Howard Pew, housed at the Hagley Museum in Delaware, have been purged of nearly all materials relating to Welch, *One Man's Opinion*, and the JBS. The little that remains in the archive are letters regarding Welch's book *The Politician*, a letter from Pew's secretary mentioning that a copy of *American Opinion* had arrived, and a letter from 1965 from Welch asking Pew for a donation for the JBS record series "One Dozen Candles." The tone of this letter seems to indicate that there had been a falling out between Welch and Pew, as Welch's request is not confident and seems resigned to a negative response. The tone of this letter notwithstanding, Pew remained on the masthead of the *American Opinion* as part of the magazine's advisory board until 1963 and he remained a stockholder in Robert Welch Inc.<sup>79</sup> The timeline of the stockholder information for Robert Welch Inc. is not publicly available, therefore the year in which Pew no longer was a stockholder is not clear.

Welch wrote in late 1963 that "getting the most influential Conservatives, in all divisions of our national life, to acquire more understanding of the Communist conspiracy is exactly what our country needs more than anything else today."<sup>80</sup> A number of influential

78. These individuals will be mentioned throughout this dissertation, and play an important role throughout the story of the JBS, Goldwater's campaign, and the spreading of the economic, political, and religious message of the JBS.

79. Group Research Inc., "Biography of J. Howard Pew," 2.

80. Robert Welch, Letter to President David E. Haywood (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown

conservative corporate and business leaders responded to this call. Multi-millionaire Dallas B. Lewis of Lewis Foods, and owner of Dr. Ross's Dog Food, left \$5,500,000 (\$40,983,148) to right-wing organizations when he passed away in 1966, one million (roughly \$7.4 million in 2016 USD) of which went to the JBS.<sup>81</sup> The Committee on Political Education (COPE), of the AFL-CIO, both noted left-wing organizations, released a political memo in 1963 that included a chart of all the right-wing and business organizations affiliated with the JBS. Included amongst the major corporations were J.I. Case, Chrysler Corporation, Deering Milliken, General Motors, Kimberley-Clark, Sears-Roebuck, and Pew's Sun Oil.<sup>82</sup> Yet, as this story unfolds, it would seem that it would be more beneficial for the influential conservatives to become involved in the JBS for financial and political gain. COPE wrote in their political memo of the JBS and their business contacts:

It adds up to a threatening picture: *Men of influence and community standing—many of them representing giant industries—are banded together in an organization dedicated to shattering trade unions and preventing social welfare progress.*

This organization in turn interlocks with others with identical causes, forming a well organized, well-heeled apparatus that is a threat to democracy itself.<sup>83</sup>

The conservatives Welch gathered within the JBS were involved in the diminishing of the power of trade unions, and were against social welfare. Through their work in NAM and

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University Archives, December 2, 1963).

81. Unknown, "Birch Society Windfall," (Tom Anderson Papers, University of Oregon Archives, Undated), 1.

82. Committee on Political Education, AFL-CIO, "John Birch High Command Interlocks with Other Rightest Groups to Form Directorate of Reaction," (Committee on Political Education AFL-CIO, Tom Anderson Papers, University of Oregon Archives, September 9, 1963), 2.

83. Ibid.

now in the JBS the promotion of the free market, capitalism, and Right to Work legislation continued to underscore their involvement in the JBS.

### **2.5.1 The Four Principles of the JBS**

The JBS focused its attention on religion, women's issues, and, to some extent, youth. However, the JBS primarily focused on what NAM called "the great, unorganized, inarticulate, so-called 'middle-class.'"<sup>84</sup> In 1958, Welch, his fellow NAM board members, and the JBS as an organization were about to organize and mobilize these individuals to the point where they were capable of having a powerful impact on the American political system and the Republican Party. The JBS did not promote itself as a religious organization, but much like NAM, the JBS focused predominantly on Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. In a speech from June 1964, Robert Welch summed up the religious mission of the JBS, and in doing so summed up the idea of religion as a weapon:

While the Communists' intended destruction of all religion is under way, they make as much use as they can of the organizational structure of religious bodies, as a means of reaching large numbers of good men and women with subtle propaganda most favourably presented. They infiltrate the clergy of various denominations. Our job, however, is not just to expose and defend against this propaganda and infiltration, but to make the impact of real religion on our national life even stronger. Put in the broadest and most comprehensive language,

84. National Association of Manufacturers, "The Challenge and the Answer. The Public Relations Program of the National Association of Manufacturers," 3.



we must counter all of the blasphemy, apostasy, and sacrilege being promoted around us, by doing our part to ‘let more of reverence in us dwell.’ And within that broad purpose, we need in our own lives to make our own personal religious beliefs into closer, firmer guides for our actions and our consciences. And may I say that in all of these respects our members are doing wonderfully well indeed. Among the greatest encouragements that we constantly find, on the quite rough road we are now traveling, are the hundreds of letters from our Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish members alike, telling us that their work in, dedication to, and understanding of, The John Birch Society has caused their religion to come to mean more to them than ever before.<sup>85</sup>

In other words, from its inception, the JBS as an organization had been attempting to wed religion with politics, as well as attempting to use religion as a conduit to mould the opinions of the middle-class.

In its membership information the JBS identified four principles at the Society’s core: political, economic, social, and religious.<sup>86</sup> The JBS was particularly interested in stressing “the religious principles which members of The John Birch Society hold in common. We believe that integrity in government, honesty in the market place, and social harmony, all of these must be based in morality. They can’t be legislated into existence.”<sup>87</sup> Welch and the JBS hoped to tap into the power of religion and an American distrust of government

85. Robert Welch, “More Stately Mansions, a speech delivered at the Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago,” (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives), June 5, 1964, 32.

86. G. Edward Griffin, “This is the John Birch Society An Invitation to Membership,” (John Birch Society, Undated), 7.

87. *Ibid.*, 25.

to reach the masses. As Dr. David M. Baxter, an ordained minister, and newspaper columnist wrote in 1961, “Unquestionably the Birchists, like politicians of all ages, propose to tie Christianity to their movement, making ‘Christians’ of those who are with them and liberals, disbelievers and Un-Americans of those who do not.”<sup>88</sup> This mistrust of trust in the American government is part of the confluence that inspired the creation, and more importantly the growth, of the JBS. A survey conducted in Bennington, Vermont in 1954 by sociologist Martin Trow, revealed that well-educated small businessmen supported McCarthy because they:

tend to develop a generalized hostility toward a complex of symbols and processes bound up with industrial capitalism: the steady growth and concentration of government, labor organizations, and business enterprises; the correlative trend toward greater rationalization of production and distribution; and the men, institutions, and ideas that symbolize these secular trends of modern society. These trends and their symbols, were . . . McCarthy’s most persuasive targets.<sup>89</sup>

Americans had been called upon for many years to fight communism. The business community had approached this fight from the perspective of the damage that communism would have on free enterprise. The JBS expanded this approach to include what they referred to as the four principles of the JBS,—political, economic, social, and religious.<sup>90</sup>

88. David M. Baxter, “What About the John Birch Society?,” (*Eternity Magazine*, Tom Anderson Papers, University of Oregon Archives, December, 1961), 2-.

89. Martin Trow, “Small Businessmen, Political Tolerance, and Support for McCarthy,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 1958, 274.

90. Griffin, “This is the John Birch Society An Invitation to Membership,” 7.

These were to be the areas that Welch and the National Council would focus on in their efforts to mobilize the general membership of the JBS for political action.

NAM, through its three-pronged public relations strategy, created a direct link between corporate America, free enterprise, and religion. Its approach to promoting this message was a direct marketing campaign aimed at the opinion shapers: women, youth and religious leaders. This campaign included a speaker series, educational programs, film, television, and radio programs, as well as newsletters, monthly magazines, and influential celebrity spokespersons. Its campaign was directed at the opinion shapers and not the “so called middle-class.” In contrast, Welch, through the JBS, focused predominately on the middle-class, while still working *on* the opinion shapers.

The issue for NAM was to create a supportive environment to combat what they perceived to be an attack on free enterprise by the government, unions, and welfare state-ism. Its strategy was to combat the injustice of these attacks by a common enemy in communism. Members of NAM, such as J. Howard Pew and Jasper E. Crane, expanded on the NAM public relations campaign, and became directly involved in the religious campaigns of Fifield and Graham. Without being publicly linked to these movements, but providing the funding and expertise, Pew and Crane were able to utilize similar marketing mediums as NAM; magazines, television, radio, and influential spokespersons; to further the link between religion and free enterprise. Fifield and Graham both utilized “the Lord for their own good and, at the same time, . . . really trying to help people understand the Lord better.”<sup>91</sup> Proselytizing conservative free enterprise ideals from the pulpit at large revivals and

91. Goldwater,

through film and television, Graham and Fifield, with the financial support and guidance of wealthy industrialists, furthered both the saving of souls and free enterprise.

From these movements Pew could see both the strengths and the weaknesses of shifting public understanding of the free market and corporations. The issue of the attack upon free enterprise and public understanding of free enterprise, continued to be an injustice that each of these movements (Spiritual Mobilization and Billy Graham's ministry) tried to affect and provide "justice" for free enterprise in America. When Robert Welch proposed a movement marketed directly to the "so-called middle-class" to the industrialists involved in NAM, he built upon the successes of NAM, Fifield and Graham. The JBS, too, utilized a speaker series, educational programs, newsletters, radio, television, film, and a monthly magazine. Welch's strategy marketed to not only the opinion shapers, identified by NAM, but he also developed a strategy to mobilize both wealthy businessmen and the middle-class. While adamantly stating that the JBS was not a religious organization, Welch utilized the lessons learned from NAM, Fifield and Graham to use religion as a motivator to mobilize the JBS membership.

The JBS, promoted to its membership a common ideal of a conservative utopia and ideology, but with different articulations of that vision based upon their socio-economic positions in society. Individuals like Pew and Crane, and powerful corporations within NAM, all had the power to influence society, but in a democracy they needed the cooperation of other social strata to realize their vision, because they needed their votes. Using their knowledge of the opinion shapers, they embarked on a mission to shape the public's understanding of the world and its hierarchy for their own benefit. Using a common enemy, communism, they utilized religion as a tool for mobilization. As the invitation to JBS

membership argued:

‘all men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.’ You see, if our rights are not endowed by our Creator, what, then is their origin? There’s only one other source — the government. If we deny the existence of God in our political institutions, then we must accept the premise that government is the source of our rights. But, if we accept that premise, then we must accept the corollary that, if government can grant rights, it also has the power to take them away. And I don’t think many Americans would want to accept that if they thought it through. Liberty is not secure unless human rights are assumed to come from God, not the state.<sup>92</sup>

Welch, through the JBS, linked religion to liberty; yet liberty itself was framed differently for the two classes. Liberty for the wealthy amongst the JBS leadership and membership was linked to economic freedom without government regulation or interference in free enterprise. For the middle-class membership, liberty was marketed as the freedom to worship God without persecution, to have a voice within government, and to be free from the fear of slavery, and a loss of God, country, and family. The JBS was to be a force not only against communism, welfarism, and big government, but also as a force for good in human history:

The John Birch Society a permanent and growing body; one in which the forces of good can maintain a lasting union and a continuing concerted effort.

92. Griffin, “This is the John Birch Society An Invitation to Membership,” 27.

We believe, therefore, as already stated, that for this reason and in this manner The John Birch Society can become a new force in human history—one that has been badly needed, especially for the past two hundred years; and that, as such a new force, it can become a very effective factor on the side of the forces of good in making this a better world. For at least not *all* of the advantages of organization and of continuity will now be left on the side of the forces of evil.<sup>93</sup>

The membership of the JBS was to battle against the forces of “evil” that were attacking America through “liberal” ideas of welfarism, corporate regulations, and the disappearance of God in the politics of America.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Without the lessons learned equating free enterprise and Christianity, without the impetus of perceived religious persecution, and without the network stemming from NAM and the mobilizations and influence of Fifield and Graham, the JBS would not have been as successful in influencing the American political system

Fifield’s Spiritual Mobilization was a movement aimed at conservative religious leaders to preach conservative thought linking free market and religion. Graham’s revivals and magazine, *Christianity Today*, took this further, marketing directly to conservative Christian leaders and their congregations. Both movements were an attempt to influence

93. Welch, “More Stately Mansions, a speech delivered at the Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago,” 27.

the American public for conservative ideas, using religious opinion shapers. Without this foundation of involvement by wealthy conservatives, armed with knowledge from NAM's research, Robert Welch's plan to mobilize the middle-class for political ends may not have had the network or financial backing to create the John Birch Society. For these individuals, controlling the financial and ideological goals of movements such as Spiritual Mobilization and the JBS, the injustice that continued to erupt was the perceived continual attack on the free enterprise system in America. Lessons learned through each social movement or "project" provided the foundation for the next. Without the perceived successes garnered through Fifield's, NAM's, and Graham's efforts to connect religion and free enterprise, the strategic plan conceived by Welch would not have succeeded. Standing on the shoulders of those who came before, the flashpoint eruptions seeking justice for free enterprise and the inheritors of the American dream continued to seek justice with lessons learned from the past.

Welch, as I will argue in the coming chapters, used his network developed through NAM to build a two-tier mobilization for conservatism in America that was based on a socio-economic division between the middle-class and the wealthy. In general, the marketing to the middle-class membership of the JBS was founded upon sustained fear, conspiracy theories, and perceived religious persecution. For the wealthy members of the JBS the approach was to fight for their inheritance of the American dream. As I will argue in chapter three, both tiers were fighting a common enemy, communism, but the approach developed by Welch appealed to distinct interpretations of liberty, entitlement, and the American dream. The lessons learned from and the success of NAM's three-pronged approach is clearly linked to the creation of the JBS. Without this initial public relations campaign,

the network of individuals and the support of linking religion, free enterprise, and politics the JBS would not have attained the support it had from the wealthy funders nor from the membership at large. As will be shown in the coming chapters, lessons learned from each of the movements and campaigns discussed in this chapter will be repeated by the JBS, the Goldwater campaign, and movements and organizations created after the election of 1964, continuing the process of repurposing fragments of perceived injustices.



## Chapter 3

# Political Mobilization, Americanism, and the Insiders

In chapter two, I argued that during the 1940s and early 1950s the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) embarked on a public relations campaign to expose the evils of communism and its potential infiltration of American institutions. NAM's campaign to connect the evils of communism to the decline of American free enterprise relied on so-called opinion molders in American society—women, religious leaders, and youth—to spread its message. Moreover, wealthy business leaders such as Jasper Crane and J. Howard Pew supported Rev. James Fifeild and Rev. Billy Graham in their efforts to connect religion and economic and social conservatism through spiritual mobilization campaigns and widely broadcast revivals. While recognizing that these efforts had opened up spaces in society for discussions of conservatism, Robert Welch thought that a necessary next step in realizing a more powerful conservative movement in the United States was direct

political mobilization.

The primary aim of this chapter is to examine the political mobilization strategy developed by Welch and informed by NAM's public relations campaign. It is a strategy, I will argue, based on the premise that for Robert Welch, and eventually the JBS, Americans were divided into a two-tiered socio-economic hierarchy and that the higher and lower classes needed different messaging to motivate them politically. To help make this argument, I begin with a discussion of the first stage of Welch's plan, a newsletter marketed to an audience of business leaders, professionals, and the wealthy. I then turn to the second phase of his plan, the creation of *American Opinion* magazine and the John Birch Society (JBS), both directed at influencing and mobilizing the middle-class. I then focus on the varying membership approaches utilized by Welch to secure involvement by the two classes. Next, I turn to a common tactic used by Welch for both groups: the development of an Americanist hero in Captain John Birch that would inspire both tiers to political mobilization. A central element in this phase of his strategy was to appeal to a highly elastic concept of heroism. For instance, I will show that through the rebranding of the term "Americanism," Welch was able to create a narrative of individual heroism, that had the capability to be interpreted and embraced by both socio-economic groups. In the next section, I show that the "Insiders" was a common enemy created by Robert Welch. By appealing to the imagery of this powerful cabal, Welch was able to create both a credible enemy and a sense of sustained fear as a tool for political mobilization of the middle-class. In the final section I examine the role of free enterprise within the John Birch Society, and how it was articulated as a motivator for the middle-class membership, while it was a source of profit for Welch and his wealthy backers.

## 3.1 One Man’s Opinion and American Opinion

### 3.1.1 Welch’s Conversion Plan

Robert Welch was a prolific writer and an ardent anti-communist. Prior to writing the newsletter *One Man’s Opinion* or authoring literature for the John Birch Society, he wrote the books *May God Forgive Us* (1952) and *The Life of John Birch* (1954).<sup>1</sup> The book *May God Forgive Us* focused on the failure of America and Christianity to stop the communist takeover of China. Welch, as he wrote in *The Blue Book* (1961), believed that once communism had been removed “like a cancer” from America, America could “still go ahead to fulfill its great destiny, and to become an even more glorious example for all the earth than it ever was before.”<sup>2</sup> For Welch, America and Europe’s morality was tied to a belief in the rewards and the punishments of a Christian God. Welch wrote that he understood the “downfall” of society as being due to a spiritual vacuum.<sup>3</sup> According to Welch, America and its citizens are destined to be the exemplars and heroes who will save the world from the evils of communism.<sup>4</sup> Both books, *May God Forgive Us* and *The Life of John Birch*, reinforced Welch’s belief that Christian morality was foundational to

1. Robert Welch’s first book was published in 1941, *The Road to Salesmanship*, and focused on sales techniques, not communism.

2. Robert Welch, *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society* (Belmont, MA: Western Islands, 1961), 55.

3. *Ibid.*, 60-61.

4. When referring to “America” and “Americans” in this chapter, I am referring to Welch’s understanding. For Welch, America includes a religious morality and an imperative to further free enterprise. Welch often argued that America was a Republic and not a democracy. He stated “The word democracy comes from the Greek and means, literally, government by the people. The word ‘republic’ comes from the Latin, *res publica*, and means literally ‘the public affairs.’” (Robert Welch, “Republics and Democracies, a speech delivered at the Constitution Day luncheon of We The People, Chicago,” [Printed in *American Opinion*, October, 1961. John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, September 17, 1961], 9) Welch also argued that America was “a government of laws and not of men.” (*ibid.*, 10)

America's success, specifically American civilization<sup>5</sup>, and that America had to take the leadership in combatting the spread of communism.

In 1955, Welch travelled to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, and the Philippines, and upon his return he gave a presentation on his experiences to some of the members of NAM. He also provided select NAM members with a written account of his trip, in which he revealed that he was pleasantly surprised to find that his book *May God Forgive Us* had been translated into Chinese and published in Taiwan.<sup>6</sup> This presentation and letter served as an introduction to the board members of NAM of Welch's understanding of the battle against communism and his vision of America's role in communism's defeat. The original presentation to NAM is somewhat unclear. Some correspondence indicates that the presentation for NAM at the Hot Springs, Virginia, board meeting, in 1955, focused on Welch's trip to the Far East. Yet, the correspondence between William J. Grede and Robert Welch, hints that the original presentation was *The Black Book*.<sup>7</sup> In a letter from October, 1957, Grede and Welch were discussing a possible speaking engagement for Welch. In this letter Welch mentions the Hot Springs presentation, and states that in this upcoming talk he "cannot go into, nor even approach, the conclusions which I set before you at Hot Springs . . . I do talk for about an hour and half on the subject of *It is a Conspiracy*."<sup>8</sup>

5. In *The Blue Book* Welch argues that with the inception of America, that a new civilization with an indigenous culture, customs and its own destiny, vastly different from Europe was created. (Welch, *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*, 53)

6. Robert Welch, "A Brief Report To Friends On My Trip to The Far East," (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, September 2, 1955), 4.

7. It is important to realize that *The Black Book* was referred to by Welch in a number of independent ways. In some correspondence it is referred to as "The Manuscript," "The Letter," "Confidential Manuscript #63," or *The Politician*. All refer to the same body of work that was constantly being updated and added to by Welch.

8. Robert Welch, Letter to William J. Grede (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, October 2, 1957), 2.

This reference in the correspondence does not seem to support the notion that the NAM presentation was simply a presentation on his travels.

Shortly after Welch's presentation to NAM, Frank E. Masland Jr. a carpet manufacturer, contacted William J. Grede, then President of NAM, and suggested that Welch travel across the United States to give this same presentation to the general public. In fact, Masland was so impressed with Welch's presentation that he offered \$1,000 to support this initiative. Masland had spoken to Welch after the presentation and suggested that he take a sabbatical year to make this speaking tour a reality. Convinced that Welch was very interested in the speaking tour, and that perhaps a program could be created to bring this idea to fruition,<sup>9</sup> Masland thought that "the establishment of a method whereby Bob's [Welch] message could reach the people of our country would represent an offensive action in our battle to defend the Free Enterprise System."<sup>10</sup> To Masland, Welch's speaking tour was an important undertaking that should be supported by business leaders.<sup>11</sup> In response to Masland's suggestion, Grede wrote that several people in NAM had started to develop possible platforms for Welch to give his presentation, and that NAM itself was putting the idea on their agenda for their next board meeting.<sup>12</sup>

Seeking to capitalize on Masland's exuberance and Grede's willingness to support a speaking tour, Welch acted on plans that called for a more fulsome response. He believed

9. Masland Jr., Frank E., Letter to William J. Grede (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, September 23, 1955).

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. The NAM board meeting files at the Hagley Museum do not include this item on its agenda, nor in the meeting minutes. (William J. Grede, Letter to Frank E. Masland (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, October 5, 1955))

that the printed word would work in conjunction with his speeches to convert people to his way of thinking.<sup>13</sup> Committed to his belief, and leveraging Masland’s financial support, Welch used Masland’s \$1,000 to launch his newsletter, *One Man’s Opinion*, in February 1956, shortly after his initial presentation to the NAM board members.<sup>14</sup> Whether or not this is what Masland initially had in mind, Welch converted Masland’s \$1,000 into common share stocks in Robert Welch Inc., the publishing company of *One Man’s Opinion*. Welch explained to Masland that his plan was eventually to dedicate all of his time to this endeavour and “to go on from that as a base to a great deal more public speaking and—eventually—political action.”<sup>15</sup> To ensure the success of this idea, Welch wanted to approach additional individuals to sell shares in the company. Welch himself invested \$4,000, equalling four thousand shares of common stock and gave himself 80% control of the company. He planned on putting a cap on any single investment to \$5,000, protecting his friends and investors from getting “badly hurt,” should his enterprise not prove successful.<sup>16</sup> Welch defended the creation of the newsletter as a necessary complement to the speaking engagements to Masland as a means of “converting” people. He wanted to ensure that the importance of “getting the message to those who need converting rather than to those who already believe as we do.”<sup>17</sup> Welch stated that to “convert” people the newsletter would need to be addressed to educators and professionals and, most importantly, the opinion

13. Robert Welch, Letter from Robert Welch to Frank Masland Jr. (Frank Masland Jr. Papers, Dickinson College, September 30, 1955), 3.

14. As noted in chapter two, the advisory board for this newsletter included many of NAM’s members.

15. Robert Welch, Letter from Robert Welch to Frank Masland Jr. (Frank Masland Jr. Papers, Dickinson College, March 10, 1956).

16. Welch, 3.

17. Robert Welch, Letter from Robert Welch to Frank Masland Jr. (Frank Masland Jr. Papers, Dickinson College, November 14, 1955), 1.

shapers.<sup>18</sup> With hopes of success for this small newsletter, in 1955 Welch envisioned that the name would change to *Opinion* and would eventually need additional authors as his speaking engagements demanded more of his time, and as the popularity of the newsletter grew.<sup>19</sup> From the inception of this idea, Welch believed that within six months of publishing the first edition, that *One Man's Opinion* would reach a circulation of 10,000, and in his words “they will be ten thousand influential citizens.”<sup>20</sup>

### 3.1.2 One Man's Opinion

*One Man's Opinion* was Welch's initial foray into creating a movement by mobilizing the business community. Welch envisioned the first edition as a “test case” of a plan he had been thinking about for several months before the first copy was printed. Welch was prepared to dedicate himself to this plan as early as of October, 1955; however, his brother, for whom he worked for at the W.O. Welch candy company, was a “liberal” and not supportive of this vision.<sup>21</sup> Even at this early stage of development, Welch believed that *One Man's Opinion* would allow him to move gradually toward, as Welch put it, “devoting all my energy to the fight against Communism and the increasingly socialistic atmosphere in which Communism thrives.”<sup>22</sup>

*One Man's Opinion* was not intended to be a monthly publication, but it quickly became

18. Welch, 1-2.

19. Welch, 2.

20. Robert Welch, Sample of Letter Soliciting Subscriptions (Frank Masland Jr. Papers, Dickinson College, January 10, 1955).

21. Welch, 1.

22. Ibid.

one.<sup>23</sup> Published for a small market of wealthy industrialists and business professionals, all the articles were written by Welch and focused on stopping communism from destroying free enterprise. The biographies contained within its pages focused on financial heroes such as Ludwig von Mises and powerful resistance leaders in foreign countries. In this regard, the articles discussing economics were similar to NAM's public relations strategy discussed in chapter two. Like the first prong of NAM's public relations plan, Welch's articles focused on how the business community and businessmen could best articulate the benefits of free enterprise to non-business groups or individuals. Welch's writing for this small market emphasized the importance of working *for* free enterprise and stopping communism from destroying the American free market system. Welch framed the role of the business community and wealthy industrialists in this battle against communism, as the inheritors of the American dream who had to take a stand to secure this inheritance. This was a role of inherited leadership by the business and economic leaders of America.

In his correspondence with Masland in the spring of 1956, Welch began to define his vision for an organization that would catalyze those "converted" by his speeches and writings into political action in favour of American free enterprise. The clear implication would be the involvement of a much larger fraction of the American public.<sup>24</sup> In the second issue of *One Man's Opinion*, published in April 1956, Welch became more specific. He wrote:

We are proposing an end to the purely negative fight against the Communist philosophy and the Communist conspiracy; and a militant positiveness in the battle cry that would turn the thoughts and aspirations of men into exactly the

23. Robert Welch, "One Man's Opinion," *One Man's Opinion* 1, no. 1 (February, 1956): 1.

24. Welch,



opposite direction. We are proposing a conception, religious in quality, inspiring in depth, unifying in comprehensiveness, which men of good will everywhere can fight *for*, instead of merely having something to fight *against*.<sup>25</sup>

In comparison to much of his earlier writing, this vision is a moderation of Welch's anti-communist rhetoric and marks the inception of a tone that will eventually mobilize the John Birch Society. The idea of fighting *for* something is inspirational, and links directly into his rebranding of the term "Americanist" as a conduit to fighting "for" something as a social hero and acting as a stalwart against communist conspiracy.

In June of 1957 an editorial advisory committee for *One Man's Opinion* was established. Writing a letter to introduce members of the committee to one another, Welch noted that not all of the advisory members were businessmen, so that the individuals from the political realm or retired military members may not have been previously acquainted despite their shared interests.<sup>26</sup> In both the newsletter and in the introductory letter, Welch did not connect the men to their companies or the organizations they represented. Welch simply listed their profession when introducing them. Welch did, however, single out some of the members of this committee with the designation of "GAM," an acronym for "God's Angry Men," to identify them as those men "devoting *all or a major part* of his life to anti-collectivist activities."<sup>27</sup> These men with the GAM designation were John U. Barr, Laurence E. Bunker, Robert B. Dresser, Clarence Manion, and J.B. Matthews; all of whom would eventually become important members of the JBS. Welch noted in this letter to the

25. Welch, "One Man's Opinion," 11.

26. Robert Welch, Letter to All Members of the Editorial Advisory Committee of ONE MAN'S OPINION (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, June 25, 1957), 1.

27. Ibid.

committee that one half of the list was comprised of industrialists. Welch explained that, “[t]his is only in part because I have more friends in the business world than in other fields. Since the magazine is at present addressed primarily to business men, I turned to such friends for a large proportion of advisers.”<sup>28</sup> To succeed with his plan, Welch needed the support and funding of industrialists.

In Welch’s plan, *One Man’s Opinion*, needed to change its title to *Opinion* once it had sufficient subscription support, or if he became “too engrossed in speeches and politics to write it himself.”<sup>29</sup> In his *One Man’s Opinion* he created an upper echelon of Americanist heroes, inspired to battle for free enterprise. Once the publication reached 10,000 subscribers, Welch was confident that he had sufficiently reached wealthy leaders who supported the cause and were able to be the spokespersons for the next stage in his plan. Although he remained vague about what his overall plan was, an important next step was that in 1958 *One Man’s Opinion* became *American Opinion*. Another was the creation of the JBS in 1958.

### 3.1.3 American Opinion

In 1957 Welch ceased to publish *One Man’s Opinion*<sup>30</sup> and focused on the next stage in his strategy. Those on the advisory committee of *One Man’s Opinion* became part of the initial National Council for the JBS and in late 1958 Welch began publishing *American Opinion*.

28. Welch, 2.

29. Welch, 2.

30. The final edition came with a copy of Welch’s *The Life of John Birch*.

The publishing of *American Opinion* represented a significant change in the tactics used by Welch. The new magazine was written for a larger audience; that is, the general public and middle-class members of the JBS. Moreover, Welch was not the sole author. This new publication included articles authored by religious leaders, business professionals (recruited during the first phase of Welch's plan), pop culture celebrities, and past government and military officials.

The articles in *American Opinion* did not constitute a rallying call for unity for men of good will; rather, the articles were, bluntly put, fear-based propaganda. As *American Opinion* began to market to "the great, unorganized, inarticulate, so-called 'middle-class,'"<sup>31</sup> as NAM once called this group of people, the marketing message morphed from unity to fear and impending disaster. The prior publication, *One Man's Opinion*, provided stories of thwarting communism through the free market, and it profiled financial heroes such as Ludwig von Mises. By contrast, *American Opinion* included stories focused on impending disaster at the hands of communists. In other words, the fear-laden narrative for which the JBS became so well known was muted in the initial newsletter aimed at the small market of wealthy industrialists and powerful leaders, but it took centre stage in the publication aimed at the middle-class. Communism would be one point of fusion between the two socio-economic groups Welch wanted to mobilize.

An example of the change in marketing to the middle-class can be seen in an undated membership recruitment flyer entitled, "Why Join the John Birch Society?" which was included in an edition of *American Opinion*. It declared:

31. National Association of Manufacturers, "The Challenge and the Answer. The Public Relations Program of the National Association of Manufacturers," 3.

The Communists now have hundreds of thousands of actual enemy ‘troops’ scattered throughout our land, all the more dangerous because they do not wear uniforms and are, in most cases, unidentifiable. They are fighting an actual war, right on our soil, right now, for the subjugation of our country and the physical enslavement of our citizens. Their weapons are propaganda, prestige, *money*, and all the levers of pressure and power short of *open* military force.<sup>32</sup>

The recruitment flyer suggested that if the reader wanted to fight *against* the future portrayed in this flyer, the most effective way was to join the ranks of the JBS. In essence, the marketing focuses on fighting *against* a dark future at the hands of the communists and not *for* something.

Another example of the fear-based marketing in *American Opinion* is the spectre of communist infiltration in the United States and social decay created by the welfare state and the emerging Civil Rights Movement. Linking these fears together, *American Opinion* usually identified the infiltration of communists in American society, effective control of infiltrators on the part of communist leaders and the emergence of an American welfare state, as the causes of the Civil Rights Movement. Consequently, articles usually denigrated the Nation of Islam (NOI), Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Welch’s attacks were predominately on King and the movement at large; however, one Council Member, who was also a writer for *American Opinion*, focused on the Nation of Islam and African American Muslims. Dr. Revido P. Oliver, a professor of classical philology, Spanish, and

32. The John Birch Society, “Why Join the John Birch Society,” (The John Birch Society, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, Undated), 3.

Italian at the University of Illinois, wrote extensively on conservative issues for the JBS and for William F. Buckley's *National Review*. In an article for *American Opinion*, Oliver focused on the Nation of Islam, and how Fard Muhammad had gathered a "body of docile followers" who had practiced human sacrifices.<sup>33</sup> Oliver claimed that the NOI was a cult, where "all converts must address to him [Fard Muhammad] a formal letter in which his name is followed by the salutation, 'Dear Savior Allah, Our Deliverer.' Members of the cult appear to have difficulty in grasping the distinction between a Messenger of God and God himself."<sup>34</sup> Oliver presented the members of the NOI as being those who are recipients of the welfare state, connecting the religious to the economic, when he wrote:

Many other members live at the expense of American taxpayers, since at least ninety percent of the 'Muslims' are concentrated in the large cities of the North and California, where hand-outs from federal, state and municipal treasuries, under the guise of 'relief,' 'aid to dependent children,' and the like, are regularly provided for political purposes. No one, so far as I know, has attempted to estimate what percentage of the members work for a living.<sup>35</sup>

Oliver synthesized the ideas of the rising Civil Rights Movement to the economic, and the potential for religious persecution for Christians, while ignoring the fundamental issue of civil rights.<sup>36</sup>

33. Dr. Revilo P. Oliver, "The Black Muslims," *American Opinion*, 1963, 25-26.

34. *Ibid.*, 27.

35. *Ibid.*

36. During his time on the JBS National Council Dr. Revilo P. Oliver spoke openly for saving Christian values and linked the communist battle to a religious battle. In the 1960s Oliver began to offend some members of the JBS with his speeches, which were becoming dramatically more racist and anti-Semitic.

With *One Man's Opinion* the clear delineation between Welch's marketing to the wealthy and the middle-class started to emerge and it continued with *American Opinion*. Both socio-economic groups were inspired to be heroes, but the heroism had different roles. The businessmen who were convinced to fight *for* something, those designated as GAM by Welch, were now leading an organization focused on convincing the conservative middle-class to fight *against* something: the impending evil inflicted upon the middle-class should communism take control of America.

## 3.2 JBS High Level Meetings

This socio-economic schism in the JBS was also evident in the process by which individuals were introduced to the Society. Welch had written many times that there were two-day meetings that introduced people to the JBS. These meetings were described as a repeating of the two-day introductory speech printed in *The Blue Book*, yet through reading the archive collections of various individuals involved in the JBS, it appears that there were other high level meetings where Welch discussed the Society. These meetings were by invitation only, the guest lists created by wealthy businessmen across America and the content presented at these invitation-only meetings is somewhat unclear.

Welch organized quite a few “secret” meetings with many of the first supporters of the JBS. In July 1957, he put together a meeting with William J. Grede, Ernie Swigert,

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Oliver became associated with William Pierce (author of the *Turner Diaries*) and the White Supremacist movement. Oliver's membership was removed from the JBS during this time period. He became a vocal spokesperson within the White Supremacist movement, and espoused a British Israelism perspective. Although he became a “folk hero” amongst the White Supremacists, later in his life, Oliver stated he was an atheist. At the time he was writing for and representing the JBS, he was publicly a Christian.

Cola Parker, and Al Wedemeyer, all familiar names from the *One Man's Opinion* Advisory Board, and the first National Council of the JBS. This meeting was held at the end of a NAM Board meeting. Welch was very obscure about the meeting details, only that high calibre men would be in attendance, and that his plan would take a full day to discuss.<sup>37</sup> In addition, Welch promoted the high level two-day meetings for businessmen to hear “the comprehensive survey of the Communist background, methods, purposes, and progress.”<sup>38</sup> In a document entitled “To A Good American” sent out to businessmen in 1959, Welch wrote that the two-day meetings were to “explain, fully and clearly, the background, methods, and purpose of the John Birch Society.”<sup>39</sup> According to this document these two-day meetings were specifically for “small groups of leading business men, professional men, and conservative scholars, from all over the United States”<sup>40</sup> and “off the record.”<sup>41</sup>

The two-day meeting format was a preferred method to disseminate Welch's message to the public as well. A general membership version of these meetings was concerned with increasing membership among the public at large. Separate high calibre meetings were directed at wealthy businessmen. Within the classification of high caliber there were two separate versions of meeting: one version that simply presented *The Blue Book* to wealthy individuals and the off the record version with attendance only through a non-transferable invitation.

37. Robert Welch, Letter to William J. Grede (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, July 29, 1957), 1-2.

38. Welch,

39. Robert Welch, To A Good American (The John Birch Society, Jasper E. Crane Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., October, 1959), 3.

40. Ibid.

41. Robert Welch, Letter from Robert Welch to Frank Masland Jr. (Frank Masland Jr. Papers, Dickinson College, April 22, 1959).

An understanding of these “off the record meetings” is aided by the meticulous notes of James W. Clise, an executive in Asbestos Supply Companies. His notes made during his attendance at one of these meetings described who attended, where they sat, and an overview of what was discussed. What Welch presented was not simply a recreation of *The Blue Book* as it was for the general membership. He began by outlining the history of the communist infiltration of the American government, with specific dates and events, as he understood them, mirroring much of what is found in *The Politician*. Then Welch spoke a little about the man, John Birch, and then outlined his overall JBS plan. Welch introduced John Birch with details from his book, *The Life of John Birch*. John Birch, was born to George S. Birch and Ethel Ellis Birch, who were deeply religious and were missionaries in India when John was born.<sup>42</sup> Birch was born May 28th, 1918, in Landaur, India, but returned to America with his parents at the age of 2 1/2.<sup>43</sup> They originally made their home in Vineland, New Jersey, and then when John was 12 they moved to Rome, Georgia, where the family of nine, remained.<sup>44</sup> John graduated, magna cum laude, from Mercer University in Macon, Georgia in 1939 and then one year later graduated from Bible Baptist Seminary, in Fort Worth, Texas.<sup>45</sup> In 1940, John became a missionary in China, never to return to the shores of America.<sup>46</sup> Birch died in China at the hands of communist soldiers at the end of World War II.

Welch’s plan, according to Clise’s notes, is somewhat different from what is presented to the general membership in *The Blue Book*. The action plan in Clise’s notes begins with

42. Robert Welch, *The Life of John Birch* (Belmont, MA: Western Islands, 1960), 4.

43. *Ibid.*, 5.

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*, 7.

46. *Ibid.*



it is “Not like tossing a coin — win or lose. Rather — do everything accumulatively.”<sup>47</sup> The plan was to create reading rooms in every community, promote conservative publications to the maximum, including *American Opinion* and *Human Events*, offer a speakers’ bureau, expand the conservative viewpoint on radio and TV, organize letter writing, and organize “all kinds of fronts”<sup>48</sup> to shock the American public by exposing communists. A new point, which was not in *The Blue Book*, was to “start undertakings on [an] International front extending our body (like Reds) (not party like Republicans)”<sup>49</sup> and “[t]hrow weight into political scales as rapidly and effectively as possible.”<sup>50</sup> Welch contended that they as a Society, needed to support Barry Goldwater, that people will vote for a person, not an organization, so they needed to create a “dynamic personal body of support”<sup>51</sup> for Goldwater. In Welch’s words “a politician must be a rider of waves.”<sup>52</sup> The first half of the battle according to Clise’s notes was to “ward off Reds”<sup>53</sup>—the second was rebuild “faith in future of eternal truths and eternity.”<sup>54</sup>

Clise’s notes provide a glimpse into one of these high level meetings and detail how Welch combined data from *The Politician*<sup>55</sup> and *The Blue Book* to build his conspiracy theory. With a scholarly approach, having identified the issues, Welch was then able to

47. James W. Clise, James W. Clise notes from JBS Two-Day Meeting (James W. Clise Papers, Coll 114, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon, September 24–25, 1959), 8.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., 9.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. The only currently available copies of *The Politician* are the ones published after the public disclosure of its existence, and it is not possible to know if the version that attendees were mailed differed substantially from the one published for public consumption. This remains a topic for further investigation.

provide an answer and a plan of action to combat the problems he elucidated. The focus on politics is far from the apolitical approach to the general membership found in *The Blue Book* and membership materials.

Welch and the National Council said of *The Black Book* that it was written long before the establishment of the JBS and was strictly Welch's opinion, and not that of the JBS. James Clise's papers from 1959 discuss his own reading of the book and notes that Welch had supplied Clise with details of others who had received a copy. From this correspondence, *The Politician* appears to be a "high level" aspect of the JBS, and not discussed among the general membership. Throughout all of the collections and archives, the correspondence indicates that all members of the National Council had received an original copy.

In a further letter to Grede, Welch mentions *The Politician* being discussed at the original meeting in Indianapolis. At that meeting Grede said of the book "the manuscript furnishes one means of stirring up true conservatives to a great deal more concern with our situation, and determination to do something about it."<sup>56</sup> Follow up letters between Grede and Welch after the initial meeting also mention the "plans and projects discussed" at the meeting. These "top level" JBS meetings were also a fundraising opportunity. Following these meetings, individuals like William Grede would follow-up with the attendees and ask them for money, or at the very minimum membership in the JBS. At one such meeting in 1959, Harry Bradley, co-founder of the factory equipment company Allen-Bradley and Fred Loock, President of the same company, agreed to a \$25,000 (\$207,412 USD in 2016)

56. Robert Welch, Letter to William J. Grede (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, December 22, 1958), 1.

donation.<sup>57</sup> Harry Bradley, Fred Loock, and Harvey Peters, the tax attorney for Allen-Bradley, committed to paying the costs associated with putting the JBS presentation on film. The cost was slightly more than \$35,000 (\$290,377).<sup>58</sup>

What these letters reveal is that the public understanding of the JBS is not the complete story. The JBS was led by members of NAM, a group who had systematically worked *on* the opinion shapers of society: women, religious leaders, and youth. Through NAM, businessmen had become commonplace in religious events, speaking engagements, and publications. Relationships had been formed between the clergy and corporate America. Welch had presented his version of the communist conspiracy to the NAM board meeting and from there a plan for political action was developed. That political action would be spearheaded and funded by the wealthy industrialists who were gathered across America at “top level” meetings. These meetings, much like the initial meeting of eleven men, were not a presentation of *The Blue Book*, but an opportunity to mobilize businessmen to influence the political landscape. When Welch wrote that he feared that some would think that the JBS “was intended to undercut and be a rival to NAM,”<sup>59</sup> it becomes clear that more than just a Society to fight communism was being created. Welch was creating a two-tiered mobilization of Americanists to evoke political change, rescue free enterprise, and save Christianity.

57. Robert Welch, Letter to William J. Grede (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, February 26, 1959), 1.

58. Robert Welch, Letter to William J. Grede (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, May 18, 1959), 2.

59. Robert Welch, Letter from Robert Welch to James W. Clise (James W. Clise Papers, Coll 114, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon, October 12, 1959), 2.

### 3.3 Americanism and the Americanist Hero

In 1954 Welch wrote a biography of Captain John Birch, where he referred to Birch as “one of the finest examples of Americanism, in all the traditional meaning and promise of that unique term. He lived and worked and fought and died, always literally giving the best that was in him, to strengthen those principles and beliefs which had brought human evolutionary and spiritual progress to its high-water mark in the America he inherited.”<sup>60</sup> Throughout the biography, Welch wove Birch’s story of living through poverty in the Depression, never once giving up on free enterprise, individualism, and God. Birch, according to Welch, never lost “his preference for the American economic and political system”<sup>61</sup> or his suspicion of “the power of the state to provide for them better than they can do it for themselves.”<sup>62</sup>

For Welch, Birch was a man working on the side of the eternal, and he emphasized this fact in his account of Birch’s life, and his eventual demise, as the ultimate hero of Americanism. Being on the “side of the eternal” is a central theme of Welch’s agenda extending beyond the biography of John Birch and into the pages of *One Man’s Opinion* and then later in the literature of the JBS. The importance of this theme to Welch is apparent in an exchange in 1963 between Welch and a member of the JBS who was also a minister. In a Member’s Monthly Message,<sup>63</sup> the minister wrote, “I believe that whether

60. Welch, *The Life of John Birch*, 48.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Member Monthly Messages were a return postcard given to JBS members at local meetings, for the members to return requesting information, ordering publications, sending in donations, or submitting ideas or comments to the JBS head office.

we succeed or not, the man that works for the right is always on the eternal side rather than the temporal.”<sup>64</sup> In the margin of that message, Welch noted, “This is almost the core of program of J.B.S.”<sup>65</sup> This idea of being on the eternal side was the message that the JBS put forth to all members of the JBS and linked it to the idea of being an Americanist hero.

Welch understood Americanism to be “the philosophical antithesis of communism.”<sup>66</sup> Two years after writing the biography, Welch defined these terms within the pages of his first newsletter *One Man’s Opinion*. He wrote, “The *americanist* believes that the individual should retain the freedom to make his own bargain with life, and the responsibility for the results of that bargain—and that means are as important as ends in the civilized social order which he desires.”<sup>67</sup> Welch wanted the two terms to make a mark on history, not through the terms themselves, but through the people who exemplified the words. Welch continued:

By *americanism* we mean far more than a way of life. We mean a philosophy of living; a philosophy to include all the best of the humane philosophies of which we are heirs. We propose the word *americanist* for the standard bearer of that philosophy for purely pragmatic reasons. We believe it will more quickly come to convey what we have in mind, to all people everywhere, than any other word we could choose or might coin. Whether it wins a worthy place in the history

64. Unknown, Letter from a Minister and JBS member to Robert Welch (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, April 17, 1963), 1.

65. Ibid.

66. Welch, “One Man’s Opinion,” 11.

67. Ibid.

of human thought and human progress depends on *americanists*—for whom Americans can only set the inspiring example.<sup>68</sup>

Americanism was, for Welch, a personification of American values, individualism, and incorporated the ideas of freedom, and that freedom involved responsibility. As the “philosophical antithesis” of communism, each individual earned their position in society, and was not a means of an absence of social classes. Moreover, the Americanist was, Welch believed, personified in men such as those on the JBS National Council, especially those described as God’s Angry Men. In sum, the terms Americanism and Americanist were appealing to both the wealthy and the middle-class members of the JBS. A sense of nationalism and heroism could easily be translated regardless of the socio-economic position. For Welch, the key was to tailor the JBS’s message to allow each group to attach meaning to the values and heroes that motivated them to political action. The marketing of these two terms was bolstered by the existing idea of the “American dream,” which refers to the potential of attaining success irrespective of a person’s economic position.

In effect, Welch was building on the idea that the American dream was being thwarted by an unseen enemy, communism. The reasoning was if communism succeeded in taking over America the opportunity for religious freedom, the dream of home ownership, and all that the middle-class values would be lost. Americanist heroes were fighting for the realization of this infinite possibility of the American dream. Americanism was an easily adaptable concept that could complement each individual’s interpretation of the American dream. An Americanist, someone who believed in their ability to to make their own success

68. Welch, “One Man’s Opinion,” 11.

in life, is linked to the idea of limitless resources and infinite possibility.

Welch articulated a similar concept of the American dream and its infinite possibilities when he wrote:

There are many of us who want America and Americans to take the lead in this fight so vigorously, and to establish so clearly as their goal those new heights of personal freedom never before reached, that the whole world-wide positive forward movement can be identified and will be identified as americanism. We want the very word americanism, with a little ‘a,’ to come to mean not the jingoistic and provincial outlook of a certain geographical area, but a philosophy of freedom to which the courageous and the self reliant everywhere can subscribe. We want ‘an americanist’ to come to mean any man, no matter in what country he lives, who believes in and supports this philosophy. Although Russia is the alma mater of communism, and a large percentage of all communists are inhabitants of Russia, the word communist may designate a citizen of any other country just as readily as a Russian. We should like to see Americans earn the right and the glory to have the true anti-communists everywhere designate themselves as americanists.<sup>69</sup>

Central to Welch’s agenda was the creation of an idealistic political movement called Americanism and an equally idealistic character called the American hero.<sup>70</sup> Through re-defining

69. Robert Welch, “The New Americanism,” *One Man’s Opinion* II, no. 9 (September, 1957): 8.

70. The term Americanism was not just isolated to Welch, and extended to other right-wing spokespersons attached to the JBS. Arguably the most prominent of these was Clarence Manion, a right-wing radio personality and National Council member of the JBS. Manion referred to Americanism in his self-

Americanists he was beginning to create a heroic personification of a “conception, religious in quality, inspiring in depth, unifying in comprehensiveness.”<sup>71</sup>

### 3.3.1 Americanist Hero Captain John Birch

The quintessential Americanist hero promoted by Welch was the namesake of his Society, Captain John Birch, a man he described as a selfless religious symbol of the morality and good of America. Birch became the personification of the JBS’s goals and symbolized the line between communism and Christian-style civilization.<sup>72</sup> Yet, as with most myths, the hero himself was far more vulnerable to the weaknesses of humanity. The story of Birch’s human frailty has not been the focus of the written scholarship of the JBS, but it is an important factor in analyzing Welch’s modification of the truth and his story-telling to use religion to motivate a segment of the population.

According to Welch’s story, Birch idealized the virtues of America and its people (as Welch envisioned those virtues), combining nationalistic fervour and divine inspiration.<sup>73</sup>

Birch was a Christian missionary in China during World War II who became an active

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proclaimed Clarence Manion Creed. Included in all the press kits and materials for his radio show and Manion’s speaking engagements, the thirteenth point is particularly revealing: “13. If the principles of Americanism should be lost or sacrificed, the whole human race would immediately be enveloped in a fog of tyranny and terror.” (Clarence Manion, “Clarence Manion Creed - Manion Forum,” [Courtesy of Frank E. Simon, V.P. Publishers Plg. Co Louisville, Ky, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, Undated]) With national Conservative radio personalities such as Manion using the term, there was a reinforcement of the potential of heroism. This message was not just for JBS members but extended to the complete reach of the radio-based Conservative market, emphasizing the fear-based rationale for action.

71. Welch, “One Man’s Opinion,” 11.

72. P.C. Wander, “The John Birch and Martin Luther King, Symbols in the Radical Right,” *Western Journal of Communication* 35, no. 1 (1971): 7.

73. Robert Welch, “The John Birch Resolutions,” *The 1970 White Book*, 1970, 29-30.



agent for American intelligence. He was killed by Chinese communist soldiers at the end of the war and, for Welch, became the first casualty of World War III. Welch believed that with Birch's death, the final war had begun. It would be the ultimate battle between good and evil. What Welch created was an Americanist hero, a man who held steadfast to the American free enterprise ideals, small government, and his faith in God—in other words, a hero that the Americanists of the JBS could hope to emulate.

Birch was a heroic symbol of the social repercussions the JBS members would face as Americanists and the sacrifice they would have to make. The “noble devotion” to the great cause of saving America and religion would come with a stigma of being an “extremist” and dismissed as a conspiracist. But like Birch, they were sacrificing themselves to this noble cause as those who had been awakened to the dangers. The JBS members were bound together conceptually.<sup>74</sup> Theirs was a social heroism, which is “associated with considerable risk and personal sacrifice in other dimensions of life, including serious financial consequences, loss of social status . . . and social ostracism.”<sup>75</sup> The main goal of social heroism is understood as “the preservation of a community-sanctioned value or standard that is perceived to be under threat.”<sup>76</sup> To be an Americanist meant being a social hero, and this term, rebranded by Welch, was the foundational basis of the mobilization of the JBS members.

74. In mobilizing against the conspiracy, they were being brave as they faced peril with a “willingness to enter a fraught situation despite clear barriers to entry and obvious paths of exit,” (Zeno E. Franco, Kathy Blau, and Philip G. Zimbardo, “Heroism: A Conceptual Analysis and Differentiation Between Heroic Action and Altruism.,” *Review of General Psychology* 15, no. 2 [2011]: 100) as psychologists Zeno E. Franco, Kathy Blau, and Philip G. Zimbardo partially define heroism.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

Welch's depiction of Birch's death at the hands of Chinese communists at the end of the war has Birch standing up for the soldiers under his command. He calmly fought for them and trusted in the Chinese taking them hostage. Welch's story created a man who believed in his fellow human, and trusted that all would go well. In Welch's words, "As John lay dying during that last hour or two of agony, after he had been shot and bayoneted and his body tossed aside, he must have realized that the rise of the anti-Christ, which he had foreseen, was already upon us."<sup>77</sup> The "evil" atheists, according to Welch, shot him and his fellow soldiers and left them to die.

General Albert C. Wedemeyer, who was a staunch supporter of Welch and the JBS, advised Welch not to promote or construct an image of Birch as a hero. Wedemeyer wrote, "Birch provoked the attack on himself. He was arrogant, I warned Welch not to make a hero of Birch. That's why I quit as an advisor. I think Welch is a dedicated, fine American, but he lacks good judgment."<sup>78</sup> Wedemeyer did indeed quit his position as advisor of *American Opinion* in response to the Birch debate.

In August of 1972, some 27 years after the death of John Birch in 1945, *The Washington Post* ran an article concerning the death of John Birch, referring to the then recently declassified government documents on the case file. The 50 pages of official reports on his death revealed that Birch had indeed provoked the Chinese communist soldiers through his arrogance and threats. According to the reports, Birch's adjutant had told him he was being arrogant and severe toward the communists. Birch's response was "Never mind, I

77. Welch, *The Life of John Birch*, 48.

78. Milton A Waldor, *Peddlers of Fear: The John Birch Society* (Newark, NJ: Lynnross Publishing Company, 1966), 21-22.

want to see how the Communists treat Americans. I don't mind if they kill me, for America will then stop the Communist movement with atomic bombs.”<sup>79</sup> In Birch's insistence that he see the Commander, he and his adjutant were surrounded by 50 to 60 communist soldiers. The communist soldiers were ordered to load their guns and disarm Birch. His adjutant intervened and was shot, hearing a second shot as he lost consciousness. Birch had been shot multiple times, apparently bayoneted, and both men were left for dead, but the adjutant, Lt. Tung, was rescued and lived. The others in Birch's group were detained for nearly two months, and upon their release, they corroborated Tung's account. A ten-page report on the incident was submitted to General Wedemeyer, who was the Commander of U.S. forces in China.<sup>80</sup> This corroborated account of Birch's death did not match the folklore of a hero Welch had spent so much energy creating.

For many years, Welch promoted his version as the true historical account of Birch's final hours, claiming that the records on Birch were being kept secret by the government to ensure that Americans would not rise up against the communists and would remain complicit in the take-over of the American political system. Welch wanted to ensure that the Christian connection to Birch and the Society, whether completely true or not, remained intact for the folklore of the Society. In addition, he wanted to ensure the sacrifice of the Americanist hero John Birch helped “to awaken his countrymen to the danger and their duty.”<sup>81</sup>

79. Wesley McCune, “John Birch: Did He Seek Death?,” *The Washington Post*, 1972, B4.

80. *Ibid.*, B4-B5.

81. Welch, *The Life of John Birch*, 61-62.

### 3.3.2 Americanism and JBS Books

To reinforce this idea of the Americanist hero, each month Welch, in the *The Bulletin*, would promote a small number of books, which were referred to as required reading for the membership. There were pages dedicated to book reviews, promotions for upcoming books and articles that were linked into the release of a new title. The books were published predominately by Western Publications (a JBS publishing company), Henry Regnery Company, or BookMailer Inc., and sold to chapter leaders to ensure there was a borrowing library available to each chapter. Books were also sold through franchised American Opinion Bookstores.

Welch knew that the JBS membership was a guaranteed market for the bookstores and a conduit to spread the Americanist version of heroism:

The membership of the John Birch Society is a unique body of men and women of high caliber, deep understanding, and unusually persistent dedication to the principles which made America. Virtually every individual in this 'body' has a firm and abiding belief in the free enterprise system and the profit motive, which is the dynamic that makes the system work. Members of the Society have been introduced to programs whereby printed tools can be used effectively and continuously by them. They have been advised that selling books is one way at their dispose for helping them reach their fellow Americans. And we believe that in the future, an increasing number of Birchers will be relying on this method for 'getting out the truth.'<sup>82</sup>

82. The John Birch Society, "American Opinion Bookstore Manual," (John Birch Society Records, 1928–

Welch was pointing to the fact that fundamental to the JBS's existence is the promotion and acceptance of the free enterprise system, and how his own strategy of promoting books, "education," and persistent sales techniques had been a success in spreading the values of the JBS.

Fundamental, for our purposes, was the content of the books. Sociologist Jack W. Sattel in 1977 analyzed right-wing novels from the period 1960 through to 1970, many of which were printed and sold by the JBS. What Sattel found was that the hero battling the enemy in these novels focusses on the idea of an enthusiasm and zeal to his occupation; furthermore, the hero articulated a willingness to work hard, no matter the task. The hero was never bored with his occupation, although he normally expressed frustration with his less-than-competent superiors. The hero also understood the need to perform all tasks in his occupation, no matter how menial those tasks were. "The positive exhales work as the foundation for the moral man and the good society."<sup>83</sup> The JBS books promoted the everyday hero, but even in their heroism, the menial work of the middle-class employee was emphasized. The hero was not the wealthy corporate owner, but someone to whom the average middle-class JBS member could relate. The enemies within these books were predominately those who held dominant positions in the national government, national media, or universities. The hero accepted disciplined leadership, and the heroes of the book were usually constructed to be natural leaders, "usually, for example, such leadership is depicted as being dependent upon many of the same factors responsible for success in business or professional life."<sup>84</sup> According to Sattel, what emerged from these novels was

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1990, Brown University Archives, Undated), 25.

83. Jack W Sattel, "Heroes on the Right," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 11, no. 1 (1977): 114.

84. *Ibid.*, 115.

the message that “strong leadership is necessary and submission to such leadership involves no stigma for the follower.”<sup>85</sup> The protagonists of the books sold and promoted by the JBS re-emphasized the importance of submission to work, and the integral role of following leadership no matter the task.

The hero in these books brings the same zeal and enthusiasm to their religion throughout the novels. Religion is not questioned or elaborated upon within the books, but it plays a guiding role in all important matters. As for evil, the communist, and the communist ideology are the prime manifestations of evil in the world. What emerges consistently in the novels is that the social world is divided into two: one world where there are those who believe in the existence of evil and will rise up to fight against it, and another world comprise of people beguiled by the evil ideology. In the end, the hero does not try to convert his enemy, but rises above and overcomes the enemy.<sup>86</sup> The portrayal of the liberal enemy in these books, according to Sattel, is that it reveals the reader’s perception of the society in which they find themselves:

The result is a world where the rightist protagonist faces not only the communist as enemy, but also stands with the entire power structure of the liberal and his creation – the vast welfare state – arrayed against him. Liberalism, as a philosophy and practice, is held accountable for the growth and alien character of the bureaucracy of big government; similarly, it is the permissiveness of liberalism that has fostered the ascendancy of public officials who are morally corrupt and uncomprehending of the dangers of communism. The rightist can

85. Sattel, “Heroes on the Right,” 115.

86. *Ibid.*, 117.

have *no* recourse to either these men or the institutions they serve in his own efforts to redeem society. The situation the rightest will eventually face, therefore, is a decision to carry his own struggles outside the existing channels of legitimate political power.<sup>87</sup>

The heroism portrayed in these books sold by the JBS reinforces the idea of a social hero, someone who faces ostracism, and who is alone against mainstream society. It also echoed the same emotions and fears that Welch in his writings did for the membership.

### **3.3.3 Americanism for Mobilization**

Peter Knight, an American studies scholar and co-founder of The Centre for Conspiracy Culture at Winchester University, has argued that conspiracy and “paranoia” are more prominent in the US because the themes of conspiracy, subversion, and the scapegoated other tap into “the traditional American obsession with ruggedly individual agency.”<sup>88</sup> For Knight, the “fear of being influenced or controlled by external social forces is inseparable from the ideology of liberal individualism, and its concomitant refusal to entertain any notion of structural causation.”<sup>89</sup> The brand of individualism propagated by NAM, Fifield, Graham, and Welch supports the creation of an Americanist hero like Birch: a lone man whose faith in country, family, and God never wavers in the face of the communist enemy and who makes the ultimate sacrifice for his beliefs. Indeed, Birch is portrayed as the

87. Sattel, “Heroes on the Right,” 123.

88. Peter Knight, *Conspiracy Nation: The Politics of Paranoia in Postwar America* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 7.

89. *Ibid.*, 8.

archetypal hero who “voluntarily risks or sacrifices their life for others’ benefit.”<sup>90</sup> Birch, in Welch’s version, died alone in the face of an arisen anti-Christ, signalling the time for Americanists to rise up and ensure his sacrifice was not in vain. The messaging is that they too can be the hero Birch was.

Having a hero who stood against the communists, fighting the faceless foe, supports the idealism inspired by the Americanist John Birch. In a society where steadfast belief in God is the foundational weapon against a faceless enemy who has infiltrated every institution, even the church, this concept is particularly strong. What they fear is not due to the changing structural or societal mores of America. Instead, the fault lies with the “other” and they too can stand against this foe. Historically these conspiratorial theories have served both to “prescribe and preserve a sense of American national identity that is restrictive in terms of race, class and gender.”<sup>91</sup> For Knight, this is created by a connection between the idea of manifest destiny and conspiratorial thought. For Welch, Americanism is a philosophy of freedom, individualism, and religion.

Americanism and the Americanist hero epitomized in John Birch the man, became the means of mobilization for a grassroots movement through the JBS. They were foundational to the forming of an improvisational conspiracism that truly mobilized the middle-class, and lower-class within the JBS membership. Improvisational conspiracism, as defined by political science scholar Michael Barkun, is an eclectic mix of millenarian religion, occultism, and radical politics, which enables the creation of novel belief systems. These

90. Selwyn W. Becker and Alice H. Eagly, “The Heroism of Women and Men.,” *American Psychologist* 59, no. 3 (2004): 164.

91. Knight, *Conspiracy Nation: The Politics of Paranoia in Postwar America*, 5.



novel belief systems give the believer a holistic and comprehensive picture of the world, which can explain a wide range of phenomena. Yet, improvisational conspiracism can only be maintained with a backdrop of a social religious structure that is capable of revealing connections at multiple levels coupled with a weak authority structure that permits these ideas to crystalize and take hold.<sup>92</sup> Birch as a hero, was God's Angry Man, he was "a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven . . . of manhood and heroic nobleness."<sup>93</sup> He was a hero to a generation who had similarly survived the economic downturn of the Depression and the end of isolationism in America.

In his original speech to the eleven men in November, 1958, when Welch introduced the idea of the creation of the JBS, Welch said, "It is my fervent hope that The John Birch Society will last for hundreds of years, and exert an increasing influence for the temporal good and the spiritual ennoblement of mankind throughout those centuries."<sup>94</sup> Americanism was an aspect of the tools that Welch and the JBS used to mobilize a portion of the American public to exert their influence. This segment of the American public were the only ones who adopted these terms and they were not used by the liberal left, who used terms such as "extremists" or "radicals" when speaking of the JBS.

92. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*.

93. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, vol. 1 (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 2.

94. Welch, *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*, 146.

### 3.4 The Insiders

To introduce and validate his theories, Welch often used facts from unnamed or unreliable sources to connect historical events to those occurring in contemporary America. He claimed to know from “small leaks and published accounts”<sup>95</sup> that secret evil groups had been behind the scenes manipulating the political and social fate of people. He claimed that by the 18th century that all the secret groups had coalesced into one “satanic creed and program.”<sup>96</sup> This group, the Illuminati, was described by Welch as wanting to destroy all governments, religion, economic systems, and morality.<sup>97</sup>

Welch began developing a contemporary version of the Illuminati in his *Black Book*. In this book, which was sent to supporters and funders, Welch accused President Roosevelt of deliberately provoking a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, George Marshall of being a Soviet agent, and Harry Truman of allowing the government to be controlled by communists. Moreover, he accused President Eisenhower of being a communist and following communist orders throughout his adult life. Although not fully developed, Welch had begun to explore the idea that a small powerful group of individuals were controlling the American political system. According to Welch, wealthy individuals were in control of the nominees and the policies that would be enacted under either a Republican or Democrat administration.<sup>98</sup> Again, linking this to “historical truths” the JBS sold and promoted reprints of books outlining the history of the Illuminati.<sup>99</sup> In fact political science scholar Michael Barkun

95. Welch, “More Stately Mansions, a speech delivered at the Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago,” 11.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. Robert Welch, *The Politician* (Belmont, MA: Belmont Publishing Company, 1964).

99. John Robison’s *Proofs of a Conspiracy* (1798), Abbé Barruel’s *Memoirs, Illustrating the History of*

has stated that:

Illuminism was of more than merely antiquarian interest, for the American right was on the threshold of an illuminati explosion. Much of the stimulus for this renewed interest came from the John Birch Society... Welch himself picked up the strands of [John] Robison's argument ... and it remained a staple of the society's view of history.<sup>100</sup>

Once having revived an interest in the Illuminati, Welch, began weaving "historical truths" about the Illuminati, with the *Insiders*, linking contemporary political figures to the secret control and corruption of the American political process. Although the JBS faced retribution<sup>101</sup> for Welch's claims in his *Black Book*, he continued to build on his version of the cabal. As late as 1968, Welch was writing about the political involvement of American politicians with communism and the *Insiders*:

Some are disturbed because they do not like the concept of the *Insiders*. This is despite its being almost certain that men like Dwight D. Eisenhower, Henry Cabot Lodge, or Dean Rusk have never had a Communist card or been a member of a Communist cell, and yet are shown by their record to have been working during their whole official careers to advance the Communist cause. The name, *Insiders*, and all of the background and history behind it, certainly help to put

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*Jacobinism.*

100. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, 50.

101. The media focused on the JBS after *The Politician* became public. Media began reporting about the JBS as a conspiracy laden organization after this point.

such men in proper perspective, and to create a better understanding of the total conspiracy.<sup>102</sup>

Through the *Insiders* Welch was outlining how the communists could change the political structure of America to constrain and eventually eradicate the American dream. He was also slowly developing a theory to explain the disenfranchisement of conservatives from the political process, an explanation as to why they felt their government was inaccessible, and most importantly a plan to address that feeling through regaining conservative control of the Presidency.

### 3.4.1 The Goal of the Insiders—A Dystopian Future

The end goal of the *Insiders*, Welch believed, was “to rule the world.”<sup>103</sup> To accomplish this they would have to “destroy contemporary civilization,” including overthrowing all existing governments, merging nationalities and races into one, under one government, destruction of all religion, and the “abrogation of all morality.”<sup>104</sup> Welch built on this idea and began to create his own dystopian view of the future. Welch wrote two short stories under the alias of Chester Berrlow, *On The Shape of Things to Come* and *A Fable from the (Hardly) Past*. Both stories are based on “found” materials and present a terrifying future under communist control in America. Welch, speaking of Berrlow in the third person in his introduction to the *Fable*, states that the piece was “originally written for

102. Robert Welch, Letter to a married couple who were members of the JBS (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, October 18, 1968), 1.

103. Welch, “More Stately Mansions, a speech delivered at the Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago,” 17.

104. *Ibid.*

some American industrial companies, and distributed by them to stockholders, employees and customers.”<sup>105</sup> Welch originally pitched the series of fables to the “Men Who Meet Payrolls,”<sup>106</sup> and every other month he planned to write a fable to be sent to the employees and stockholders of the various companies.

The Fable simply tells the tale of big government taxing workers to the point of bankruptcy. Beginning in the 1930s, this process grew worse throughout the 1950s and 1960s until people eventually rose up and overthrew the Big Government. *On The Shape of Things to Come* is a far darker tale told through letters, government documents and newspaper accounts, of a future where the American people are enslaved by the government. All possessions are lost, marriage no longer exists, no one owns their homes or land, and those who resist are to be exterminated. The government of the futuristic 1970s promised to create a utopia through taxation, and to achieve this end, they would exterminate up to 100,000 non-communists, Christians, and “traitors” per week.<sup>107</sup> The Insiders, in Welch’s estimation, wanted to create this world for America in the very near future. But there is, for Welch, hope that “[w]hile the anti-Communists of the world simply do not have, and never have had, any organizational continuity which gives the slightest chance of their even learning about, and much less utilizing, the experiences from past encounters which are repeated over and over. Till Enters The John Birch Society. . .”<sup>108</sup> Welch links economic policies and religious persecution to a dystopian future that is caused by contemporary

105. Robert as Chester Berrlow Welch, “A Fable from the (Hardly) Past,” *American Opinion*, January, 1961, 15.

106. Robert Welch, Letter to Men Who Meet Payrolls (Robert Welch, William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, April 2, 1959), 1.

107. Robert as Chester Berrlow Welch, “On The Shape of Things to Come,” (Robert Welch Inc., Undated).

108. Welch, “More Stately Mansions, a speech delivered at the Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago,” 25.

actions. This not only sustains fear for the membership, but also creates a sense of hope through the individual work and action by the JBS members. Welch's tales under the alias of Berrlow, create a scenario where the infinite possibilities of the American dream no longer exist, communists were the enemy, and the Americanist hero was on the eternal side, fighting for God, country, and family. Through the use of fear tactics and a litany of potential disasters, Welch and the JBS were mobilizing a portion of the middle-class, to the voting booths, to stop the attack on free enterprise.

For Welch, the Insiders consisted of:

thirty money-moguls in that *fraction* of the top command . . . And that the other seventy would consist of extremely authoritative *Insiders* from the worlds of religion, 'statesmanship,' education, publishing, high military rank, secret societies, scientific expertise, labor organizations, organized crime, and a miscellany of other categories.<sup>109</sup>

Welch never defined who exactly the Insiders were; instead, he focused on "classifying and identifying"<sup>110</sup> the members. He claimed the Insiders were "determined to take away everything that our forefathers created for us, and which we should leave to our descendants."<sup>111</sup> Welch had a mounting distrust of American institutions because, he believed, they had been infiltrated by communists. Among those he cited were the National Council of Churches (NCC). Having laid these seeds of doubt, Welch used these ideas of infiltration

109. Robert Welch, "And Some Obiter Dicta," (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, 1976), 15.

110. *Ibid.*, 16.

111. *Ibid.*

in the same institutions with the Insiders. While the communist infiltration was within the lower ranks of these institutions, the leadership was linked to the Insiders. Exempt from the Insider label were the rich and powerful who funded and represented the JBS. In other words, these rich and powerful individuals were not the Insiders but were God's Angry Men, fighting for the same American values as the JBS members. Welch reconfigured the Illuminati to be the wealthy liberal and moderates, and he was poised to lead the final battle against this evil.

Yet, the JBS leadership was comprised of wealthy individuals, who were adding to that wealth through their involvement in the JBS. Although Welch needed an "army" of Americanists to lead the battle, he and his supporters were businessmen, first and foremost. Welch created a business model with the JBS that not only mobilized a portion of the electorate it also allowed for profit for the leadership and financial supporters. This business model also provides a clear delineation of the two economic tiers within the JBS.

Previous attempts at mobilizing, or shifting perceptions of free enterprise, such as those with Fifiield and Billy Graham had been funded by wealthy individuals. Fifiield and Graham depended on the donations of people such as Howard Pew and his colleagues and in exchange these donors received tax breaks for the money invested into Spiritual Mobilization or the Graham revivals. As churches or programs of churches the money provided tax breaks but did not garner money for the "investors," the return on their investments was in spreading conservative thought to opinion shapers, who then articulated these ideas to their ministries.

With Welch's plan, the investors of Robert Welch Inc., or the financial supporters of the

JBS, were able to not only help to influence public understandings of free enterprise and spread conservative thought, but they also garnered much more than simply tax breaks. Through their involvement in the JBS, wealthy supporters were able to utilize contacts to profit their companies. The JBS provided a route in which these individuals could market, through advertising, to an audience who wanted to support “patriotic” companies and individuals. This advertising was considered a normal business expense.

Common share stocks provided direct profit for the investors in Robert Welch Inc. including Welch, the main stock holder in the company. Welch claimed that he did not receive any salary from the JBS, and in fact wrote “your Founder has never drawn a penny of remuneration from either the Society or the magazine.”<sup>112</sup> Robert Welch had filed for non-profit status for the JBS, but the main beneficiary of the JBS was Robert Welch Inc. The John Birch Society Incorporated, the not-for-profit company, paid a fee to Robert Welch Inc. for rent and office services.<sup>113</sup> The profits from books published and sold by the JBS went to Robert Welch Inc., not the JBS non-profit company.<sup>114</sup> This would mean that profits from books for the JBS published by Western Publishing, Belmont Publishing, and the monthly magazine *American Opinion* would go directly to Welch, and Robert Welch Inc. shareholders. These shareholders included such notables as J. Howard Pew, Frank Masland, and William J. Grede.<sup>115</sup> As Welch wrote, “Only through aggressive use of the profit system can the sales volume and readership of our literature reach *sufficient* levels.”<sup>116</sup>

112. Robert Welch, “With Regard to Finances,” *The Bulletin*, July, 1960, Flyer Insert.

113. Spark, Mann & Company, “The John Birch Society, Incorporated Accountants Report For The Year Ended December 31, 1962,” (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, June 11, 1963), 3.

114. Thomas N. Hill, Memo to Coordinators of the John Birch Society (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, January 13, 1966).

115. Welch, 1.

116. The John Birch Society, “American Opinion Bookstore Manual,” 26.



Those levels were what were making the JBS profitable for Welch and his shareholders. The books were aiding in sustaining fear in the general membership. In a prophetic way Welch wrote, “Sufficient and careful readership of our literature will alter the course of history.”<sup>117</sup> Welch’s business model was helping to shape the opinions of the membership, while simultaneously profiting himself and his wealthy supporters. Unlike the previous attempts at mobilizing and “educating” the public, now the directors of this movement were not simply receiving tax breaks, they were monetarily benefiting from their goal.

The retail value of the books and pamphlets sold by the JBS was approximately four million dollars per year.<sup>118</sup> By 1964 there were 93 American Opinion libraries, 120 independent outlets, and twelve American Opinion Book Mobiles, all selling JBS published books and literature.<sup>119</sup> To supply these outlets the JBS sent out over \$20,000 (retail value) (\$155,760) of books, reprints and pamphlets across America each week.<sup>120</sup>

The business side of Welch’s efforts are detailed in the financial statements of Robert Welch Inc. In 1962, Robert Welch Inc. shows a total owing from the JBS company of \$114,659 (\$916,618); it had made over \$327,000 (\$2,614,137) in sales of publications. Under the expenses there is the amount of over \$97,000 (\$775,447) for salaries.<sup>121</sup> The 1964 Robert Welch Inc. balance sheet includes a line item for an asset listed as the JBS Inc. for the amount of \$169,202 (\$1,317,745). A note states that the amount is for books and pamphlets

117. The John Birch Society, “American Opinion Bookstore Manual,” 26.

118. Robert Welch, “The John Birch Society Report Script,” (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, Recorded January, 1966), 5.

119. Thomas N. Hill, Memo to All Major Coordinators and Coordinators of the John Birch Society (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, May 7, 1964), 10.

120. *Ibid.*, 11.

121. Spark, Mann & Company, “Robert Welch Inc. Financial Statements December 31, 1962,” (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, June 11, 1963), 2.

sent to the field staff and section leaders of the JBS, as a working stock for them to sell at meetings and presentations.<sup>122</sup> By 1965 Robert Welch Inc. was showing revenue<sup>123</sup> of \$1,190,576 (\$9,125,028) from sales of publications alone.<sup>124</sup> The salary expenses for that year were over \$250,000 (\$1,916,095). To ensure that Robert Welch Inc. operated at a deficit, and thereby minimize its taxation, new for-profit companies were created and spun off as the profitability of Robert Welch Inc. grew. Although Robert Welch was not taking a salary from the JBS, the accounting information from Robert Welch Inc. shows a sizeable income. Robert Welch Inc. was vertically integrated to receive profits on the products created and promoted by the JBS.

Understanding Welch's sales theory is important in the analysis of the membership and the JBS approach. Welch stressed in his book on salesmanship that the lower-class would buy or desire products purchased by the middle-class.<sup>125</sup> He reasoned that this trickle-down effect was a result of the lower-class wanting to aspire to a higher socio-economic level. Welch used the wealthy as the spokespeople for the JBS. They were the successful, wealthy individuals the middle-class could aspire to be, but also who they would want to interact with. The middle-class with their involvement would eventually bring in the lower-middle-class to the JBS, for the same reasons. The JBS was created as a profitable political mobilization with different rules, and different approaches based on socio-economic position. From the marketing to bring in members to the organizational structure Welch

122. Spark, Mann & Company, "Robert Welch Inc. Pro-Forma Balance Sheet December 31, 1964," (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, June 11, 1963), 1.

123. Addition revenue sources included monies owed from the John Birch Society Inc., Correction Please! Inc., and stocks and bonds.

124. Spark, Mann & Company, "Robert Welch Inc. Statement of Income and Expenses December 31, 1965," (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, Undated), 1.

125. Robert Welch, *The Road to Salesmanship* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1941).

created a “society” based on free enterprise and capitalism. The middle-class membership were the workers and were supported by literature that reinforced their position. The wealthy leadership was provided with profits and benefits to their business enterprises. The leadership of the Society were promoting wealth and power were not an issue in the decline of society. One could be successful and still fight on the side of the eternal. Free enterprise was not the key to corruption, it was liberal ideology that corrupts.

### 3.5 Welch’s Agenda in Summary

In an article in *American Opinion*, JBS member Dr. S.M. Draskovich wrote, “It [The JBS] expresses and echoes the feelings and disappointments and frustrations and hopes and dreams and will of the American people.”<sup>126</sup> This is reflective of the “disillusioned fury” that can be inspired by the idea of the American dream.<sup>127</sup> Welch had strategized to create a movement that was enshrouded in Americanism, social heroism, and the infinite possibility of the American dream. Yet, he also fanned the disillusioned fury of many Americans by creating dystopian visions of the future as well as creating *The Insiders* to explain social issues and a sense of inaccessibility to government. Continued sustained fear, combined with the JBS positioning of Welch as an opinion shaper, created a movement inspired by the disillusioned fury and disenchantment of many Americans.

Through his initial foray in the establishment of *One Man’s Opinion*, Welch marketed

126. Dr. S.M. Draskovich, “The John Birch Society Is a Threat to Whom?,” (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, Undated), 4.

127. Jennifer L Hochschild, *Facing Up to The American Dream: Race, Class, and The Soul of the Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 15.

to the businessmen and wealthy industrialists the need to fight for their inheritance in the American dream. Marketing directly to this group, he linked their role as leaders to the mobilization against communism and in support of free enterprise. Once he had secured their financial support and their engagement in leading the mobilization of the middle-class, Welch moved to the second stage of his plan, the establishment of the JBS. After creating the JBS in 1958, Welch began to focus on fear to mobilize a portion of the American middle-class. Branding their activism for conservative ideals under the moniker of Americanism as Americanist heroes, he instilled in the JBS members a fear of impending disaster. Contemporary developments in society, such as the Civil Rights Movement, government welfare programs, and a growing secularism, became Welch's evidence of the decay of Christian civilization in America, a crisis that needed Americanist heroes to save the traditions of free enterprise, religion, and family.

Welch, through the JBS, was able to intermingle the messaging of religion and politics. He asked the members of both socio-economic tiers to work on the side of the eternal, to fight for free enterprise and the American dream, and to fight against communism. Past scholarship on the JBS has focused on the conspiratorial beliefs of the members and their leader Robert Welch; yet due in large part to the lack of public religious pronouncements, the scholarship on the JBS has not focused on religious motivations or the significance of being on the eternal side in the battle for free enterprise. In chapter four, we turn our attention to the role of religion within the John Birch Society and the importance of religion as a motivating factor for the middle-class membership.

## Chapter 4

# The John Birch Society's Relationship with Christianity

In chapter two, I argued that during the 1940s and early 1950s NAM and wealthy business leaders such as J. Howard Pew and Jasper E. Crane launched an initial attempt to connect religion to economic and social conservatism with the help of the widely broadcasted efforts of Rev. James Fifeild and Rev. Billy Graham. Chapter three argued that Robert Welch had developed a two-tiered political mobilization strategy for the membership. For the wealthy, the JBS provided a sense of heroism based upon a rightful inheritance of all that America had to offer, to save free enterprise and for some, a profit. For the middle-class, the JBS promoted heroism motivated by fears of communist infiltration, secret organizations controlling American politics and society, and looming persecution.

The primary aim of this chapter is to examine the role of Christianity within the John

Birch Society, as well as the Society's precarious relationship with certain major Christian institutions. To help make this argument, I begin with a brief overview of Christianity and the JBS. I then develop a discussion of how Welch and the JBS linked communist infiltration to churches and especially the National Council of Churches (NCC), in order to destabilize JBS members' connection to their churches. In doing so, Welch was able to position himself as an opinion shaper on equal footing with the clergy for the membership. In the next section I argue that Welch, through the JBS, was able to create a sense of religious persecution of American citizens by exploiting fear of both the Insiders and communist infiltration. Integral to this idea of persecution, I will argue in the next section, is Christian apocalyptic thought, and most importantly how the JBS responded to and flamed the idea of end times for the JBS membership. Religion as a form of mobilization was so fundamental to the JBS that a full-time religious advisor was hired to respond to members' religious inquiries. Representative of this apocalyptic thought, and exemplary in the illustration of improvisational conspiracism as a powerful motivational tool, is the JSB response, through Welch, to Fundamentalism. Conversely, the JBS also recognized the power of Fundamentalists in its overarching political strategy. Although the JBS and Welch, much like NAM, worked closely with the clergy to promote the connection between free enterprise and religion, in the final section I discuss the negative reaction some religious leaders had toward the JBS.

## 4.1 The John Birch Society and Religion

Although Welch claimed the JBS was a non-religious organization, the Society, much like NAM, intermingled religion and politics in its messaging. On the whole, religion was linked to conservative political ideals, serving as a taken-for-granted philosophical foundation for free enterprise and small government. More specifically, Welch and the JBS leadership were able to tap into the fear of imminent religious persecution to motivate the general membership to mobilize politically. Fifield and Graham, through their religious revivals and mobilization, had made a strong connection through Christianity with corporate America and politicians, and at the same time had effectively created a pulpit for economic conservatism in many American churches through organized sermons, church publications, and events. Continuing this linkage, within the pages of the various JBS publications and correspondence with the JBS members, Welch and his staff described the battle against communism in religious terms. This was the ultimate battle between good and evil. As JBS National Council member, Thomas J. Anderson stated in a JBS presentation, “America has a great mission to perform: to save the world from slavery and to save the world for Christianity.”<sup>1</sup>

Scholars of right-wing extremism, have argued that the JBS was a “non-religious or non-Fundamentalist” organization. For example, in his book *The Politics of Unreason*, Seymour Martin Lipset uses the JBS magazine *American Opinion* as support for his argument of the non-religious nature of the JBS. He reasons that the lack of a single religious leader

1. Thomas J. Anderson, “Bi-Partisan Treason,” (John Birch Society sound recordings collection, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Circa 1961–1963), Circa 1961–1963.

appearing on the cover of the magazine from 1964 to 1967 was symptomatic of the lack of concern of the Society with traditional religious matters during this same time period. The emphasis of the scholarship during this time period has instead been concerned with the anti-communist movement and the reflection of these aspects with respect to organizations that have the word Christian in their official title. While it is true that Welch was not a minister, and he consistently claimed that the JBS was a non-religious organization, the failing is with scholars such as Lipset. Despite their research of the JBS in the 1970s, the emphasis was placed on the conspiratorial aspects of the Society, their “extremism.” There was a systematic failure to recognize the effectiveness of the organization and how its effectiveness could be traced to its often explicit religious beliefs and moral foundations.

While the covers of *American Opinion* may not have featured religious leaders, the pages of the magazine and in the correspondence with the JBS membership at this time, demonstrate that not only was there a religious foundation to the JBS, there was also a concerted effort to mobilize Fundamentalist Christians. The writings of the JBS focused on individualism and the Americanist hero. The only leader was Welch, and in many instances he promoted a leaderless rebellion, acting as the martyr who gave of himself to educate and inspire the true suburban warriors, the JBS members. The responsibility of saving America, God, the American dream, and the family rested upon the shoulders of individual Americans who knew the truth and who were willing to fight against an invisible enemy that lurked in every institution in the country.<sup>2</sup> Welch instilled in JBS members a belief that their government was being controlled by a small group of wealthy individuals,

2. Robert Welch, “April Bulletin,” *The 1964 White Book*, 1964, 1-2.



the Insiders,<sup>3</sup> who had stolen their democratic right to select a truly conservative leader. Even though Welch thought that no politician could solve the problems of America, and no politician could be trusted,<sup>4</sup> he called upon his members to change the course of history through political means. Theirs was a battle against evil, that should have occurred hundreds of years earlier,<sup>5</sup> but now it was the time of the JBS and the time to rise up for God, country, and family.

## 4.2 Communist Infiltration within Religious Institutions

Welch thought that religious institutions were a fertile ground for communist infiltration. An important institution for the JBS's accusations was the National Council of Churches (NCC). The NCC was founded in 1950, and emerged from the Federal Council of Churches (FCC). The new NCC combined the original twenty-nine denominations within the FCC with the addition of the United Lutheran Church. The FCC had been founded in 1908 to "propagate ideals such as the social gospel and ecumenism."<sup>6</sup> The social gospel of the FCC advocated for unions, promoted rights for workers, and championed the working class.<sup>7</sup> Continuing this support, the NCC throughout the 1950s released policy statements in sup-

3. Welch, "And Some Obiter Dicta," 15.

4. Alan F. Westin, *The John Birch Society: Fundamentalism on the Right* (American Jewish Committee, 1961), 97.

5. Welch, "More Stately Mansions, a speech delivered at the Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago," 27.

6. Lloyd Billingsley, *From Mainline to Sideline: The Social Witness of the National Council of Churches* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1990), 6.

7. Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 17.

port of worker's rights and government bills to help the working class. It also released statements against communism and chastised the USSR for its human rights violations.<sup>8</sup> According to K. Lloyd Billingsley, a journalist who has written extensively on popular culture, politics, and religious fanaticism, the NCC's policy statements throughout the decade "continued to distinguish between the Christian religion and ethics and the ideology of Marxism."<sup>9</sup> The NCC was in support of peace and disarmament, calling for an international body to control nuclear weapons. Its 1951 policy statement, "International Regulation and Reduction of Armaments" focused on peaceful alternatives to war.

The FCC and NCC stance on workers' rights was in direct conflict with NAM and JBS ideologies. NAM was not a cross-class organization, and it did not speak for workers or consumers. As Kim Phillips-Fein wrote in her book on the making of the American conservative movement from Roosevelt to Reagan:

[NAM] openly sought to organize businessmen to articulate a forceful defense of capitalism, to rally a national network of executives to oppose the rise of labor unionism and to defend the rights of management, both practically and ideologically. It tried to use the power of employers as a counter to the power of the state, with the assumption that if business 'told its story' publicly and vocally, the rest of the nation would have to pay attention.<sup>10</sup>

As institutions that represented a cross-section of Americans, albeit predominately white

8. Billingsley, *From Mainline to Sideline: The Social Witness of the National Council of Churches*, 20.

9. *Ibid.*, 21.

10. Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan* (Obor, Indonesia: Yayasan, 2009), 1.

and middle-class, the FCC and NCC posed a fundamentally different economic vision of America than NAM and the JBS. The right-wing antipathy toward the FCC and NCC meant that, even when there was agreement on issues, there was virtually no willingness to acknowledge that they had reached the same conclusions. For example, even though the NCC publicly denounced communism, the JBS, J. Howard Pew, and other influential voices on the right continued to attack the NCC for its liberalism. Moreover, the NCC's public announcements supporting the pro-welfare and pro-worker programs of the federal government, programs that Welch and the JBS leadership did not support, basically negated any good the NCC did by denouncing communism.

Welch, much like Pew and Crane, held that the NCC was too left leaning in its political stance. Welch and other JBS writers connected the idea of the NCC being controlled and infiltrated by communists and atheists with the social welfare and liberal public, political statements of the NCC. With his laymen's group, Pew had tried to change the direction of the left-wing movement of the NCC, to no avail. Welch, in his stance against the NCC instead chose to "expose" the communist infiltration of the NCC and liberal Protestant churches in America. With that exposure, he tried to mobilize JBS members to take a stand against the NCC.

In *The Blue Book* Welch wrote that when the NCC "comes out with some Liberal pronouncement, and claims — explicitly or otherwise — to be speaking for forty million Protestants or any other large or general group which includes you, get up on your feet start telling the world, or as much of it as will listen, that it simply isn't so."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore,

11. Welch, *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*, 6.

he instructed the membership to speak to their ministers about the communist threat as he believed many among the clergy had not been informed of the communist menace amongst their ranks.<sup>12</sup> Welch's attack on the American Protestant clergy was not only that they were "Comsymps" (communist sympathizers) and communists, but also that one-third of all the services in the Protestant churches in the United States were contributing to the loss of faith, because the ministers themselves were not true believers. In *The Blue Book* Welch wrote, "Some have merely watered down the faith of our fathers, and of theirs, into an innocuous philosophy instead of an evangelistic religion."<sup>13</sup> In effect, Welch was attempting to link to the history of America with an idea of inheritance. Welch also reiterated his belief that American civilization was tied to a Christian morality, and that the contemporary issues facing the nation were due to a spiritual vacuum<sup>14</sup> created by a movement away from Christian morality.

In *The Bulletin*, Welch rephrased much of what he had previously stated about communism and the churches. J. Howard Pew had worked feverishly to influence the NCC from within the leadership with his executive layman's committee, and in his correspondence there were many letters from the general public asking him for advice or input on the NCC and communism. Welch, on the other hand, was trying to motivate the Protestant members of the JBS to dismantle the NCC through its denominational membership, in order to "save" religion. Even House of UnAmerican Activities (HUAC) promoted the idea of the communist infiltration of the churches. In the HUAC Report *100 Things You Should Know About Communism and Religion* the Committee wrote:

12. Welch, *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*, 6.

13. *Ibid.*, 59.

14. *Ibid.*, 60-61.

The Communist Party of the United States assigns members to join churches and church organizations, in order to take control where possible, and in any case to influence thought and action toward Communist ends. It forms 'front organizations,' designed to attract 'fellow travellers' with religious interests. It tries to get prominent religious leaders to support Communist policies, disguised as welfare work for minorities or oppressed groups.<sup>15</sup>

With Welch reiterating what HUAC was stating about the infiltration of the religious institutions of America, one would think that the battle against the NCC would gain widespread acceptance. Yet many of the JBS members wrote to the head office of the JBS that they were not listened to by their fellow churchgoers.

Welch was trying to motivate his members to take control of their churches, to speak up, to influence thought and action towards a free enterprise or Americanist ends. Welch echoed the efforts of Fifield and his Spiritual Mobilization, which encouraged prominent religious leaders to use their sermons to generate support for social and economic conservatism. The communist infiltration into the highest echelons of Protestantism, for Welch, allowed the ministers to "become spokesmen and pressure groups for accepting Red China into the family of nations, for promoting the doctrine that capitalism is just as bad as socialism or even outright Communism, and for helping any number of specific Communist objectives as well as widely supporting Communist purposes in general."<sup>16</sup> Welch, with his Americanist

15. Committee on Un-American Activities, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington D.C., "100 Things You Should Know About Communism and Religion," (John Birch Society Records, 1928-1990, Brown University Archives, 1949), 11.

16. Robert Welch, *The New Americanism: And Other Speeches* (Belmont, MA: Western Islands, 1966), 81-82.

brand, tried to persuade religious leaders to use their influence by writing articles in JBS publications, or by using their own publications in a coherent effort to support the JBS and its causes.

A result of this discussion of communism and the NCC is seen in the monthly member messages and member letters to the JBS. For example, one member from Illinois wrote to Welch in 1962:

We are very much concerned in the NCC and will have to look for a new church I guess because we cannot continue to be a member of a church affiliated with the NCC. No one will believe what we say about the NCC even after reading many articles we have given them. This movement of one church in the world will be the last of a real christian [sic] church. One can see the world movement to centralize everything in order to control everything. Now how do you go about stopping this movement?<sup>17</sup>

The Research Department of the JBS, which was dedicated to responding to the members' correspondence, kept the NCC allegations alive. In a response to another member's question about the communist influence on the NCC, the Research Department responded:

If it is of any consolation to you, many thousands of people all over the country share your concern about the National Council of Churches. In some areas, they have been successful in having local Councils break with the National

17. Unavailable, Letter to Robert Welch from a member in Metamora, Illinois (John Birch Society, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, November 15, 1962).

Council . . . Before too long, we hope to see a widespread repudiation of the pronouncements of the NCC.<sup>18</sup>

Welch and the JBS re-enforced members' fears that their churches were at risk. There was hope that others were rising up against "the atheists" (which was effectively synonymous with "communism") in the churches. Members were simultaneously reassured that they were not alone, and reminded of their personal responsibility to stand up against this infiltration.

We can see that the public pronouncements of the NCC were not understood by the general public as anything other than institutional support for the changing social fabric of America. The NCC announcements were primarily regarding new understandings of the rights of citizens, through the Civil Rights Movement, unions, and attempting to stop Right To Work Legislation. Concurrently, the JBS clung to free enterprise ideas, creating an "other," an enemy, to rally against in support of a conservatism.

This infiltration of the churches spoke to the idea of a lessening of faith by the general population and their growing distrust in their ministers' leadership. Unsure of their minister's commitment to "Americanism," in Welch's terms, some members turned to the JBS for advice. While there is no known record of just how many requests for advice came to the JBS, the volume was sufficient to support the employment of a full-time religious advisor. This role, which formed a religious bridge between the membership and the Society, was occupied by D.A. Waite, Welch's assistant at the Belmont, Massachusetts, office.

18. Research Department, Research Department of the John Birch Society response to a Member's Monthly Message (John Birch Society, John Birch Society Records, 1928-1990, Brown University Archives, Dated December 20, 1962, Dictated December 18, 1962).

Waite was a Baptist and held both a Th.D (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1955) and Ph.D (Purdue University, 1961) and was tasked with responding to the membership on behalf of Welch regarding any religious questions. In response to one such question, Waite wrote, “And I submit to you that the Lord Jesus Christ never ‘commanded’ us to observe Communism in any part of its murderous violence. We are to ‘teach all nations’ and at least part of this ‘teaching’ includes a definite anti-Communist approach to the atheistic, criminal, Satanically motivated conspiracy!”<sup>19</sup> This response captures the connection between the battle against communism and the religious nature of the JBS; moreover, it echoes Welch’s earlier statement in *One Man’s Opinion* at the start of this movement, “We are proposing a conception, religious in quality, inspiring in depth, unifying in comprehensiveness.”<sup>20</sup> In effect, the JBS positioned itself as an authority that could hold religious leaders and organizations to account; and if those in the churches were not going to heed the warnings and avoid the slide toward the evils of communism, then disgruntled church members should follow the leadership of the JBS. The JBS through its pronouncements and conspiracies was providing a moral compass for those Christians disaffected by their liberal pastors and their churches.

The JBS often took up the cause of religious freedom in the face of what it saw as the absence of church leadership on this issue. For instance, in 1959 Welch identified a “conspiracy” that the United Nations was conducting a war on Christmas. Using an article written by Hubert Kregeloh, a former news analyst and JBS spokesperson, entitled “There Goes Christmas?!” which appeared in the JBS’s *American Opinion*, Welch asked

19. D.A. Waite, Letter to a JBS member (John Birch Society, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, December 18, 1963).

20. Welch, “One Man’s Opinion,” 11.



the membership to start a letter writing campaign to major department stores across the nation. Kregeloh wrote, “One of the techniques now being applied by the Reds to weaken the pillar of religion in our country is the drive to take Christ out of Christmas — to reduce the event of its religious meaning.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, Kregeloh thought that the UN was planning to take over Christmas by replacing the Christmas decorations on trees in department stores with decorations promoting the UN. He continued, “American one-workers<sup>22</sup> are determined to exploit even the holiest of Christian observances to make it a propaganda vehicle for the unholyest of organizations, the United Nations.”<sup>23</sup> Kregeloh reiterated the idea that communism was the enemy of religion, and whenever communism takes control, “religion is trampled under foot and religious people are brutally persecuted.”<sup>24</sup> To combat this conspiracy and save Christmas, Welch and Kregeloh asked members to write the department stores where they held charge accounts or regularly shopped and oppose this “perversion of the symbolism associated with Christmas.”<sup>25</sup> According to the JBS, the UN taking over Christmas was not simply a ploy by the UN to promote itself, but was “to destroy *all* religious beliefs and customs.”<sup>26</sup> The war over religious freedom was being fought not only in the churches but apparently in the department stores as well.

21. H. Kregeloh, “There Goes Christmas?!” *There Goes Christmas?!*, 1959, 13.

22. Those who supported America’s involvement outside of the borders.

23. Kregeloh, “There Goes Christmas?!” 13.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 15.

26. *Ibid.*, 16.

### 4.3 The End Times and the Americanist Response

Welch, in *The Blue Book*, stated “Christian faith was the foundation of our [American] ethics, and the substance of our consciences,”<sup>27</sup> he continued, “Through many centuries, Christianity, despite all its splits and schisms, supplied the fabric of morality for the whole Western World.”<sup>28</sup> To Welch’s way of thinking, the result was that Christian morality and ethics were the foundations of human civilization, while the spread of communism represented a loss of faith and erosion of the human spirit.<sup>29</sup> In his initial lecture creating the JBS, Welch told his audience of eleven that the fundamentalism believers (Catholic, Protestant or Jewish) were becoming a minority.<sup>30</sup> For Welch “fundamentalist believers” were those who were against the social gospel, and who believed in “the Divine Names or the Divine History and Divine Teachings”<sup>31</sup> These true believers were those “who still believe unquestioningly in the divine truths and powers which their Bibles reveal to them, and whose conduct and relations with their fellow men are guided strictly by the precepts of their religious faith—or who at least feel that they have sinned whenever they have transgressed such precepts as understood by their consciences.”<sup>32</sup> Welch believed that, except for those who were fundamentalists in all religions, religion was being replaced by opportunism and hedonism.<sup>33</sup>

Many of the Christian members of the JBS viewed their battle to save America through

27. Welch, *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*, 61.

28. *Ibid.*, 62.

29. *Ibid.*, 67.

30. *Ibid.*, 58-59.

31. *Ibid.*, 59.

32. *Ibid.*, 57.

33. *Ibid.*, 60.

a biblical lens. As such, many wondered if the fight should be waged if the end times were nigh. They wrote to the JBS head office and Welch, inquiring about the coming end times and if fighting for America should really be a concern. One letter writer asked, “In the light of the fact that an Omniscient Christ has told us that this kingdom would come and prevail until the end of time, how can the members of the Birch Society work on the basis of believing that this can and will be thwarted?”<sup>34</sup> Welch’s response to this question was that he believed that “we are not even within tens of thousands of years of ‘the end times’ as to be understood by this prophecy.”<sup>35</sup> The same member asked if a Christian believes that “all the kingdoms of this world are to perish” would America not be included within this kingdom, and given that America is to perish, why fight?<sup>36</sup> D.A. Waite, responding on behalf of Welch, explained to the member how Welch envisions the communist conspiracy within the biblical end-times prophecy:

Mr. Welch feels that we have millennia through which we must work with ‘one increasing’ purpose before this prophecy applies. He [Welch] feels also that the present Communist Conspiracy and effort to rule the world is only a very temporary and transient scourge on mankind, and that in the course of every few thousand years we shall have many like it—which many must overcome largely by his own efforts if he is to be worthy of God’s help.<sup>37</sup>

Further in this letter Waite outlined his own perspective on the end times and the fight

34. Unknown, 1.

35. D.A. Waite, Letter from D.A. Waite to a JBS Member (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, July 10, 1963, Dictated July 5, 1963).

36. Unknown, 2.

37. Waite,

against communism:

As a fundamentalist Baptist Pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Newtown, Massachusetts, I would not answer your questions myself in just the terms that Mr. Welch has done. I take the pre-millennial view of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, rather than the implied post-millennial view which is hinted above. I do not feel that man can set up his own millennium, (Ci.[sic] Daniel 2:43-44), but that this is set up the Lord Jesus Himself at His Second Coming. . . . I believe the Lord would want us to fight evil and the Devil's lies and cruel system of slavery, and let Him worry about the consequences. Right? I certainly don't think we should take a defeatist attitude towards this. In fact, if the Communists can get a large segment of American Protestants to just sit down and rest, and quit fighting them because the Communist take-over of America is inevitable, because prophesied in the Bible, they will be very happy indeed.<sup>38</sup>

Waite's response regarding the end times was indicative of the JBS's tendency to allow for a diversity of interpretations (in this case, pre-millennial or post millennial interpretations of the end times ). For the purposes of this research I will be using historian George M. Marsden's definitions of pre-millennialism and post-millennialism. Pre-millennialism had begun to be accepted in America during the 1870s, and had an ancient Christian lineage. Most importantly pre-millennialism "provided a framework for answers to the critical questions of how truth is known and how Christianity relates to civilization."<sup>39</sup>

38. Waite,

39. George M Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 51.

Pre-millennialism “saw history as controlled by a cosmic struggle, allowed for interpreting some Biblical prophecies literally, and that some prophecies about the time immediately preceding the millennium were already being fulfilled in current events.”<sup>40</sup> According to Marsden pre-millennialists are “prone to a more literal interpretation of Scripture and less hopeful concerning progress.”<sup>41</sup> Post-millennialism was promoted in America during the Great Awakening, by Jonathan Edwards.<sup>42</sup> For post-millennialists:

the prophecies in the book of Revelation concerning the defeat of the anti-Christ (interpreted as the Pope and other leaders of false religions) were being fulfilled in the present era, and were clearing the way for a golden age. This ‘millennium’ (the ‘one thousand years’ of Revelation 20) would be the last epoch of the present historical era. During this time the Holy Spirit would be poured out of the Gospel spread around the world. Christ would return after this millennial age (hence ‘postmillennialism’) and would bring history to an end.<sup>43</sup>

Further, post-millennialists are optimistic about the future of the spiritual progress of society. Human history, for them, is a reflection of the ongoing struggle between the cosmic forces of good and evil, which are represented by various earthly powers.<sup>44</sup> By allowing for a variety of interpretations, the JBS tailored its response according to the member’s preferred interpretation, intensifying the bond and reinforcing the beliefs of

40. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 51.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*, 49.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

each member. For instance, Ezra Taft Benson, the former Secretary of Agriculture in the Eisenhower administration and a Mormon leader, addressed this theological debate in *American Opinion*:

Before the final triumphal return of the Lord, the question as to whether we may save our Constitutional Republic is simply based on two factors—the number of patriots and the extent of their obedience. That the Lord desires to save this Nation which He raised up—there is no doubt. But that He leaves it up to us, with His help, is the awful reality.<sup>45</sup>

Benson, too, placed the responsibility upon the “patriots” of the *American Opinion* readers to save the nation. A supporter of the JBS, Benson’s *bona fides* as an influential religious leader should not be underestimated. He served as the 13th President of the Mormon Church (LDS) from 1985 to his death in 1994.

In 1961, speaking to a group of JBS supporters, Welch spoke at length about the coming battle between the God of Love and the God of Hate.<sup>46</sup> In the speech he describes communism, with its “lies and treason, the murders and tortures, the brutal oppression and the merciless exploitation,” as “tributes to a god of hatred.”<sup>47</sup> These attributes were, Welch wrote, replacing:

the truth and loyalty, the respect for individual life and the compassion for others’ pain, the personal responsibility and adherence to the Golden Rule, the

45. Ezra Taft Benson, “The Christ and The Constitution,” *American Opinion*, 1964, 42.

46. Welch, *The New Americanism: And Other Speeches*, 86.

47. *Ibid.*

belief in man's God-given 'upward reach' and in his ever more glorious future on earth, which are the tributes of a morally-climbing man to a God of Love.<sup>48</sup>

Welch provides numerous examples of the communist infiltration within American governmental and religious institutions. These examples are linked to the systematic decline of morality at the hands of the communists and the eventual battle is framed in this context as a battle of morality.

These tropes also appeared in various JBS publications. E. Merrill Root, a professor of English literature at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana until his retirement in 1960, was a regular contributor to *American Opinion*. In a 1963 article entitled, "The Endless Quest and the Eternal Now" Root wrote:

Too many see the mortal war that we fight against the heap or the hive of collectivism only as an economic and political war. That is why we are losing it. Actually, like all great wars, ours is a war of the spirit—of metaphysics, of light against darkness, of the dynamic of the soul.<sup>49</sup>

Root reminds the *American Opinion* readers that although the battle against communism is framed within politics, it is inherently a battle of good and evil. For Ezra Taft Benson, these issues arose because, as he wrote, "We Americans have strayed far from sound principles—morally, Constitutionally, and historically."<sup>50</sup> Benson reinforces the idea of immorality as the main conduit to the issues facing society. This immorality, for him, was why "Americans

48. Welch, *The New Americanism: And Other Speeches*, 86-87.

49. Merrill E. Root, "The Endless Quest and The Eternal Now," *American Opinion*, 1963, 18.

50. Ezra Taft Benson, "An Internal Threat Today," (*American Opinion*, John Birch Society, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, 1963), 3.

at the grass roots level have sensed that their way of life is being threatened.”<sup>51</sup> Benson also linked this immorality and decline of society to the ultimate battle between good and evil when he wrote, “And neither will I hesitate. The fight to save the Constitution is not mere controversy, not the fight against Communism. In fact, it is a war with the devil—Christ versus anti-Christ—and I am willing to fight it.”<sup>52</sup> The authors for *American Opinion* reinforced Welch’s tropes of immorality as the cause of society’s ills and that the battle was not merely a political one, it was a battle that was viewed through a biblical lens.

Welch’s use of contemporary examples of occurring and impending disaster (such as slavery for Americans, the loss of religion, or the end of America as a whole) represents what scholar Michael Barkun states is pivotal in millennial movements. “There must be multiple rather than single disasters; a body of ideas or doctrines of a millenarian cast must be readily available; a charismatic figure must be present to shape those doctrines in response to disaster; and the disaster itself must be relatively homogeneous and insulated.”<sup>53</sup> Granted the JBS was not a millennial movement, but it did manipulate apocalyptic thought for mobilization.

As with millennial movements,<sup>54</sup> the JBS depended on charismatic leadership, to pinpoint the occurring and the potential disasters that existed due to communism. Welch also provided a “blanket condemnation of the existing social and political order”<sup>55</sup> for the

51. Benson, “An Internal Threat Today,” 3.

52. *Ibid.*, 18.

53. Barkun, *Disaster and the Millennium*, 19.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Ibid.*



membership. Moreover, Welch also provided a process to overturn the existing social and political order.

### 4.3.1 Religious Support of JBS

The membership of the JBS was comprised of predominately those with religious affiliation, with only 4% of respondents (1 in 25) selecting nonaffiliated, when asked about religion, according to Grupp's survey in 1965.<sup>56</sup> Fred W. Grupp Jr.'s survey was conducted under the approval of the JBS, and included a brief letter of support by Robert Welch. The Society mailed out the survey to select members, and based upon the responses received, predominately to chapter leaders and other JBS leaders. Grupp did not have access to the members addresses so was unable to follow up on any surveys received. From the responses he did receive, the breakdown of the bulk of the membership revealed that nearly 50% of the membership identified as either Catholic or Protestant<sup>57</sup> (25% Catholics, 24% Protestants, 14% conservative Protestants,<sup>58</sup> 13% fundamentalist Protestant,<sup>59</sup> 7% Sectarian,<sup>60</sup> 12% those of Jewish and liberal Protestants<sup>61</sup> faiths).<sup>62</sup> By 1967-1968 this distribution had

56. Grupp Jr and Newman, "Political Ideology and Religious Preference: The John Birch Society and The Americans for Democratic Action," 403.

57. Grupp used Glock and Stark's (1965) typology to rank denominations along a liberal-conservative theological continuum.

58. American Baptist and Lutherans

59. Southern Baptist and Others

60. "Religious groups that evidence particularistic doctrines that depart in a distinctive way from the major religious traditions." (Grupp Jr and Newman, "Political Ideology and Religious Preference: The John Birch Society and The Americans for Democratic Action," 403)

61. Congressional, Episcopal, Unitarian

62. Grupp Jr and Newman, "Political Ideology and Religious Preference: The John Birch Society and The Americans for Democratic Action," 404.

changed significantly with a much higher incidence of fundamentalism<sup>63</sup> reaching 90% amongst the membership, Protestant groups being the largest and various fundamentalist sects were second.<sup>64</sup> The religious breakdown of the volunteer membership at the time of this second survey was Protestant 40%, fundamentalist Protestant 32%, Catholic 16%, and none 12%.<sup>65</sup>

The JBS was ecumenical in the sense that any religion was welcome to join in the ranks of the army against communism, with the exception of course of the liberal Compsymp at the FCC and NCC. Welch convinced that through the JBS, those with religious beliefs would find a stronger connection to their beliefs. Conservative religious leaders supported this idea as well. Catholic Father Francis E. Fenton, the founder of the Orthodox Roman Catholic Movement, wrote an article for the Catholic paper *The Wanderer*, entitled “A Catholic Priest Comments on the John Birch Society,” which was later published by the JBS as a flyer to promote the Society. Fenton wrote glowingly of the JBS:

Indeed, to any ‘hard-core’ American patriot, Catholic or non-Catholic, who asks what he can do, in addition to prayer and the observance of the moral law of God, most effectively to aid in the crucial battle against [sic] the diabolical menace of atheistic Communism, I do not hesitate to reply: Join the John Birch Society.<sup>66</sup>

63. Political scientist, Barbara S. Stone who conducted the survey in 1967–1968, designated fundamentalists as those who attended or belonged to the following churches: Apostolic Christian Church, Calvary Bible Presbyterian Church, Churches of Christ, Christward Ministry, Congregational Free Church, Conservative Mayflower Church, Orthodox Presbyterian, Grace Community Church, First Christian Church, and Spiritualist Church. (Stone, “The John Birch Society: A Profile,” 191)

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Rev. Francis E. Fenton, “A Catholic Priest Comments on the John Birch Society,” (John Birch

For Fenton, the JBS was a conduit of hope and political action for Catholics who wanted to “save America.” He continued, “These people, many of them too with extensive Catholic schooling, see in the John Birch Society, as do I, under God and together with the spiritual and moral force of their faith, the best hope and promise for the security and survival of America and the liberation of our enslaved fellow-men throughout the world.”<sup>67</sup>

Fenton was not the only religious leader to write in support of the JBS. Bishop Mark K. Carroll, of Wichita, wrote to the JBS in 1961, and was quoted in a JBS publication as stating, “I have read carefully your description and the purposes of The John Birch Society. The twelve principles describing the general philosophy of the Society are nothing more than the Ten Commandments of God in modern language.”<sup>68</sup> The same pamphlet quoted the Archbishop of Boston as stating, “I do not know of any more dedicated anti-communist in the country than Robert Welch. I unhesitatingly recommend him to you and endorse his John Birch Society.”<sup>69</sup>

Father John Coogan wrote an article about the division of Catholics in America. The divisional line was drawn between those who identified as liberal and those who were conservative Catholics. In the article “American Catholics: A Household Divided?” Coogan describes the two groups as follows:

Yes, it may well be that we American Catholics are being divided into two camps, more sharply and deeply than ever before. And the sort of ‘liberal’

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Society, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, Undated), 3.

67. Fenton, “A Catholic Priest Comments on the John Birch Society,” 3.

68. John Birch Society, *From Our Mail* (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, 1961), 4.

69. *Ibid.*, 2.

declarations we have been describing seem notably responsible for that division. The ‘liberals’ may be more sophisticated, more widely read, more at home in the world of the *New York Times*, more acceptable to the A.D.A. [American Democratic Action] But the conservative commoners are by and large pillars of the parish, habitual attendants at religious functions, daily communicants, sacrificial givers. They may sometimes lack the learning of the schools, but they are taught of the Holy Spirit. They are not to be despised. If one knows a better way for them to go, they can be kindly shown; but they will not be browbeaten and they will not be deterred. They have an instinct for the faith and they will not accept secularism as even a second best. They are patriotic and proud of it, and they will not be satisfied with a diminished Americanism. Nor will they meekly submit to becoming pawns in a paternalistic ‘liberal’ state. Let the ‘liberals’ who treat them with such patronizing be responsible for a divided Catholic America.<sup>70</sup>

Coogan in this article emphasized the religious and patriotic characteristics of Catholic conservatives, while painting the liberals as “elitist.” These sentiments of division between liberals and conservatives, regardless of religious denomination was a cornerstone of the JBS position.

The relationship between the JBS and the Christian Crusade, a Christian anti-communist organization led by evangelist Billy Hargis, was mutually supportive but both groups al-

70. Father John Coogan, “American Catholics: A Household Divided?,” (First appeared in the May, 1962 *The American Ecclesiastical Review* reprinted by *American Opinion*, John Birch Society, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, 1962), 7.

ways emphasized that they were not connected. In many interviews Hargis stated that the JBS was not connected to his Christian Crusade, other than they had a similar mission and the same enemy, communism. Welch did promote the Christian Crusade in the JBS literature to the membership, but he always ensured that the members focused on the JBS activities before involving themselves in Hargis's movement. In a memo to JBS coordinators in October 1963, Welch wrote:

This is not to suggest that you sacrifice or handicap any of your work for the Society in helping to promote the meetings for Dr. Hargis. And we hasten to explain that there is no connection, official or unofficial, between Dr. Hargis and his *Christian Crusade* and ourselves. But he is a good friend, and a good battler for the Americanist cause. So if there should be any advantage to him, anywhere along the way, for our Coordinators to know when and where his meetings are taking place, we are glad for you to have that information.<sup>71</sup>

This connection with Hargis goes much deeper than simply promoting his events and being a good friend of the JBS and Welch. In 1962 the JBS created the Finance Committee headed by William J. Grede. The committee was the fundraising arm reaching into the business community for the JBS. The committee sent out appeals to businessmen across America asking for donations. The appeal was based on the premise that the government was taking “many millions of dollars”<sup>72</sup> to advance the collectivist front for communism

71. Robert Welch, Memo to All Coordinators (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, October 7, 1963).

72. The National Finance Committee of The John Birch Society, Letter to Members and Friends of the JBS (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, December 26, 1962), 1.

to advance in America. In stark contrast, the JBS required a “few million”<sup>73</sup> per year to mount an effective opposition campaign against this advance. These donations could be made payable to the JBS, *American Opinion*, or an escrow account.<sup>74</sup> Donations to the JBS were not tax deductible, which was a deterrent to some of the wealthy potential donors. As an alternative, the finance committee did offer the larger donors, as Grede described it, the “channel through which we can take a limited number of contributions on a tax deduction basis, which we have reserved for special situations and some of our larger contributors. By making a check payable to Freedom Clubs, Inc., the funds can be channeled through them for the work of the Society.”<sup>75</sup> Freedom Clubs Inc. was Reverend Fifield’s group, operating through his Church in California. Other letters from Grede to wealthy donors encouraged them to make their cheques payable to the Freedom Clubs, but that the cheque be sent directly to Grede or Welch to accommodate the process.<sup>76</sup> Alternatively cheques could also be made out to the Christian Echoes Ministry, Inc. for tax deduction purposes, for donations to the JBS.<sup>77</sup> Christian Echoes Ministry Inc. was Billy Hargis’s tax exempt ministry that supported Christian Crusades.<sup>78</sup> Through both publication support and backdoor financial support, conservative Christian pastors and evangelists found ways to support the JBS and rally their followers to its cause.

73. The National Finance Committee of The John Birch Society, 1.

74. *Ibid.*, 3.

75. William J. Grede, Letter to Mr. and Mrs. Tom Ireland (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, January 18, 1963).

76. William J. Grede, Letter to Gilbert M. Tucker (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, May 21, 1963).

77. William J. Grede, Letter to Robert Welch (William J. Grede Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, March 24, 1964).

78. In the early 1960s the Internal Revenue Service revoked Hargis’s tax-exempt status due to his alleged political activities.

In fact, religion was so central to the JBS and Welch's strategy to defeat communism, atheists—even those who supported his Americanist agenda—were not welcomed as members in the Society. To ensure that religion—or more precisely, Christianity—was the foundation of the JBS, atheists were not welcome into the JBS membership. In response to a potential member, D.A. Waite noted, “Mr. Welch wrote on June 17, 1963: ‘We are not accepting and shall not accept professed or even known atheists to membership.’”<sup>79</sup> Even those who were not avowed atheists but whom were connected to or held strong regard for known atheists were not welcome. Another potential member wrote the JBS in 1964 asking if they could be considered for membership if they “agreed with most of the ideas of Ayn Rand . . . I [the letter writer] subscribe to her ‘Objectivist Newsletter’ and I am very anxious for the successful dissemination of the ideas of both the John Birch Society and Ayn Rand.”<sup>80</sup> The potential member was declined on the following basis: “since Miss Rand is an avowed atheist, she would certainly not follow the Society in its insistence that its members believe in God.”<sup>81</sup> To be a member of the JBS one of the qualifications, was that the member have a “Reverence for a Power greater than man himself.”<sup>82</sup> (This was qualification number 14) “As you may know,” Waite wrote to Ketcham, “there is an entire system of anti-Communism, which combines atheism with it.” Waite continued, “These people, though they may be anti-Communists, can never knowingly become members of the John

79. D.A. Waite, Letter to a potential JBS member (John Birch Society, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, April 30, 1964, Dictated April 29, 1964).

80. Potential Member, Letter to Robert Welch (John Birch Society, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, April 24, 1964).

81. Waite,

82. D.A. Waite, Letter to R.T. Ketcham (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, Dated July 23, 1963, Dictated July 19, 1963), 3.

Birch Society, because they could not meet qualification No. 14.”<sup>83</sup> Although Ayn Rand was one of the mothers of Libertarianism, and her economic and political outlook matched the JBS in many ways, she was an atheist and her followers were not welcomed to participate in the vision that Welch, and his council had for a “Christian-style civilization.”<sup>84</sup>

### 4.3.2 The JBS and Billy Graham

Although the JBS publicly stated it was an organization of all faiths and creeds, within the JBS correspondence there emerges a concerted effort to recruit fundamentalists. In 1963, D.A. Waite, responding to a JBS member, wrote that “these religious fundamentalists, are some of our best possible allies, and am doing everything I can to win more to our cause.”<sup>85</sup> Attracting Fundamentalists to the JBS was also a concern of J. Howard Pew and Merwin K. Hart, (the President of the libertarian political organization National Economic Council). In 1959, one year after the JBS had officially been created, Hart wrote Welch on behalf of Pew, after they had both attended a two-day presentation on the JBS in New York. Both Hart and Pew felt that Welch was correct in stating that religious faith was declining in America, but they wanted him to emphasize that the most serious decline was in Christianity. For Hart and Pew, this decline in Christianity was “the most fundamental cause in the decline of American liberty and the growth of socialism and communism in the United States, and in much of the world today.”<sup>86</sup> In the letter, Hart tried to persuade

83. Waite, 3.

84. Welch, *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*, 67.

85. D.A. Waite, Letter to Robert Welch (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, December 18, 1963).

86. Merwin K. Hart, Letter to Robert Welch (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., May 5, 1959), 1.



Welch to work with Billy Graham because, Hart wrote:

the overwhelming majority of the people who are attracted by Billy Graham and other lesser evangelists are the very people we need to get as followers in the John Birch Society. They are fundamentalists, not only with respect to a belief in God and Jesus Christ, but with respect to faith in and loyalty to their own country. I would go as far as to say that it may be impossible for the John Birch Society to be as successful as it wishes to be, without aiming to enroll these fundamentalists. For among all Christians, they are the ones who really care about their God and their country.<sup>87</sup>

Possible collaboration with Graham was also on the minds of the members of the JBS, since Graham had warned in one of his sermons that there would be a communist take over of America by 1972.<sup>88</sup> Despite the number of these calls to collaborate, neither Welch nor the membership department responded.

This lack of response is uncharacteristic of the JBS staff, considering the personal experience Welch was cultivating for the JBS membership and his desire to recruit fundamentalists. A resolution of this apparent paradox was explained in an article entitled “And some Obiter Dicta,” published in 1976, in which Welch revealed that he believed that Graham was a member of the Insiders. While not directly naming Graham, Welch cited an example in this article of an “evangelist par excellence,” a Mr. B., who according to Welch was selling a “British-Israel theme” at his revivals and through his writings. Welch

87. Hart, 1.

88. A JBS Member, Monthly Member Message (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, November 30, 1964).

may not have named Graham, but he stated that Mr. B. is named as one of the two men tied for 19th and 20th position in the *U.S. News and World Report's* "Who Runs America Annual Survey." The tie for 19th and 20th position belongs to Billy Graham and William S. Paley, Chairman, CBS Inc.<sup>89</sup> Welch wrote that Mr. B. was promoting an idea of "Born Again" that leads the converted to believe communism has been imposed on humanity as a punishment. To rebel against this punishment would be the equivalent of a rebelling child to their mother's spanking. Welch wrote:

Instead, we should simply go home, repent, and pray, leaving the outcome of this struggle between good and evil entirely up to God, until He is satisfied by our repentance and decides to alleviate or even end our punishment. This line of thought . . . has been increasingly spread and promoted by the Communists and their bosses for just about a hundred years. Its leading and most effective advocate in our time has been Mr. B.<sup>90</sup>

Bluntly put, Welch accused Graham of helping the communist cause and of being "an example of a most important *Insider* who did not attain that power and glory because he had the millions to buy them, but because he has contributed more to aid the Conspiracy than most of his rival Liberals who had that kind of money."<sup>91</sup>

Welch's attack on Graham fit well with the end time messages that Waite and Welch gave to their members. In effect, Waite and Welch thought that sitting back and waiting

89. U.S. News & World Report, "U.S. News & World Report Who Runs America Annual Survey," April 19, 1976, 31.

90. Welch, "And Some Obiter Dicta," 20.

91. *Ibid.*, 21.

for the end times essentially removed the agency from the Christian to battle for good in the apocalyptic scenario. The membership was fighting against communism and the imminent eradication of Christianity in America. Sitting back and letting the communists (or Satan) take-over, or simply embracing end times, was a failure to individualism. It was also a failure to act in accord with the liberty that Welch and his Americanist ideas promoted.<sup>92</sup>

### 4.3.3 Religious Opposition to JBS and Atheism

Given ongoing attacks on the NCC and other liberal religious organizations, not all religious leaders were supportive of the JBS. Rev. John A. Crane of the Unitarian Church of Santa Barbara decided to research the JBS by thoroughly reviewing the Society's literature. This research was in response to the JBS accusing the Unitarians of being communists or Comsymps. Crane had decided to combat these accusations with a well-researched sermon to his congregation. In that sermon, Rev. Crane acknowledged the motivational power of Welch's rhetoric. He said:

It's not the lunatic fringe type of literature, but a first-class piece of demagoguery. The man is clearly a genius in his chosen field, a force not to be trifled with. There is just enough truth, just enough logic, and more than enough poetry and power in his [Welch's] arguments to bemuse millions of uncritical readers. You have to work hard to escape being trapped in the writhing coil of his logic, hypnotized by the magic of his flowing language. I came within an

92. Robert Welch, *The Neutralizers* (Belmont, MA: John Birch Society, 1963), 37.

ace of becoming a John Bircher myself. Well, it wasn't really that close, but I *could* feel the pull and the appeal of this strange man's message.<sup>93</sup>

In effect, Rev. John A. Crane saw that the power of Welch's rhetoric could easily sway an individual—and it was so powerful because Welch was able to establish links between contemporary issues and his conspiracy theories, his calls to action, and America's religious foundation. Crane's review of the JBS writings was an attempt to understand and explain the effect the JBS's pronouncements could have. Welch, through the linking of contemporary issues via his conspiracy theories, equated to making the dangers and possible disaster at the hands of communists that much more pressing, relevant, and real. Crane was calling to his church members to reject the compelling rhetoric of Welch and the JBS.

A second religious leader who researched the JBS, R.T. Ketcham, National Consultant for the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches in 1963, wrote a review of the inclusion of religion in *The Blue Book*. Ketcham sent the review to Welch with a letter asking for his thoughts on what had been written. In the letter to Welch, Ketcham stated that he had tried to be factual and fair to the JBS and Welch. He confessed to Welch that, despite Welch's claims that the JBS was an entirely secular organization, "religious philosophy is a very vital part of your total philosophy in your anti-Communist movement."<sup>94</sup> This connection between Welch's religion and the anti-communism movement in the JBS concerned Ketcham, and this was what instigated his published review. Ketcham even asked Welch about the rumour of a proposed university that Welch wanted to establish,

93. Richard Vahan, *The Truth about the John Birch Society* (New York: Macfadden-Bartell Corp., 1962), 110-111.

94. R.T. Ketcham, Letter to Robert Welch (John Birch Society Records, 1928-1990, Brown University Archives, June 19, 1963).

and wanted to know, “What would be your purpose in establishing a university if it were not for the purpose of indoctrinating its students in your religious as well as your political philosophy?”<sup>95</sup>

Ketcham connected the religious aspects of the JBS to its anti-communist movement, even though the Society said it was a non-religious organization. Ketcham found much of Welch’s own religion in *The Blue Book* and the publications of the JBS. As noted by Rev. Crane, Welch was a powerful writer, and the “writhing coil of his logic,” and “the magic of his flowing language” wove the secular, the economic, and the religious together seamlessly. In response to Ketcham, D.A. Waite wrote, “He [Welch] has told me on many occasions that he himself (not the Society) believes that Christianity is the ‘one true faith,’ and he rejoiced to see people come to the acceptance of this faith. And he is happy when ministers like yourself can bring them to this point of decision.”<sup>96</sup> Ketcham’s assessment found Welch’s religious faith apparent in *The Blue Book*, where Welch wove religion as the “upward reach” of humanity to stop communism. Welch argued that the “continued coexistence of Communism and a Christian-style civilization on one planet is impossible.”<sup>97</sup> In other words, civilization could not succeed with atheism.

## 4.4 Conclusion

Welch, through the JBS, was often able to distance the membership from their “liberal” churches and the NCC and to instill himself, and the JBS as their “religious based” opinion

95. Ketcham,

96. Waite, 2.

97. Robert Welch, “July Bulletin,” *The 1962 White Book*, 1962, 3.

shaper. As evidenced in the membership correspondence, religion played an essential role in the “eventual political action” of the JBS. Religion was a motivator of the two-tiered socio-economic JBS membership. As with NAM, religious leaders were a conduit to link conservative ideas with religion, and through the JBS they played an important role in shaping the opinions of the membership. In the next chapter I will focus on the role of women, and how they influenced the battle to save God, country, and family. The JBS, contrary to their public statements, was an organization deeply rooted in religious sentiments and culture, and used the connection of religion and politics to further conservatism in America. Building on the fears of the members, both secular (communism) and religious apocalyptic thought the JBS was able to begin a political mobilization of its membership. Welch as a de facto religious opinion shaper created a moral compass for the membership. His messages to the membership were carefully crafted to appeal to all understandings of the end times and to motivate for God, country, and family. In the next chapter the role of women in the JBS and the Republican Party of the Goldwater campaign will further my argument that Robert Welch and the JBS marketed religion, morality, and fear specifically to various groups for political mobilization.

## Chapter 5

# Culture Warriors - Women on the Right

In chapter four, I focused on the role that Christianity played in the John Birch Society (JBS). For Robert Welch, who had been privy to the data generated by the public relations campaign led by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), it was critical that the JBS reach out to the religious leaders and organizations. Failing to convince them that the JBS represented an authentic and appropriate response to political and moral decay in the United States, would have meant the JBS failed in influencing what NAM identified as one of society's most important opinion shapers. Equally critical was Welch's need to reach out to women to ensure the success of his overall mobilization plan. As discussed in chapter two, religious leaders and women were foundational to the right-wing movement in the 1950s and 1960s. The aim of this chapter is to examine the role of women on the right within the JBS. In spite of the public persona of the JBS as a male dominated enterprise,

the JBS encouraged the involvement of conservative, religious women. I will discuss how the JBS sought to mobilize women politically by promoting the idea that women were the protectors of morality, family, and Christianity, and in doing so, set the foundation for a culture war. As I will argue in this chapter, the role of women in the JBS, and in the right-wing movement more generally, was quite extensive and integral to the gains secured by the right-wing of the Republican Party.

Because the private sphere was the main realm of women's power and influence, with family as its central institution, NAM, the JBS, and other right-wing organizations, launched public relations campaigns to mobilize women to address issues typically associated with the private sphere: individual and social morality, communism's attack on the family, and the declining influence of religion as a social and political force. To argue this point, I will begin with a discussion of the expectations and promotion of traditional roles for women in society during the early Cold War era. In this discussion I will argue that NAM, through their public relations campaign targeting women, built upon these fears of social decay and immorality to motivate women to participate in the political process. Women were the largest voting bloc in America, and yet they were the least likely to vote. The thrust of the campaign to mobilize conservative women was fundamentally a "get out the vote" strategy. I will then turn to a discussion of the role of women authors within the JBS. Their writings helped to portray the women of the JBS as Americanist heroes within the private sphere, and fanned the embers of a coming culture war. Each of the authors addressed specific culture war issues such as family, sexuality, morality and organized religion through first person accounts that were relatable to the women members of the JBS. In the final section I will discuss the influence that the JBS had on one family within the Society,



and how religion, morality issues, and political mobilization altered their family unit.<sup>1</sup>

## 5.1 Evolving Perceptions of Domesticity

During World War II women were needed to fill important gaps in the workforce to support the war effort. But as soldiers returned home to America, many men returned to their traditional roles, often displacing women in the labour force. After World War II there was a revival of traditional standards of femininity and domesticity. Amidst the post-war restructuring of labour in the United States, the Cold War broke out between the US and the forming Soviet Union. As a matter of foreign policy, the Cold War marked a restructuring of geopolitical power, with the world's two largest militaries squaring off. As a matter of domestic policy, the Cold War was a battle between the defenders of traditional American values and the "godless masses of communism." One battlefield in this war was the changing nature of traditional gender roles. Legal scholar Sheila M. Brennan argues that, during the Cold War, "[g]ender roles were unambiguous. The male role was solely to support the family financially. The man was the breadwinner, providing material goods for the family, all in pursuit of the American Dream. The woman's role, on the other hand, was to bear and raise children. Accordingly, her 'place' was in the home. This return to traditional gender roles resulted in the glorification of family life and the traditional female persona."<sup>2</sup> In this sense women were supposed to be defenders of traditional American

1. Portions of this chapter are an edited version of a paper entitled "Yes We Can, Women of the JBS" submitted for grading during my PhD courses.

2. Sheila M Brennan, "Popular Images of American Women in the 1950's and Their Impact on Ethel Rosenberg's Trial and Conviction," *Women's Rights Law Reporter* 14 (1992): 49.

values.

A provocative 12-year study conducted by Lee Rainwater, Richard P. Coleman, and Gerald Handel, released in 1959, under the title *Workingman's Wife: Her Personality, World and Life Style*, gave an air of social scientific legitimacy to the idea that working class and lower middle-class women were conservative. The authors state:

[We] have examined the most conservative members of our society. Within the women are imbedded the deep and enduring values of our culture. They carry the central and largest core of our conscious and unconscious life. Unlike those above them, [wealthy women] they are trained to be women who are not the life time competitors of men in the job market, but to grow as daughters into wives and mothers and then to train once again those of the new generation who in their turn will be like them. Their roles are highly restricted, the principles and precepts that guide their thought and often rule their conduct are rooted in the early beginnings and foundations of American culture. Compared with women of the upper middle classes who are professionally conscious and taught to have the second thoughts of the college educated, they are more conservative and traditionally oriented.<sup>3</sup>

Based on this research, one conclusion was that middle-class and working class women were not only embracing the traditional roles but were also conservative and motivated by these traditional roles linked to nationalism. The authors concluded that the changing

3. Lee Rainwater, Richard Patrick Coleman, and Gerald Handel, *Workingman's Wife: Her Personality, World and Life Style* (New York: MacFadden-Bartell, 1962), vii.

world was having an influence on the working-class women:

When compared with the same kind of women one or two generations ago they are far more independent and necessarily more autonomous. The rapidly changing outside world has not only revolutionized the physical arena where they act out their lives, but drastically re-ordered the traditional sanctuaries of their immediate families and invaded the innermost recesses of their personalities, their unconscious privacies. They too must themselves be adaptive, flexible, emergent beings. There's no hiding place down here. The meaning of life for them is largely class bound and traditional. But within them the fluid world of today is too rapidly being invaded by tomorrow for emotional comfort.<sup>4</sup>

The world was shifting and the working class and middle-class women would have to react and adapt to these changes. What the authors of this study concluded was that working-class women “have difficulty feeling themselves to be full-fledged members of the wider society.”<sup>5</sup> Due to these feelings of marginalization, the women in the study “did not identify with purposes larger than those that develop within face-to-face groups, such as their own families.”<sup>6</sup> By contrast, middle-class women were more accepting of group activities and were more civic minded. Although working-class women who resided in suburbs were much more open to the idea of women's groups and public sphere involvement, once their children had grown and left the home.<sup>7</sup> The most important focus for working class women

4. Rainwater, Coleman, and Handel, *Workingman's Wife: Her Personality, World and Life Style*, vii.

5. *Ibid.*, 120.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

were their children, husbands and families, outside of this social circle a sense of being marginalized from greater society kept them from becoming involved in women's groups and outside activities.

Additionally, scholarly research on magazines of the time-period have had a significant influence on the research of women in the postwar era. The most famous of which is Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Historian Joanne Meyerowitz argues that Friedan's analysis concluded that full-time domesticity stunted the growth of women, and was based upon conservative accounts. Meyerowitz states that "since Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, historians of American women have adopted wholesale her version of the postwar ideology. While many historians question Friedan's homogenized account of women's actual experience, virtually all accept her version of the dominant ideology, the conservative promotion of domesticity."<sup>8</sup> Meyerowitz, like Friedan, conducted content analysis on non-fiction articles in magazines for her research. Unlike Friedan, what Meyerowitz concluded was that the accepted version of the feminine mystique was only one aspect of the postwar culture. "All the magazines sampled," Meyerowitz notes "advocated both the domestic and the non-domestic, sometimes in the same sentence. In this literature, domestic ideals coexisted in ongoing tension with an ethos of individual achievement that celebrated nondomestic activity, individual striving, public service, and public success."<sup>9</sup>

Meyerowitz found that the non-fiction stories in these magazines focused on individual women, and although they frequently referenced domesticity, she found that the stories

8. Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946–1958," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 4 (1993): 1456.

9. *Ibid.*, 1458.

actually “expressed overt admiration for women whose individual striving moved them beyond the home.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, the articles applauded housewives, while at the same time offering support to women who worked outside of the home. Most importantly for my research, Meyerowitz notes that the articles “urged greater participation in politics.”<sup>11</sup> This tension between promoting and embracing the nuclear family and traditional roles for women, and the encouragement for conservative women to be politically active was not addressed by Friedan. Women were idealized as the protectors of hearth and home, the goddesses of the private sphere, and yet at the same time there was a realization that conservative women could be, and should be, politically active. In conclusion Meyerowitz stated, “the postwar mass culture embraced the same central contradiction—the tension between domestic ideals and individual achievement—that Betty Friedan addressed in *The Feminine Mystique*. . . Friedan drew on mass culture as much as she countered it. The success of her book stemmed in part from her compelling elaboration of familiar themes.”<sup>12</sup>

This tension existed and as Meyerowitz noted “[w]hile feminine stereotypes sometimes provided convenient foils that enhanced by contrast a women’s atypical public accomplishment, they also served as conservative reminders that all women, even publicly successful women, were to maintain traditional gender distinctions.”<sup>13</sup> This is where a tension develops and the ideas arise of women as “super women” who are not only exemplars of domesticity but also actively engaged in public sphere activities such as politics. Friedan’s work highlighted the feelings of those who believed they were constrained by the tradi-

10. Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946–1958,” 1458.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 1460.

tional roles imposed on them. There exists though, a group of women who embraced both the traditional roles, and a position of playing a vital role in public matters to defend these traditional values and roles. Postwar magazines were unequivocally supportive of women increasing their involvement in politics. A prime example is from 1947, when Margaret Hickey, the past president of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, launched the monthly "Public Affairs Department" for *The Ladies' Home Journal*.<sup>14</sup> The articles under this department encouraged women to become involved in politics. During the 1950s Hickey's department at the magazine ran a series of articles entitled "Political Pilgrim's Progress." According to Meyerowitz, in the articles "a woman rejected the temptations of full-time domesticity and found salvation through politics rather than religion."<sup>15</sup>

Russell Kirk, a leading conservative writer in the mid-20th century, said of women in his book *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Conservatism*, published in 1957:

Women have become intelligent adherents of conservative parties throughout the Western world. In Italy, it is the votes and the resolution of the women that keep the Communists out of power; if only men voted there, the scales would tip toward radical collectivism. In America, similarly, most of our voluntary organizations which support our established society of justice and order and liberty are kept vigorous by American women.<sup>16</sup>

14. Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946–1958," 1467.

15. *Ibid.*, 1468.

16. Russell Kirk, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Conservatism* (Old Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair Co., 1957), 6.

Kirk acknowledged that the political power of women was not only as the majority of voters but also as the workers within organizations and groups. While the pressure was placed upon women to remain within the constraints of traditional domestic roles, their sheer numbers and volunteerism had a significant influence on politics.

NAM also understood, as did Kirk, that women were a powerful political group who could influence the election of a conservative nominee. The idea of communism destroying the family structure was used as a talking point by NAM in its approach to influencing women. By the 1960s NAM's focus was on encouraging women's political involvement. Through their publicity and public relations campaign, NAM highlighted the differences between liberal and conservative politics, and how the lack of support for conservative candidates would negatively affect the family budget, the family structure, and the future of American children. The reason for NAM's marketing campaign to women was not only because women had the time to dedicate to political causes, but also because there were substantially more women voters than there were men eligible to vote. NAM was aware of the influence of women voters not only through their numbers, but also their influence on male voters in the family.

The power wielded by women voters by sheer numbers alone was a topic that NAM spokespersons stressed in their public appearances. Louise Bushnell, the Program Director for NAM's Women's Organizations Department, travelled to speak at various women's groups luncheons and events across the country. Each variation of the speech she gave reiterated this fact. "In this country," she said, "there are three million more women voters than men. But our votes are valueless unless we cast them at the polls. If the influence of women is to be felt by our government—it will be organizations like yours

[women's groups], which will motivate the full participation of women in our political life."<sup>17</sup> Bushnell was pointing to the fact that the number of women voters was larger than men, but in 1952 and 1956 ten per cent fewer women than men voted in the presidential elections.<sup>18</sup>

A Gallup Poll had shown that women were voting for the conservative candidate when they did vote. Gallup Poll figures, collected by the Republican Party, revealed that the majority of votes cast by women, regardless of affiliation, for the three presidential campaigns prior to 1964, were for GOP candidates. Over 58% of the women's vote in 1952 were for Eisenhower.<sup>19</sup> In that year there were 98.1 million eligible voters, comprised of 46.8 million men and 51.2 million women.<sup>20</sup> In 1956, Eisenhower received 61% of the women's vote for his re-election,<sup>21</sup> women comprising 53.6 million of the eligible 102.7 million voters.<sup>22</sup> Almost 52% of women voted for the GOP candidate in 1960.<sup>23</sup> Of the total votes for the GOP, women's votes accounted for almost 52% in 1952, almost 53% in 1956 and nearly 51% in 1960.<sup>24</sup> Further, the 1962 U.S. Census revealed that women outnumbered men of voting age by almost four million<sup>25</sup> with 57.5 million women of voting age and only 54

17. Louise Bushnell, "Thoughtful Leadership, An Address by Mrs. Louise Bushnell, before the Leadership Program Conference, Wisconsin Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs," (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., August 20, 1960), 2.

18. Cees Van der Eijk, Mark N. Franklin, and Johan Ackaert, *Choosing Europe?: The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union* (Washington, DC: American Mathematical Society, 1996), 40.

19. Republican National Party, "Women In Politics," (William Edward Miller papers, #2391. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, February 23, 1963), 1-2.

20. U.S. Bureau of The Census, "Current Population Reports - Population Estimates," October 5, 1956, 1.

21. Republican National Party, "Women In Politics," 1-2.

22. U.S. Bureau of The Census, "Current Population Reports - Population Estimates," 1.

23. Republican National Party, "Women In Politics," 1-2.

24. *Ibid.*, 2.

25. *Ibid.*



million men.<sup>26</sup> As expressed in the 1963 Republican National Party booklet, *Women In Politics*, “No longer does ‘the little woman’ have to ask her man how to vote—he now often seeks her opinion since she has time to attend campaign meetings and current affairs discussions.”<sup>27</sup> To enhance the prospects of victory for the GOP, a larger percentage of women needed to vote.

Women’s participation was an important aspect to the political life of the country. It was also important to NAM that women voted for conservative candidates to ensure political support of free enterprise and capitalism. From NAM’s research it knew historical voting numbers, and projected voting numbers for women in the 1960 presidential election:

Even though the old rule, ‘pink is for girls, blue is for boys,’ will not be visible on the ballots at the polling places, it seems obvious that the more than 53 million women of voting age will once again show their influence and power in November. In the last several elections women cast 50 per cent or more of the total vote, and it is estimated that their votes will exceed the men’s this year by two million.<sup>28</sup>

The potential political power of women in the voting booths was not something that could be simply ignored.

Women also played a powerful role in the GOP Convention to select the Republican presidential nominee. Getting women interested in the Republican Party, but more specif-

26. Republican National Party, “Women In Politics,” 3.

27. *Ibid.*, 2.

28. May B. Brown, NAM Press Release for an Address by Charles R. Sligh Jr., (The National Association of Manufacturers Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., 1960).

ically in “truly conservative” political ideas, that Goldwater represented, and that NAM and the JBS had been promoting was of the utmost importance to secure a Goldwater presidency. The JBS leadership promoted Goldwater to the membership from its inception in 1958 until the conclusion of the 1964 election. As discussed in chapter three, Welch wanted to create a wave that Goldwater could ride, and he believed that the JBS could mobilize women to help create that wave.

## 5.2 Phyllis Schlafly

An important aspect of this “wave” came via conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016). Schlafly had a long history with conservatism in America before the 1964 campaign. She had been a researcher for the conservative think tank, American Enterprise Institute in 1946, had run under the Republican ticket in her home state of Illinois for Congress in 1952, and in 1960 she and “other moral conservatives revolted at the 1960 Republican convention after Richard Nixon supported a civil rights plank (proposed by Nelson Rockefeller) demanding ‘aggressive action’ against segregation and discrimination.”<sup>29</sup> Schlafly remained very well known for promoting conservative causes and opposing women’s rights legislation until her death in 2016 and was once referred to by Robert Welch as a “very loyal member” of the JBS.<sup>30</sup> Schlafly stated publicly that she was not a member of the JBS, but in a letter to Verne P. Kaub, founder and President of the American Council of Christian Laymen, Schlafly wrote: “I am happy to send you the list of persons who at-

29. Judith Warner, “She Changed America,” *The New York Times*, January 29, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/29/books/review/she-changed-america.html>.

30. Robert Welch, “November Bulletin,” *The 1960 White Book*, 1960, 13.

tended Bob Welch's meeting. . . . The John Birch Society is doing wonderful work, and my husband and I both joined promptly after the Chicago meeting."<sup>31</sup> This letter shows that Schlafly and her husband were not only members but had attended one of the "high level" meetings that Welch organized, and are discussed in detail in chapter three.

Neil J. Young, a historian of U.S. politics and religion, wrote of Schlafly that she "envisioned and articulated the 'family values' politics."<sup>32</sup> Building on ideas of "moral decay, national sin, and God's righteousness"<sup>33</sup> she helped to lead the pro-family movement beginning in the 1970s. Young attributes Schlafly with the being first to bring together Catholics, Evangelicals, and Mormons to battle for shared political goals. Schlafly's link to the JBS could potentially be where she gathered the know-how to bring together these groups to initially fight the ERA in the 1970s. Schlafly was a strident defender of women's "special status as homemakers protected by their husbands."<sup>34</sup> She believed that feminism would destroy the traditional nuclear family. Schlafly was the epitome of a woman who embraced the traditional domestic role assigned to her gender, but was very active politically while raising her family. In an interview with religion scholar Marie Griffith, Schlafly said of her political work:

I spent 25 years raising my children. I did not have a paid job since I got married, but homemakers are not chained to the stove. . . I had a very supportive

31. Phyllis Schlafly, Letter to Mr. Kaub (American Council of Christian Laymen Records, Wisconsin Historical Society, December 5, 1959).

32. Neil J. Young, "Sermonizing in Pearls: Phyllis Schlafly and the Women's History of the Religious Right," September 7, 2016, accessed September 20, 2016, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/sermonizing-pearls-phyllis-schlafly-womens-history-religious-right>.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

husband who loved everything I did. . . . But there's plenty of other time to engage in politics, which was my hobby and I didn't really do any overnight speaking to speak of until they [her children] were all off, basically until they were pretty much all off in college. The first time I ran for Congress in 1952, I never had to be gone overnight. It was just a two-county district; you go out and give a speech and come back. So big deal.<sup>35</sup>

Schlafly saw her formidable political career as a "hobby" with the raising of her children being her first concern, and being home each night.

Schlafly was, in many respects, the epitome of the tension within conservative circles between traditional domesticity and increasing encouragement to participate in the public sphere, and how that was rationalized. Linking politics to religion, Schlafly in the same interview discussed why she was against the welfare system in America "And this enormous amount of money is being spent because people have, well I guess given up their religion or their sense of morals and they're not getting married and they're having babies anyway and they expect the government to support them."<sup>36</sup> Schlafly points to the obvious link, for her, in the decline of morality and religion in America to the economic.

In April of 1964, her husband, John F. Schlafly, contacted Denison Kitchel, the General Director of the Goldwater campaign. Schlafly informed Kitchel of his wife's soon to be released book *A Choice Not an Echo*, and inquired if the book could be employed in the

35. Marie Griffith, "What Phyllis Schlafly Believed: An Unreleased Interview with the Late Anti-Feminist Activist," September 6, 2016, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://religionandpolitics.org/2016/09/06/what-phyllis-schlafly-believed-an-unreleased-interview-with-the-late-anti-feminist-activist/>.

36. Ibid.

Goldwater campaign.<sup>37</sup> The response was positive and the book soon became a prime piece of Goldwater's campaign literature for the California primary.<sup>38</sup> Gardiner Johnson, the Republican National Committeeman for California, said of the book, "The distribution of a half-million copies of *A Choice Not an Echo* in California prior to the June 2 primary was a major factor in bringing victory to Barry Goldwater against the terrific assault of the press, the pollsters, and the paid political workers of the opposition."<sup>39</sup> According to Neil J. Young, "That success made Schlafly a hero to grassroots conservatives, but persona non grata among the party's leadership, especially after Goldwater's humiliating loss."<sup>40</sup>

The book reiterated many of Welch's theories about the Insiders. Schlafly created a historical account of the "Kingmakers," as she referred to them, who were the controlling influence in the selection of the presidential nominees for the Republican Party since the early 1940s. Her Kingmakers were the same liberal, wealthy individuals that Welch pointed to as the Insiders. Schlafly's book not only reiterated the powerful control of this small group, but she too called upon the conservative voters of America to regain control of the GOP through their vote and nomination of Goldwater. She placed the conservative voters as heroes who would be reclaiming their Party, as well as saving America and free enterprise through their political action. By selecting Barry Goldwater, she argued, they were taking the reins of control of the federal government from the Kingmakers/Insiders and putting them back in the hands of the people of the republic. The sales of *A Choice*

37. Denison Kitchel, Letter to John F. Schlafly (F. Clifton White papers, #2006. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, April 17, 1964).

38. Mike Newberry, *Goldwater-ism* (Manhattan, NY: Marzani & Munsell, 1964), 15.

39. Phyllis Schlafly, *A Choice Not an Echo* (Alton, IL: Pere Marquette Press, 1964), 3.

40. Young, "Sermonizing in Pearls: Phyllis Schlafly and the Women's History of the Religious Right."

*Not an Echo* reached three and a half million copies in 1964.<sup>41</sup>

Even well after the Goldwater campaign, Schlafly continued to distrust moderates in the Republican Party. In her interview with Marie Griffith, Schlafly stated that one of her main projects had been to make the GOP a pro-life party. Schlafly's pro-life and pro-family political stances stem from a much earlier movement in American politics. Religious historian Margaret Lamberts Bendroth argues that the modern pro-family movement began with the:

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, [where] gender issues were central to the movement's identity and progress; however, this did not result in a full-fledged agenda to shore up the traditional family. That change came fairly recently, beginning in the years following World War II and accelerating in the late 1970s. The timing and content of this transition are important, having as much to do with the evolving nature of the modern family as with the developing shape of religion in American society. More specifically, the shift reflects the transformation of erstwhile 'fundamentalists' into a new group calling themselves 'neo-evangelicals.'<sup>42</sup>

Schlafly's earliest days were shaped by two institutions: the church and the Republican Party.<sup>43</sup> Raised as devoutly Catholic and staunchly Republican, Schlafly embraced the conservative links between religion, politics, and gender roles. Schlafly was the darling

41. Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 124-125.

42. Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, "Fundamentalism and the Family: Gender, Culture, and the American Pro-Family Movement," *Journal of Women's History* 10, no. 4 (1999): 36.

43. Young, "Sermonizing in Pearls: Phyllis Schlafly and the Women's History of the Religious Right."

of the conservative religious movements of the 1950s and 1960s and was able to bridge together those of differing faiths to fight feminism and the moral decay of American society. Lamberts Bendroth describes the era in these terms, “In the opening decades of the twentieth century, the masculine rhetoric of American politics filtered across American Protestantism, and served as a rallying cry in churches where women had long held numerical majorities.”<sup>44</sup>

Lamberts Bendroth argues that, within this environment, Schlafly and other leaders were able to harness the “mass of contradictions that over the years have proved vexing to outsiders. It [religion and politics] was at once antiauthoritarian and obsessed with order; it was fervently apocalyptic, sometimes to the point of otherworldliness, and at the same time enmeshed in American middle-class culture”<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, Schlafly accomplished this in conjunction with writings directed to white, Protestant denominations—primarily Methodist, Northern Baptist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist—that expressed the ideal family life and dynamics.<sup>46</sup> These writings were a call to the predominately women churchgoers in these denominations.<sup>47</sup>

Schlafly’s own focus on religion and traditional values became the cohesion to bring these various religious groups together. Her motivation was not based on apocalypticism but, on reversing the decline of morality in America through political involvement by religious conservative Americans. Lamberts Bendroth writes, “In the late 1950s and early

44. Bendroth, “Fundamentalism and the Family: Gender, Culture, and the American Pro-Family Movement,” 39.

45. *Ibid.*, 38.

46. *Ibid.*, 42.

47. *Ibid.*, 38.

1960s, conversations about the home began to shift from matters around child rearing and religious nurture into a series of debates about family-related issues, beginning with divorce and then spiraling on to birth control, abortion, and homosexuality.”<sup>48</sup> She continues:

The efficacy of the pro-family movement is testimony to the emotions that its moral agenda provoked among grassroots religious conservatives. Well before the Christian Coalition emerged in the national media, a dedicated group of neo-evangelical leaders discovered that family matters resonated with churchgoers, providing clear lines between the godly and the unrighteous. Such issues allowed preachers to invoke personal and social morality; and they laid down moral boundaries that differentiated believers from nonbelievers, without rendering religion socially irrelevant. Opposing abortion, divorce, homosexuality, or teenage pregnancy permitted evangelical leaders to evoke a separatist fundamentalist past and speak a prophetic word to present-day American culture. They could be distinctively ‘Christian’ individuals and modern, late-twentieth-century people.<sup>49</sup>

Religious conservatives rallied around the culture war issues that were the dividing line between the Godly and the unrighteous. The women of the right, and specifically those within the JBS, were influenced by the writings of fellow women, by religious leaders and conservative media. Schlafly, although denying she was ever a member of the JBS, was the darling of the right-wing movement, and was a vocal leader of the anti-feminist,

48. Bendroth, “Fundamentalism and the Family: Gender, Culture, and the American Pro-Family Movement,” 43.

49. *Ibid.*, 48.



pro-traditionalism women's movement. Issues such as abortion, divorce, homosexuality, teenage pregnancy, and the moral decline of society, were culture war issues that stemmed from the private sphere of traditional women. Protecting or "conserving" the traditional roles through political engagement was an extension of that private sphere into the public.

### 5.2.1 JBS Literature and the Beginnings of a Culture War

Russell Kirk defined conservatism and the role of women in these terms: "*The conservative is a person who endeavors to conserve the best in our traditions and our institutions, reconciling that best with necessary reform from time to time. 'To conserve' means 'to save.' Women are particularly good at saving.*"<sup>50</sup> Welch paralleled this definition in his marketing to women in the JBS by positioning religion as viewed against a backdrop of traditionalist normative values as something that needed to be "saved." Welch made the contemporary family the fundamental social unit about which this movement measured the morality of society.<sup>51</sup> In doing so, Welch motivated the women in the JBS membership to fight against communism and in support of free enterprise, as it reflected the "virtues of America," the concern for their children, families, God, and their communities. In effect, Welch was defining the battle against liberalism as a culture war. As religion scholar Stephen Prothero explains, culture wars "are symbolic worlds."<sup>52</sup> Prothero in his book *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When they Lose Elections)* states:

50. Kirk, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Conservatism*, 12.

51. R.H. Williams, "From the 'Beloved Community' to 'Family Values': Religious Language, Symbolic Repertoires, and Democratic Culture," *Social Movements: Identity, Culture, and The State*, 2002, 248.

52. Prothero, *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When They Lose Elections)*, 3.

the term culture wars refers to angry public disputes that are simultaneously moral and religious and address the meaning of America. As such, they exhibit four key features:

- First, they are public disputes recorded in such sources as presidential speeches; the Congressional Record; and popular books, magazines and newspapers.
- Second, they extend beyond economic questions of taxing and spending to moral, religious, and cultural concerns, which are typically less amenable to negotiation and compromise.
- Third, they give rise to normative questions about the meaning of *America* and who is and who is not a true *American*.
- Fourth, they are heated, fueled by a rhetoric of war and driven by the conviction that one's enemies are also enemies of the nation.<sup>53</sup>

Through the novels promoted, published, and sold by the JBS to women members, Welch focused on the symbolic representations of the decay of morality in "Christian America," and how this was the battlefield of the women members.

Welch used the results of the NAM public relations campaign to develop his own strategy with the women in the JBS, similar to the marketing to the male members of the JBS, which entailed wealthy businessmen speaking to the middle-class male membership. Welch focused on influencing the middle class by utilizing powerful women to influence middle-class women. Having been privy to much of NAM's research and public relations strategy,

53. Prothero, *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When They Lose Elections)*, 9.

Welch used this information to continue to influence women's groups, and to motivate them to mobilize more effectively for conservative political candidates. According to Clise, the plan for Welch was "Not like tossing a coin—win or lose. Rather—do everything accumulatively."<sup>54</sup> Indeed, Welch did embark on a comprehensive plan that encouraged members to be involved locally and municipally. Members were encouraged to be active in PTAs, library boards, and municipal politics and building on members' sense of accomplishment, he continuously introduced new and bigger campaigns.

Russell Kirk, arguably conservatism's leading public intellectual in the mid-20th century, wrote, "Women have become intelligent adherents of conservative parties throughout the Western world."<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Kirk understood the political potential of women, their importance to the conservative movement, and the integral roles they played in educating the American public. In the case of Robert Welch, women were vitally important to bringing people into the JBS and he marketed the JBS message directly to women. In his famous Chicago speech called "More Stately Mansion," which he delivered in 1964, Welch declared:

Now it is in the family circle that the feminine half of mankind's basic partnership justly earns credit for so large a part in human progress. The day-after-day influence of the mother in the family, through the exercise of love and patience and discipline and understanding, and through the inculcation into the children of ambition and generosity and a moral code and a sense of responsibility; it is this composite influence of all the mothers of any generation which has tremendous bearing on the position and the direction of the next generation.

54. Clise, 8.

55. Kirk, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Conservatism*, 6.

Goethe says: ‘Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan.’ The eternal woman draws us on. And it is certainly through the family that the eternal feminine makes its greatest contribution to the upward reach of all mankind.<sup>56</sup>

Much like the great hero, Captain John Birch, women were on the eternal side, in Welch’s view, and not the temporal in this battle. This was a battle for good, as was best expressed by a woman JBS member in Texas, “As a mother of five . . . , I feel deeply that I cannot go to my grave without trying to help give this world back to God who made it.”<sup>57</sup>

Welch worked diligently to motivate women to be involved in the JBS and to bring their world back, as this woman said above. Welch argued, “The battle for saving our Republic could well be won or lost in our living rooms.”<sup>58</sup> He needed to motivate Americans to political action, and women, who were predominately homemakers, had the time and the passion to become politically involved. Welch spoke of the importance of acknowledging the accomplishments of America and the potential of America’s destiny:

But we must also seek at all times and everywhere to make our fellow citizens constantly more aware of the material, political, and spiritual accomplishments of our nation; of the greatness of heroes, of its once glorious promise as the last best hope of man, and of the tremendous destiny that still awaits it as both a physical and a spiritual leader among the nations of the future. We must be willing not only to die for our country, if that ultimate need arises, and in

56. Welch, “More Stately Mansions, a speech delivered at the Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago,” 35.

57. John Birch Society, 5.

58. John Birch Society, “How to Handle a Presentation Meeting,” (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, Undated), 1.

accordance with a noble tradition of mankind which the Communists have not yet been able to uproot; but we need to live for our country to the extent that the example and the produce of our daily lives can contribute to its greatness as a home for ourselves, our children, and their descendants.<sup>59</sup>

Welch and the JBS through its publications fanned the embers of a burgeoning culture war for the women of the JBS. Women authors of the JBS epitomized the four key features of culture war as defined by Prothero, by focusing on moral, religious, and cultural concerns, frequently defining the enemy as not being truly American, and placing this rhetoric within a war or battle setting. The JBS publishing company focused on the first hand accounts of women authors to depict the moral decay, sexual promiscuity, and atheism of communism as the seedlings of a culture war to motivate the women. Welch countered this with a call to political activism to return America to the “spiritual leader amongst nations.” As a result, the women of the JBS became the work force for the Republican Party, and Goldwater as their nominee. The most prolific and well-known author for the JBS was author Taylor Caldwell. She wrote a regular column in *American Opinion* that highlighted these culture war flash points.

### **5.2.2 Taylor Caldwell**

Taylor Caldwell (1900-1985) was a best-selling author of fictional novels. William F. Buckley wrote in *The National Review* that “Caldwell, Agatha Christie and the Bible accounted

59. Welch, “More Stately Mansions, a speech delivered at the Conrad Hilton Hotel, Chicago,” 33.

for 90 per cent of book sales for more than a generation.”<sup>60</sup> Caldwell’s novels were historical in nature with Christianity playing an important role in her stories. Born Janet Miriam Holland, in Manchester, England, she also wrote under the aliases Marcus Holland, Max Reiner, and J. Miriam Reback, (one of her married names). She immigrated to America with her family in 1907.<sup>61</sup>

Caldwell was well known for her conservative opinions, and her strongly held belief in the communist conspiracy. Her personal struggle against communists led her to join two prominent far-right political organizations: the John Birch Society and, for a short period of time the anti-Semitic Liberty Lobby.<sup>62</sup> As a member of the JBS, she authored articles each month for *American Opinion* and toured as a presenter for the American Opinion Speakers Bureau. Caldwell’s articles in *American Opinion* were harsh towards liberals. She wove stories with her own personal experiences and offered the reader relationship and parenting advice. In fact, many of these articles from *American Opinion* were later reprinted as a collection in her memoir *Growing Up Tough* (1971).<sup>63</sup>

Caldwell, in her memoir, recounted her personal stories in such a way that she ensured there was an important lesson for contemporary conservatives in each. As she recalled stories of her childhood, for example, she openly mocked the field of child psychiatry and instructed parents to “Study your clergyman, and remove your family from his influence if he is all for the Social Gospel, and find a man who talks of the Eternal Verities.”<sup>64</sup> In

60. William F. Buckley Jr., “Taylor Caldwell, RIP,” *The National Review*, 1985, 17.

61. Taylor Caldwell, *Growing Up Tough* (Old Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair, 1971).

62. Buckley Jr., “Taylor Caldwell, RIP.”

63. Caldwell, *Growing Up Tough*.

64. *Ibid.*, 63.

her writing she touched on the important liberal causes of the day and focused on the women's liberation movement. Her attacks on liberals were not just ideological; rather, they could at times be personal. She wrote, for instance, "Liberationist females, judging from their photographs at least, and on some personal observation, are so unattractive mentally, physically, and in personality."<sup>65</sup> This was ironically in stark contrast to the role she framed for herself as the ideal conservative, Christian woman. Her writings for the JBS focused on the dangers of decline in Christian morality in America, the repercussions of a lack of a strong family structure, and the role communism played in those issues. All of these were culture war flash points that the JBS focused on in their marketing to women. She used these warnings—typically cloaked in religious terms—as motivation for women to speak up, to become informed, and to become active against communism and liberalism. For example in warning youth in 1971 she wrote, "We [contemporary society] have taken away their Lord, and they [the youth] do not know where we have laid Him. Until they find Him, they and our world stand under threat."<sup>66</sup>

Caldwell's articles in *American Opinion* addressed issues that were important to the women members of the JBS. Her opinion was from the perspective of a strong, intelligent, and successful mother and wife. She held up her own activism while raising children and keeping a home as an example of what could be done by all conservative women. Caldwell was against feminism and wrote about the importance of raising boys to be 'real' men. It was the responsibility of the parents, and specifically the mother, to ensure her son was 'manly.' As a conservative, Caldwell held onto the traditional gender roles and promoted

65. Caldwell, *Growing Up Tough*, 103.

66. *Ibid.*, 159.

the importance of traditional roles to her readers, “You see, Americans in those days were truly adult, and the men were masculine, the women feminine, and there was no blurring of the sexes as with the women of today who are far more manly than men, and the men who are far more more feminine than the women. A man’s word was law in his house, no matter how shrewish his wife.” Caldwell continues:

Best of all, there were no pants, figuratively or literally, on ladies’ legs. In short, women were happier then, and so were the kids. Papa wasn’t expected to change Baby’s diapers nor get its bottle in the middle of the night, nor did he wipe dishes, or run a vacuum cleaner, or be a ‘a pal to The Children.’ Papa had nights out with the Boys, and if he came home a little beery, and late, Mama knew enough to keep her mouth shut.<sup>67</sup>

Caldwell recreated a nostalgic world, even accepting when the situation was not ideal in the home, where many of the issues faced by the women of the JBS, such as being ostracized for their traditional roles, or their “patriotic” beliefs, were acceptable. In fact Caldwell, supported and encouraged the women to stand strong in their “roles” and “battles.” Caldwell’s propagating of traditional roles of women supported the argument made by public health officials during this era that women, both in the home and outside of the home, who challenged these traditional roles placed the security of the nation at risk.<sup>68</sup>

Caldwell was emphatic that mothers had to raise their sons to be as ‘manly’ as possible. These writings on motherhood and raising sons emphasized the key themes of family, sex-

67. Taylor Caldwell, “Love Thy Neighbor An Example of Divine Humor,” *American Opinion*, 1967, 36.

68. Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 96.



uality and morality, and the important role of women in protecting these specific American cultural values. In her view, after turning away from God, homosexuality and effeminate men were the cause of the communist infiltration of America. “Again, treat your son, from the very bassinet, to be manly. He is a human being and has dignity from his birth; he is not a cutesy toy; he is not ‘adorable.’ He is not ‘sweet.’ He is an embryo man. Treat him so. Let him see from infancy that you respect his status and he will acquire pride in himself.”<sup>69</sup> Caldwell wrote to the women of the JBS, that to ensure their sons do not grow up to be homosexual, and escape the “emasculating pollution” of society:

First of all his mother must be a woman, whose husband is her dearest treasure above all else, whose children are *secondary* to her mate in all things. A woman must be womanly—not just ‘feminine.’ She must have the strong instincts of a woman, and a love for her home. A mother whose *first* concern is ‘sex’ and clothes and personal indulgence and hairdos, and her physical appearance, will not produce a manly son.<sup>70</sup>

Caldwell’s parenting instructions focused predominately on male children, rarely giving advice on how to raise daughters. If a mother did not raise her son as an ‘embryo man’ she would feel his wrath in his adulthood, according to Caldwell:

It is not an accident that homosexual men almost invariably hate their mothers. It is the rare homo who became that way because his mother loved him too much and pampered him too much and protected him too much. Homosexuals

69. Taylor Caldwell, “On Manliness So You Want to Raise A Boy?,” *American Opinion*, 1968, 94.

70. *Ibid.*, 93.

are made at home, from the very earliest years. Hatred for women—and for Mama in particular—is the homosexual’s most outstanding characteristic. One can feel honest compassion for them, and condemn their mothers. They are trivial women—and murderers of the best in their men, emasculators really.<sup>71</sup>

The point here and the connection Caldwell is arguing is that women who were not embracing the traditional roles of motherhood were responsible for the decline in society—of which homosexuality was surely a symptom as well as a cause. Caldwell’s writings reflected that in times of crisis and rapid social change fears of sexual chaos erupt,<sup>72</sup> this fear led to a connection between communism and depravity. Elaine Tyler May, in her book *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, describes the logic of people like Caldwell in these terms:

The logic went as follows: National strength depended upon the ability of strong, manly men to stand up against communist threats. It was not simply a matter of general weakness leading to a soft foreign policy; rather, sexual excesses or degeneracy would make individuals easy prey for communist tactics. According to the common wisdom of the time, ‘normal’ heterosexual behaviours culminating in marriage represented ‘maturity’ and ‘responsibility’; therefore, those who were ‘deviant’ were, by definition, irresponsible, immature, and weak. It followed that men who were slaves to their passions could easily be duped by seductive women who worked for the communists. Even worse were the

71. Caldwell, “On Manliness So You Want to Raise A Boy?,” 94.

72. May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, 90.

‘perverts’ who presumably, have no masculine backbone.<sup>73</sup>

The Cold War era brought forth a wave of homophobia, and “gay baiting rivalled red baiting in its ferocity.”<sup>74</sup> As Caldwell’s writings emphasize the responsibility for raising children, the future of America, to ensure they were not “sexual deviants” and susceptible to communist subversion rested upon the shoulders of women.

Traditional roles were not the only topics Caldwell wrote about, she also wove politics into the tales of her childhood. In an article for *American Opinion* entitled “Anatomy of a Liberal,” Caldwell tells of her first encounter as a child with a liberal teacher, and then recounts a tale of another encounter as an adult. Both stories end with her losing her temper, at the evil vindictiveness of the liberal antagonist. The end of the article builds on this theme and she writes of the evil of the liberal:

He, like all evil, is ubiquitous. He is sleepless; he never tires. His vindictiveness knows no bottom; his vengeance pursues like a fury. His intolerance is deep as the grave, and deeper. Justice and honor and law are unknown to him. He manipulated them as he will, and always to the advantage of his Satanic master. No words can fully expose him; no revilement is too strong for him. And no punishment is too severe. He is our Enemy, the Enemy of America.<sup>75</sup>

Caldwell not only describes the characteristics of the liberal, she also defines the liberal as the enemy of America. Positioning the liberal as an enemy of America questions the

73. May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, 91.

74. *Ibid.*

75. Taylor Caldwell, “Anatomy Of A Liberal,” *American Opinion*, 1963, 39.

“meaning of America and who is and who is not a true American,” as Prothero defines one of the key features of a culture war. Additionally linking liberals to a “satanic master” weaves this public sphere dispute as a moral and religious issue within the meaning of what are the culture values of America.

A large percentage of Caldwell’s articles in *American Opinion* focus on how liberals were destroying America. The liberals, in her depiction were an atheistic, invisible enemy that would never tire of the battle against the good in America. Liberals, in her understanding, espoused feminine men who were seeking love, and through their capitulation and submission were ignoring the “manly” role to watch over the government and politics. Women were complicit in this, by raising their sons to be effeminate. The destruction of a strong male-led church, the erosion of the family structure and the changing roles of men and women were the conduit to the downfall of America.

Caldwell reiterated many of Robert Welch’s theories in her articles and speeches. She would write directly to the women members of the JBS, changing the focus of Welch’s points to directly reflect the points from a traditional women’s perspective. An example would be how she adapted Welch’s argument that the Civil Rights Movement was a tool of the communist forces and not a human rights cause. Again, moving a public sphere dispute into the realm of the religious and moral definition of American values through their writings, Caldwell and Welch reinforced culture war issues linking communism to both atheism and the moral decline of America. In 1963, Welch wrote that “the Civil Rights Act of 1963 if enacted will be the first major legal step in establishing a brutal totalitarian police state

over the American people.”<sup>76</sup> Writing in *American Opinion* Caldwell referred to liberals who were supporting the Civil Rights Movement as cads who had no real understanding of the South, and the African American experience:

It is our cads who invade the South and deliberately create hatred between white and colored Americans, though they care nothing about the riots in Northern cities. The cad hates the aristocratic Southerner, who loves his privacy and self-respect. He will turn with rage on the colored American who denounces him, and he will call that American an ‘Uncle Tom.’ Once states could refuse undesirables entry across their borders, for the good of the community. But the U.S. Supreme Court, under the influence of cads, put a stop to that.<sup>77</sup>

Caldwell in this article justifies her accusations by retelling her time living in the South. In her perception, she believed that African Americans were treated “wonderfully” by the white residents. Rather than focusing on the theories and “proofs” that Welch relied on, Caldwell, as did most of the women writers for the JBS, recounted her own personal experiences to connect with the women members of the JBS, creating a connection of shared experiences and a sense of friendship with the reader through these accounts. This was different than the marketing approach to the men, which was presented from the perspective of “experts” or “leaders” informing the men of “how it was.” The women writers developed a sense of being an equal to the readers, sharing experiences more than simply stating the facts of the matter.

76. Robert Welch, “March Bulletin,” *The 1964 White Book*, 1964, 17.

77. Taylor Caldwell, “The Cad and How to Detect Him,” *American Opinion*, 1966, 85.

Caldwell promoted that women fight back through the political arena. Although a common theme, Caldwell expressed this call to rise up best in an article appearing in *American Opinion* in 1966:

But the cad-women did not let up. They have now invaded the P.T.A.'s, and they are there with their shrill voices and their violent gestures and their insistence. Ladies I know have resigned in disgust. This is wrong. We cant afford to resign from the League of Women Voters or our local political clubs. In short, we can't afford our disgust. The nation can't afford it.<sup>78</sup>

Although this was after the Goldwater election, the enemy, liberals, remained the same, as did Caldwell's characterization of them. Welch had long promoted the involvement of the JBS members in PTAs and politics, Caldwell supported this, and wrote about the need for women to be involved. Without their involvement politically, regardless of the level, the "cads" would win.

This idea of patriotism and morality was integral to the postwar era and with the reinforcement of gender roles. Sociologist Joane Nagel argues:

the culture of nationalism is constructed to emphasize and resonate with masculine cultural themes. Terms like honour, patriotism, cowardice, bravery and duty are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculinist, since they seem so thoroughly tied to both the nation and to manliness. . . .the 'micro-culture' of masculinity in everyday life articulates very well with the demands

78. Caldwell, "The Cad and How to Detect Him," 84.

of nationalism particularly its militaristic side.<sup>79</sup>

Yet, here we see the women of the right linking their public sphere work with patriotism and morality through their embracing of traditional gender roles. Nagel argues that this is because:

religious nationalism, indeed all nationalism, tends to be conservative, and ‘conservative’ often means ‘patriarchal.’ This is partly due to the tendency of nationalists to be ‘retraditionalisers,’ and to embrace tradition as a legitimating basis for nation-building and cultural renewal. These traditions, real or invented, are often patriarchal and point out the tenacious and entrenched nature of masculine privilege and the tight connection between masculinity and nationalism.<sup>80</sup>

Through their political involvement, the women of the right challenged society’s assumptions about women as political players.<sup>81</sup> Through the glorification of the role of housework and the homemaker, anti-communism politics showed women they could participate in politics without abandoning their traditional roles.<sup>82</sup> The more conservative a woman was (economic or social) correlated to a greater sense that communism was a threat to all she held dear.<sup>83</sup>

79. Joane Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21, no. 2 (1998): 251-52.

80. *Ibid.*, 254.

81. Mary Brennan, *Wives, Mothers & the Red Menace* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2011), 2.

82. *Ibid.*, 9.

83. *Ibid.*, 36.

In addition to the three broad themes of moral decay, sexual promiscuity, and atheism of communism, Caldwell also addressed issues faced by the social heroism of the JBS members, such as alienation or ostracism. In her article “The Truth and My Deplorable Habit of Telling It” she addressed this topic specifically. The focus of this piece was on the punishments and ostracism Caldwell had encountered from her childhood for her no holds barred truthfulness. She wove the tale from her child memories to contemporary anecdotes of speaking to “liberals” and telling them the “truth:”

You might, perhaps, be able to help your country by indiscriminate truth-telling, but it is rough on you and your family and your purse, and adds nothing of sweetness and light to your rugged life. It comes to you, with disastrous woe, that your telephone has been silent for days and you never see your friends any longer, and that you are avoided like the Black Death. It is no comfort to you to recall that you did strike a blow for your country; for your country certainly doesn't seem to appreciate it.<sup>84</sup>

It is important to note that this article appeared after the defeat of Goldwater, and would appear to be addressing the sense of loss or perhaps any defeatism the members may have felt.

As she often did Caldwell turned to the Bible and its parables to strengthen her argument:

Thirty Pieces of Silver. Christ's life was sold for them. Thirty Pieces of Silver.

84. Taylor Caldwell, “The Truth and My Deplorable Habit of Telling It,” *American Opinion*, 1966, 74.



America was sold by Americans for that. Affluence, eager acceptance of totalitarianism, welfarism, soothing pats and kisses, suburban tract houses with all the cheap, shiny gadgets and the cheap, shiny cars and the unspeakable television and the permissive schools. That was the worthless handful of fraudulent silver from the hands of the politicians which bought America and has led her to her Calvary. The politicians kiss the American people and call them 'wonderful.' And Judas betrayed Our Lord with a kiss, and hailed Him.<sup>85</sup>

Caldwell, in most of her articles for the JBS, wrote from the perspective that she herself was a heroine standing up before the liberal. In these depictions she consistently positioned saving God, country, and family as her motivation for standing against the liberal antagonist in her tales. She, and the women of the JBS, could save America from "Judas." In other words, she was saying, "I am brave, why can't you be too?" She spoke to the women of the JBS clearly, as one of them, reinforcing the sustained fear that Welch created in his own speeches and writings. Caldwell was a mother who had survived poverty and had raised her children in spite of difficult conditions; yet, her faith had never wavered. She was a social hero who had risen above, a perfect mentor to the women of the JBS, always reinforcing the idea that women and their roles as housewives and mothers was a conduit to define both the evils of communism and the virtues of America.<sup>86</sup> Using her celebrity and her writing talents, Caldwell was a perfect communicator to the women of the JBS.

85. Caldwell, "The Truth and My Deplorable Habit of Telling It," 78.

86. Brennan, *Wives, Mothers & the Red Menace*, 10.

### 5.2.3 Julia C. Brown and The Civil Rights Movement

Opinions expressed by Welch and Caldwell, especially those regarding the Civil Rights movement, were echoed by two African American women who were lecturers for the American Opinion Speakers Bureau, which had more than two hundred speakers available to speak to service clubs, women's clubs, church clubs, and PTAs.<sup>87</sup> One African American speaker was Julia C. Brown. As a FBI spy Brown was a member of the communist community for nine years. While a member of the Communist Party in Cleveland she reported all her activities and contacts to the FBI, which she did as she served as treasurer for five underground Communist Party groups in the northeast section of Cleveland.<sup>88</sup> In June 1962, Brown testified about her experiences in the communist groups to the United States House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities, (HUAC). In Brown's 1966 JBS published book, *I Testify: My Years as an FBI Undercover Agent*, she described her childhood and how religion, patriotism, and a love and respect of the Constitution were the foundations of her upbringing.<sup>89</sup>

Her first encounter with communism came when she and her husband moved to Cleveland and were welcomed into the community by their neighbours. At a neighbourhood gathering they were invited to join in a political group, the Civil Rights Congress, which worked for civil rights, better housing, and better schools for African Americans. Brown agreed to join in 1947, and that same year she was working on a campaign for a coun-

87. Robert Welch, "April Bulletin," *The 1962 White Book*, 1962, 14.

88. Julia Brown, *I Testify: My Years as an FBI Undercover Agent* (Belmont, MA: Western Islands, 1966), x.

89. *Ibid.*, 6.

cilman, who eventually lost.<sup>90</sup> Brown wrote that this social group was comprised of only white people and that she and husband were the only African Americans. At a Christmas party when she was leaving, the female host called her back and asked her to join the Civil Rights Congress officially by signing a membership application. She received a membership card after signing. The next morning, when Julia awoke, she read the card, but instead of the card reading the Civil Rights Congress, it read The Communist Party of America.<sup>91</sup>

Brown claimed that an aspect of the political strategy of the Communist Party, in her area of Ohio, was to have African Americans elected as committeemen for the Democratic Party. She was one of four African American women selected by the Party to stand for election, was the only one elected, but, because she was ostracized by the Democrats, she resigned.<sup>92</sup> Her political involvement also included helping to gather 75,000 signatures that were necessary for Henry Wallace's candidacy for President on the Progressive Party ticket. In spite of her support of Wallace, she grew disgruntled by his political ties to communists. She wrote, "the more I learned about how his campaign was being engineered by Communists, the more disgusted I became. Did they hope to gain control of the Federal Government by electing a President who would be under obligation to them?"<sup>93</sup> In her testimony to the HUAC she affirmed that Wallace was not a member of the Communist Party.<sup>94</sup> After eight months in the Communist Party, Brown became disillusioned and resigned. She wrote:

90. Brown, *I Testify: My Years as an FBI Undercover Agent*, 16-17.

91. *Ibid.*

92. *Ibid.*, 25.

93. *Ibid.*, 28.

94. Brown,

During those eight months I had spent within the Communist Party before breaking away, I had learned enough to convince me it was a multi-faceted evil. First and foremost, it taught overthrow of our government by revolution, entailing force and violence. Second, lies, deceit and treachery were tools of its trade. Third, a dictatorial few would enslave the many. Fourth, it encouraged immorality in all its most sordid aspects. Fifth, it denied God and all religion. What person of sound mind and honest heart would want any part of it?<sup>95</sup>

The Communist Party stood in opposition to the beliefs she was raised to hold true, and that the JBS promoted, God, country, and the Constitution. Brown also was promoting the ideas within a culture war, linking religion, morality and envisioning it as a “war driven by the conviction that one’s enemies are also the enemies of the nation.”<sup>96</sup>

She attempted to return to the quiet life she had led prior to being a member of the Communist Party, but her membership had ostracized her from the neighbourhood. Seeking solace she found a church in a different community. She recalled:

The mere thought of that quality of ‘faith’ made me think also of something we had quite given up while I was under Communist domination—church. The privilege of sitting through a service in the company of decent, God-loving folks; of joining in singing dear, old hymns, became irresistibly attractive. . . . I derived great spiritual strength from inspiring sermons and from contact with people whom I could respect and admire.<sup>97</sup>

95. Brown, *I Testify: My Years as an FBI Undercover Agent*, 43.

96. Prothero, *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When They Lose Elections)*, 9.

97. Brown, *I Testify: My Years as an FBI Undercover Agent*, 36.

Brown claimed that her involvement with communism had led her to lose her religious faith and to forget the solace that came with being part of a religious community. It was not simply that communism had banned religion or promoted atheism, it was through involvement in their causes, such as the Civil Rights Movement, that she had simply lost her connection to her church and to her God. She had equated communism with evil, slavery, and immorality. Her return to her faith and her church had “saved” her and returned her to the “company of decent, God-loving folk.” This first person account supported the depiction of communism that Welch and the JBS promoted.

After she resigned from the Communist Party, Brown contacted the FBI. A few months later the FBI contacted her and requested that she rejoin the Party as a spy for them. At first she was hesitant; however, she recounted that the FBI agent convinced her that she would be “performing a great service for my country.”<sup>98</sup> Brown agreed to return to the Party because, as she wrote, she wanted to “make partial payment for having been—however innocently—disloyal to my country. I could make partial payment for the privilege of being a citizen of the United States of America.”<sup>99</sup>

Much like Taylor Caldwell, Brown also emphasized the promiscuity and immorality of the communists in her account of her time within the Party:

Do you have any idea of the controls exercised by the Party over the marital— or extra-marital—relationships of its members? The Party says a couple will marry—they marry. It says they will live together—they live together. It says that couples divorce or, if not actually married, split up—they obey. An

98. Brown, *I Testify: My Years as an FBI Undercover Agent*, 40.

99. *Ibid.*, 41.

ideology that recognizes *no* sanctity will not accord it to marriage vows or the home.<sup>100</sup>

This description fans the flames of the fear of the right-wing women, who were fighting for their families and their communities. “By destroying moral values they destroy decent human relationships. A nation which is morally strong cannot be taken over, so Communism seeks to destroy the moral fibre of the people. Within the Party the leaders can more easily control a membership morally depraved.”<sup>101</sup> Brown, through the testimony of her personal experiences, reinforced the immorality that was feared by the JBS members.

Brown’s account was the personification of the image of communism that the JBS created for the members. She also served to confirm that African Americans were being used by the communists, and the liberal stand on the Civil Rights Movement was another example of their complicity in the take-over of America. Communists were immoral atheists who were “duping” white liberals and African Americans through the Civil Rights Movement. This developing narrative of the communists, liberals and supporters of the Civil Rights Movement framed the very public disputes regarding human rights in America in religious and moral term. This lens reflected the “American traditional values” of the culture war issues,—namely, those focusing on sexuality, morality, and religion—that the JBS women authors promoted. It also allowed for the continuing portrayal of liberals and communists as not being true Americans and as the enemies of America and its people.

Echoing Welch’s conspiracy that the communists were the catalyst to the Civil Right’s division in America, Brown wrote in her book:

100. Brown, *I Testify: My Years as an FBI Undercover Agent*, 109.

101. *Ibid.*

As a Negro, I could only be enraged by what I knew Communism was trying to do to my people—to turn them from God, to make them hate, to incite them to riot and revolt. I knew the rotten means they used against my fellow Negroes to attain their evil end. I was aware that Communism aimed at enslaving the entire world, making of it an atheistic Hell on earth, with the multitudes dominated by an elite few under a despotism never known before. . . . In short, I knew Communism to be the enemy of my nation, of all mankind, and of God.<sup>102</sup>

She accused the communists of using sex as a tool to entice members to join, calling the women “promiscuous to get members.”<sup>103</sup>

Among Negroes of any quality, sexual promiscuity is abhorred just as in the comparable strata of white society. Intermingling of the races in libidinous relationships is not condoned any more by decent Negroes than by decent whites. This is not the case, as I have stated earlier, in Communism. The Party not only tolerates, not only encourages, it *demand*s that members engage in illicit sex acts between members of different races.<sup>104</sup>

This “sexual deviancy” represents what Elaine Tyler May argued that the ideas of sexual promiscuity or sexual chaos were fears that stood to destroy the traditional family and the virtues of America. Brown’s account of promiscuity within the communist groups within

102. Brown, *I Testify: My Years as an FBI Undercover Agent*, 185/86.

103. *Ibid.*, 109.

104. *Ibid.*

which she had been active, re-emphasizes the importance of morality, religious faith and cultural concerns. These tropes of traditionalism and morality according to sociologist Joane Nagel are important to the nationalism promoted by the conservative media (such as the JBS publishing arm) because, as Nagel argues:

Sometimes women attempt to enact nationalism through traditional roles assigned to them by nationalists—by supporting their husbands, raising their (the nation’s) children and serving as symbols of national honour. In these cases women can exploit both nationalist and enemy or oppressor patriarchal views of women’s roles in order to aid in nationalist struggles.<sup>105</sup>

Brown’s recounting of her time as an FBI spy links these very ideas together. She chose to return to the communist groups as a spy because of her love of America, essentially making her return an act of nationalistic support. Yet, throughout her tale, Brown uses tropes of traditionalism, religion, modesty, and morality as the values that save her and keep her grounded within the vortex of the communist communities. For Brown, the only effective way to stop communism in America was to “impose the severest penalties on any who would continue to adhere to its theories of its practices.”<sup>106</sup> She believed that the time to stop the communist threat was now, concluding that “We have flown in the face of Divine Providence long enough.”<sup>107</sup>

Brown, much like Caldwell, wrote from the perspective of her experiences. She too was feeling the pressure that the social heroes of the JBS, her readers, were feeling. Stand-

105. Nagel, “Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations,” 253.

106. Brown, *I Testify: My Years as an FBI Undercover Agent*, 114.

107. *Ibid.*



ing up in the face of adversity she had fought for her God, her country, and her family. Brown through the recounting of her experience in the Communist Party of America was substantiating an overlap between the fight against an evil atheistic political force in communism and the fight against moral decay via liberalism. This battle against communism was being framed as moral and religious through culture war issues of family, sexuality, morality and traditionalism. Communism was not only an enemy to these issues Brown was also arguing that communism was the enemy of America. The individual battle of one woman against communism's attacks on American values and traditions were told through firsthand accounts such as Brown's. She was a social hero who was a homemaker, a wife, and a Christian who stood on the side of the eternal against the enemy, to do her part to "save America."

#### 5.2.4 Grace Lumpkin

In 1962, the JBS purchased the rights to Grace Lumpkin's novel *Full Circle*. Lumpkin was an author who had been involved with the Communist Party and was awarded the Maxim Gorky Award for best proletarian novel for her book *To Make My Bread* (1932).<sup>108</sup> In time, Lumpkin became disillusioned with communism and joined the anti-communist Moral Re-Armament (MRA) movement, which stressed spiritual and moral renewal as a basis for social justice.<sup>109</sup> Eventually Lumpkin left the MRA and rejoined the Episcopal Church, a move that she explored in her later novels. In 1953 Lumpkin testified before the

108. John A. Salmand, *Gastonia 1929: The Story of the Loray Mill Strike* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

109. *Ibid.*

Senate Sub-Committee on Government Operations, where she denounced communism.

In an attempt to promote the book in the October 1962 edition of *The Bulletin* Welch gushed praise:

If you want to know what the Communists are really like, and especially what life among the actual Party workers at the cell level is like; if you want to see the inevitable and eternal place of religion and reverence in the heart of man; if you would like to see the ideals of a Christian civilization weighed in actual practice against 'idealism' of the Communists, here is the best presentation of all three that we have ever read.<sup>110</sup>

Like Brown, Lumpkin was creating a first-person account of battling against communism and how a mother saved her family from this evil. Both Brown and Lumpkin's protagonist are relatable to the women readers of the JBS. They are individuals thrust into action to save their families, stepping outside of the normal traditional women roles yet through their religious beliefs were able to do the unexpected and save themselves and their families.

The novel weaves the tale of a young Southern girl who is angered by the injustices of the world, and joins the Communist Party. She loses her morality, her faith in God, and in the end is found catatonic on the stairs of a church in New York. Her mother, who also joined the Party to support her daughter, returns her to the South. The only thing that brings the daughter back to "life" is prayer, and the family's reconnection to the Church. The family had fallen apart and become alienated from the Church because the girl's

110. Robert Welch, "October Bulletin," *The 1962 White Book*, 1962, 23.

father, a minister, had fallen for a younger woman in the church. This younger woman introduces the Social Gospel to the father, which he describes in these terms: “There is a feeling of freedom about all this that I can’t explain, a sense of adventure, of burning bridges, of kicking over the traces, fascinating and attractive. It is intoxicating. We are making a new world, reaching out to all people, and if doing this involves sacrificing some of our dearly held beliefs the sacrifice is worth it.”<sup>111</sup> This description aligns with Welch’s and the JBS stance on the Social Gospel. Welch himself in *The Blue Book*, referred to the Social Gospel as an “innocuous philosophy” and not an “evangelical religion.”<sup>112</sup> To Welch, the Social Gospel was simply a shill for the welfare state and Socialist politicians.<sup>113</sup>

The young girl in Lumpkin’s tale becomes a communist and brings the mother into the fold. She explains communism’s beliefs on marriage and sex to her mother one night:

It means, Mama, that marriage, the marriage ceremony simply doesn’t exist for a Communist, except as a convenience. I know, I know you think it wrong of me to sleep with all of them. But they have showed me that I cannot be the right kind of member unless I make myself absolutely free of all bourgeois moralities and hypocrisies. It is so wonderful, Mama, to be free—to know there is no sin at all, no guilt, no fear, only freedom. And one of our duties is to do all we can to break up family life. That is a revolutionary duty. . . . marriage doesn’t mean a thing. It is humanity we must work for.<sup>114</sup>

111. Grace Lumpkin, *Full Circle* (Belmont, MA: Western Islands, 1962), 95/96.

112. Welch, *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society*, 59.

113. *Ibid.*

114. Lumpkin, *Full Circle*, 126.

This sexual promiscuity matches the same experiences that Julia Brown described in her time within the Communist Party. It also strikes at the heart of the Christian ideal of the traditional family that the right-wing women were fighting to save. Lumpkin's novel also reflects the JBS's concern that humanity's laws and hedonistic needs were usurping God's laws and humanity's need to serve God. More importantly for my argument, it also represented the four key factors of a culture war. Both with the father's speech about the Social Gospel, and the above passage on marriage, both characters emphasize the need to be "working" and "serving" humanity. The key culture war themes are the destruction of the family unit, the use of sexual immorality in the demise of the family and the nation, and the destruction of organized religion and Christianity in America.

Lumpkin created a stunning visual of the greatest fear of the members of the JBS, the death and removal of Christ in America. Her novel depicted a scene that fanned the fears of like-minded readers of an attack on Christianity and America's Christian moral foundations. Lumpkin wrote a description of one of the communists, a man named Art, who attacked a crèche at the Christmas celebration of the protagonist and her mother:

He had found somewhere in his pocket, or had taken it from one of the packages they had brought, a length of cord. As we looked he lifted the figure of the Christ Child from the manger and with deep concentration, completely oblivious of the three women who watched (a concentration I could not help but admire), he slowly and carefully tied the cord about the neck of the carved wooden infant. At each end of the roof of the stable the eaves extended in single carved overhangs. And as we watched, and with the same concentration,

bending his head over his ‘task,’ moving his clever fingers in and out, he twisted and tied the ends of cord about its neck, dangled as if it had been hung on a gibbet<sup>115</sup> ...and with the same utterly concentrated attention, Art took up the figure of Mary and laid it down in the straw. ...With great deliberation he then lifted the figure of Joseph and placed it face down upon the figure of Mary.<sup>116</sup>

This defilement of the figure of the Christ and his parents epitomized the fear the Christian membership of the JBS had of communism and the eradication of their religion.

### **5.2.5 Elizabeth Linington**

Unlike the other women authors discussed, Elizabeth Linington<sup>117</sup> provided the reader with a plan on how to stop this “menace” through membership in the JBS. Linington’s book, *Come To Think of It*, published in 1965 by the JBS through its publishing house, Western Islands, analyzed the issues facing patriots in contemporary America. Chapters titled “Some Information Please,” “Tyranny Si, America No,” “A Planned Economy—And For Whose Benefit?” and “Some Strange Bedfellows” laid out problems in liberal America from the perspective of a typical American family. Each chapter opened with a quote from Robert Welch, from his writings or speeches. The final chapters “And So For Some Answers” and “The Heart Knoweth Its Own Bitterness,” carefully laid out what response

115. Lumpkin, *Full Circle*, 151.

116. *Ibid.*, 152.

117. Linington, well known for her mystery novels, she also wrote under the aliases of Anne Blaisdell, Leslet Egan, Dell Shannon, and Egan O’Neill. Her most famous character was LAPD Homicide Lieutenant Luis Mendoza.

or actions the typical American could do to combat these evils in society. In a memo to the American Opinion bookstore owners, Welch wrote, “We think this book will prove to be extremely effective for recruiting purposes.”<sup>118</sup>

In the building of her argument, Linington wove together sin, society’s immorality, and economics. She wrote:

There isn’t, of course, any obvious connection to the man-in-the-street between increased drug addiction, the decadence of public morals (and we could produce a whole chapter about *that*—talk about spiritual wickedness in high places, . . . ), the graduated income-tax, the sale of pornography, Social Security, the Communist Manifesto, the monotonous cry of Police Brutality from all directions, Medicare, and all the enraptured liberal adulation of the United Nations. It sounds a little crazy, maybe, to say there’s a very definite tie-up linking all those things, and other things, together. But there is.<sup>119</sup>

Linington, after connecting the issues of morality and economics, provides an answer on how to stop the coming wave: “It’s just a suggestion—you can always join The John Birch Society.”<sup>120</sup> Readers should not give up, she wrote, as “there’s been a very good reason to throw in the loaded dice, this time. An excellent reason. Because the Birch Society isn’t one of those silly sects earnestly preaching some obvious absurdity. They’re talking simple commonsensible down to earth truth, and backing it up with a lot of good solid facts.”<sup>121</sup>

118. American Opinion, Memo to All Bookstore Units (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, April 9, 1965), 2.

119. Elizabeth Linington, *Come to Think Of It* (Belmont, MA: Western Islands, 1965), 61.

120. *Ibid.*, 73.

121. *Ibid.*, 110.

The reader should join the JBS, she argued, “To save this nation for free men. To save *you*.”<sup>122</sup> Linington concocts a scenario where concentration camps exist, and long marches to death are imminent, and Americans are walking in a dream-state—and Americans need the help of the JBS to wake them up. As Linington acknowledges, this awakening comes with a price, with terms as “fanatic” and “crackpot” being used by skeptics to describe those doing this important work.<sup>123</sup> But there is, she contends, no need to despair. She writes:

And then you think back to that ordinary American living-room, and that handful of people gathered together, ordinary American citizens, and you know you are not alone. No. A sudden tremendous reassurance fills your heart, to know that there are thousands upon thousands of people like you who know, know all the dangers, who do know the truth, and who are quietly and efficiently working away, every minute they can spare, to spread the truth into more and more minds. To add thousands upon thousands of more people to their swelling ranks—that the truth shall be shouted aloud over this nation, until enough of this people shall be awakened and alerted that they will—let’s hope by education and political action—take their own nation back and restore to all its citizens the liberties and justices the Enemy has taken away.<sup>124</sup>

Linington provides a group, where the social hero is no longer alone. She also links the hope to “education and political action.” This accumulative building of fear was countered

122. Linington, *Come to Think Of It*, 113.

123. *Ibid.*, 116.

124. *Ibid.*, 117.

with hope through political action.

Each of the women authors used the key features, as defined by Prothero, of a culture war in their articles and books. Creating a sense of moral and religious decay in America at the hands of not only communists, but by un-American liberals who were portrayed as treasonous. Some economic issues were linked to the moral decay of America society, but the focus was on the attacks on religion, traditional values, the family unit and a breakdown of morality within society. These key features to a culture war were used by Welch to mobilize women within the JBS for political ends.

### **5.3 Laurene Conner: How the Culture War Rhetoric Mobilized/Politicized One Member of the JBS**

Laurene Conner was one of the women who responded to the JBS's call to the front lines of the battlefield against communism. In fact Laurene insisted that her entire family fulfill the mission of the JBS. Her and her husband were the first two members of the JBS in Chicago, he being the first.<sup>125</sup> They both purchased \$1,000 lifetime memberships, a considerable investment in 1958, and her husband, Stillwell Conner, was a member of the National Council of the JBS for 32 years.<sup>126</sup> In her autobiography *Wrapped in the Flag A Personal History of America's Radical Right*, Claire Conner, their daughter, recounted her childhood as a child of these JBS members. According to Claire, L. Conner believed

125. Claire Conner, *Wrapped in the Flag A Personal History of America's Radical Right* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2013), 33.

126. *Ibid.*, x.



that “God had set her path, and she followed His will. ‘Saving the country trumps fun and games.’”<sup>127</sup> This mantra was the foundation of the Conner family and all of their JBS activities.

Laurene and Stillwell were conservative Catholics who used their faith as the impetus for their JBS activism. They spoke almost weekly to large groups at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church, a parish pastored by Father John Dussman, also a Bircher. The couple posted weekly JBS information in the church bulletin the *Clarion*.<sup>128</sup> L. Conner’s first major effort for the JBS was to help combat against the War on Christmas. With the help of her daughter Claire, L. Conner stuffed hundreds of letters to department stores expressing her concern of UN decorations being used instead of Christmas decorations in the stores. Claire recalls in her mèmòire, “There is a war on Christmas. You watch. Before long, they’ll write it like this: *Xmas*. That’s the clue. They’re x-ing Christ out of his own birthday”<sup>129</sup> her mother declared while stuffing the envelopes.

A long standing campaign for the JBS was the “Impeach Warren” campaign that stemmed from the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954, which declared that racially segregated schools were inherently unequal. Welch described the ruling as “the most brazen and flagrant usurpation of power that has been seen, in a major court in the whole Anglo-American system of jurisprudence, in three hundred years.”<sup>130</sup> Welch and the JBS began a petition drive to impeach Chief Justice Warren with their goal to gather ten million signatures in six months, a goal that Laurene enthusiastically embraced.

127. Conner, *Wrapped in the Flag A Personal History of America’s Radical Right*, 24.

128. *Ibid.*, 52.

129. *Ibid.*, 47.

130. Robert Welch, “January Bulletin,” *The 1961 White Book*, 1961, 16.

Impeaching Warren became a priority as Welch said of the cause, “For us to bring about the impeachment of this idol of the Left would be a shattering blow to the morale and position of the ultra-Liberal forces. So shattering that it could be the crack which started the rapid crumbling of the whole Communist conspiracy in the United States.”<sup>131</sup> To thwart the conspiracy, L. Conner went door to door, made numerous telephone calls, and organized as many JBS members in Chicago as possible.<sup>132</sup> Claire Conner wrote of her parents, “My parents viewed their personal efforts as a small part of a much larger battle: the ultimate battle between good and evil, between God and Satan. When they succeeded—when evil was destroyed and God was on his throne—America would be restored to its rightful place, a nation dedicated to Christ under Christian law.”<sup>133</sup> The dedication of their work for Christianity, a Christian America, and to battle for good, is representative of Welch’s articulation of being on the “eternal side” through the actions of the JBS members.

According to Claire Conner, Laurene and Stillwell gave her a lifetime membership to the John Birch Society when she was 13; as a child, her lifetime membership dues were \$1,000. With this membership also came responsibility as L. Conner forced Claire to write letters as dictated in the monthly JBS membership newsletter, *The Bulletin*, for various campaigns.<sup>134</sup> L. Conner also spent hours each day reading magazines and newspapers, after reading she would start writing letters to newspapers, senators, and congressmen. Sometimes she would critique textbooks for school administrators, principals and pastors.<sup>135</sup> According to Claire Conner’s account, L. Conner also went through all

131. Robert Welch, “September Bulletin,” *The 1962 White Book*, 1962, 12.

132. Conner, *Wrapped in the Flag A Personal History of America’s Radical Right*, 78/79.

133. *Ibid.*, 135.

134. *Ibid.*, 86/87.

135. *Ibid.*, 30.

of the textbooks her children used at the Catholic schools they attended. Much to the embarrassment of her children, she was a frequent visitor to the schools due to her attempts to ban textbooks and to correct the schools' socialist teachings.<sup>136</sup> Taking the textbook war further, L. Conner worked with Phyllis Schlafly on the textbook issue. The two women also collaborated on the Anti-ERA (Equal Rights Act), campaign and lobbying Catholic Bishops to oppose the growing social justice movement in South America.<sup>137</sup>

Expanding on her research in 1960, L. Conner became the research director for the Catholic Fact Research Association. Through this position she became associated with Alphonse Matt, the editor of the *Wanderer*, a politically right-wing Catholic magazine, which was promoted by Welch in the April 1962 *The Bulletin*.<sup>138</sup> L. Conner began writing for the *Wanderer* and as her involvement with the Catholic magazine increased, her daughter Claire recalled, "I paid more attention to my parents' new 'orthodox' Catholicism. It became apparent that they'd fused their Catholicism with their Birchism and created an anti-Communist, anti-big government, pro-business Jesus who gave men absolute dominion over the earth. This Jesus approved of 'just war' and disapproved of 'social justice.'"<sup>139</sup> L. Conner's involvement with the *Wanderer* expanded as she became the driving force behind the Wanderer Forum Foundation. The Foundation was created by herself, Stillwell and Alphonse Matt and was "devoted to support true Catholic teaching and the religious and moral education of the Catholic laity according to the norms promulgated by Vatican II."<sup>140</sup> The Foundation held National Forums to provide "educational and spiritual speak-

136. Conner, *Wrapped in the Flag A Personal History of America's Radical Right*, 20-24.

137. *Ibid.*, 28.

138. Welch, "April Bulletin," 32.

139. Conner, *Wrapped in the Flag A Personal History of America's Radical Right*, 133.

140. Various, "Wanderer Forum," 2007, accessed March 19, 2013, <http://www.wandererforum.org/>

ers for Catholics who were literally outcasts as many in the post-Vatican II Church, made a left turn.”<sup>141</sup> Through the Foundation she managed the annual forums, selecting topics and speakers to match the yearly theme for the events, (such as marriage, social teachings, priesthood, respect for life).<sup>142</sup> This inspired L. Conner to team up with journalist Frank Morris to develop and manage the Foundation’s quarterly publication *Forum Focus*.<sup>143</sup> As L. Conner’s involvement in both the Foundation and the JBS grew, her daughter Claire said, “It became more and more difficult to see where Mother and Dad’s politics stopped and their religion began—or vice versa. Before long, there was no separation of church and state as long as the church was Christian and the state was, well, Christian too.”<sup>144</sup> While the intermingling of politics and religion was not a unique tactic used by the JBS, and one that the JBS attempted to deny, the case of Claire Conner’s memoir *Wrapped in the Flag*, demonstrates how religion could act as a motivating force that the JBS could tap into to mobilize members politically.

## 5.4 Conclusion

Each of the women authors for the JBS addressed specific and at times, overlapping, culture war issues in their writings. Key themes emerged from their work including the importance of the nuclear family and the role of women to protect their traditional roles for themselves

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History.html.

141. Various, “Wanderer Forum.”

142. Various, “uselectionatlas.com,” 2012, accessed December 28, 2012, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?year=1956&minper=0&f=0&off=0&elect=0>.

143. Ibid.

144. Conner, *Wrapped in the Flag A Personal History of America’s Radical Right*, 134.

and the coming generations, sexual deviance and sexual promiscuity as a tool of communists and as a conduit to the decline of morality in society, and the influence of atheism through communism and liberal political policies to dismantle organized religion within America. Using these culture war issues, the authors and the JBS hoped to mobilize women voters for conservative nominees. Battling against the liberals who were portrayed as the enemy of their families, their church, and their nation, right wing organizations framed this call to arms to women through private sphere issues that needed to be protected through activism in the public sphere. This was an extension of their traditional roles as the protectors of family, God and country. As the GOP stated, “American women have more to do with this [politics] than many of them realize. They have more votes than men. They devote more of their time to consideration of the welfare of the helpless, the aged and the younger generation.”<sup>145</sup> Women’s roles as the “heart” of hearth and home needed to become a political voice through activism and the voting booth. Their activism and their enduring of marginalization or sacrifices, such as Brown’s spying for the FBI, was truly on the side of the eternal from their perspective and the perspective of those, such as Welch, calling them to mobilize.

The influence that women authors connected to the JBS would have on creating the wave for Goldwater to ride to the GOP nomination for President would eventually have a long lasting influence on the Republican Party. The confluence of influences on women in the JBS, from sources such as Taylor Caldwell, Elizabeth Linington and the nameless conservative soldiers of the JBS grassroots movement, affected their role in the election of 1964. The Goldwater campaign focused on morality issues that were of utmost importance

145. Republican National Party, “Women In Politics,” 7.

to the women of the JBS, the foundations of a culture war. As will be argued in the coming chapters, these culture war issues would play a key role in the Goldwater campaign, but would only influence those individuals who were already battling against the decay of society. The broader American society, as I will argue in the next chapter, did not engage or react to these morality issues that the campaign and the JBS used to mobilize.

## Chapter 6

# “Silent Americans” and the Politics of American Moral Values

As argued in chapter five, the women of the John Birch Society (JBS), and women on the right as a whole, were integral to the political success of the conservative movement and the Republican Party. Housewives worked diligently to get the vote out, created study groups, and rallied like-minded citizens. To mobilize conservative women, right-wing strategists looked to culture war issues such as the importance of the nuclear family, the duty of women to protect their traditional roles, and sexual deviance and sexual promiscuity, as mounting evidence that morality was on the decline in the United States. While these culture war issues were often directed specifically at women, there was broader appeal—the emerging culture wars of the early 1960s were often tied to the battle against communism and liberalism, two forces, many conservatives believed, that were seeking to dismantle religion and destabilize American society. As a result, these culture war issues were also important

to the Goldwater campaign platform, which portrayed Goldwater's brand of conservatism as a solution to the moral crisis in America.

The focus of this chapter is on Barry Goldwater's journey to the presidential election of 1964. In this chapter, I will argue that the leadership of the JBS posed a problem for the Goldwater campaign. On one hand, Robert Welch "created a wave" for Goldwater to ride, which I addressed in chapter three. On the other hand, Welch brought discord and an air of disreputability to the campaign because his conspiracy theories and provocative pronouncements could be easily dismissed as extremism. As the 1964 election approached, the Goldwater campaign had to find a way to attract voters mobilized by the JBS, while not alienating more mainstream voters who would be turned off by what they perceived as the extremism of the JBS. As I will show in this chapter, Goldwater concluded that he had to disavow Welch, while at the same time reaching out to JBS members, and especially JBS funders.

I begin with a brief description of Goldwater's early political career. Then I discuss efforts that Welch, and wealthy industrialists associated with the JBS, undertook to support Goldwater prior to the 1964 election. In effect, Welch and the right-wing media built upon the ideological bridge created earlier by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), Fifield, and Graham that linked freedom, liberty, and free enterprise to religion, specifically Christianity. Next, I focus on the public understanding of the JBS, and more specifically Robert Welch, as conspiracists and examine how Goldwater attempted to distance himself from these aspects of the JBS. The implications of this labelling of the JBS as "conspiracist" and "extremist" caused the Goldwater campaign to strike a balance between disassociating themselves from the JBS while maintaining an association with the



members of the JBS as a voting bloc, and with the wealthy funders of the JBS. I then argue that Goldwater's campaign focused on American moral values, a moral decline in America, and culture war issues promoted by the JBS predominately to the women members, to strengthen their voting base and secure much needed votes. At the same time, right-wing media outlets and Welch reinforced these same issues as the cause of the communist infiltration and social conflict in America.

This overview demonstrates that Goldwater was reluctant to accept the Republican presidential nomination. Welch had successfully constructed this role for him by creating a "wave" of support for a Goldwater nomination. The political positions that NAM, the JBS, and conservative religious leaders had been espousing for many years helped to position Goldwater as the political "voice" of the right. Goldwater, often with the help of ghostwriters, echoed these opinions, providing a sense of validation and support from a political representative. He validated their fears and opinions. Furthering this coordinated effort, wealthy individuals such as J. Howard Pew and others on the JBS National Council used their social capital and money to create a Draft Goldwater movement; they worked feverishly behind the scenes to convince Goldwater that this was his role to play for true conservatism in the GOP. These individuals had long wanted a Republican nominee who was a "true conservative," who would limit the power of the moderates within the Party.

In many ways all of the interested parties were working to create a division between the moderates and the far-right within the Party—and in the process, they actually created greater divisions between the extreme right and moderates in the public sphere and among religious leaders. Ultimately, this moral values argument did not resonate with the majority of American voters. As a result, Goldwater was placed in an untenable position

of having to balance his financial supporters, the conservative electorate, and the extreme right. Goldwater was being positioned as the “conservative messiah” on many different fronts. Those in the background of the movement were both the financial supporters of his campaign and his counsel, providing advice on his career and campaign. Goldwater had to quietly accommodate these individuals, while at the same time facing the media and public onslaught of his support of the “extremists” that these individuals in the background had fostered and mobilized. Goldwater was a reluctant nominee who accepted the position to help save God, country and family at the behest of those who had created a voting bloc of improvisational conspiracists.

## **6.1 Religion, Politics, and Free Enterprise: The Rise of Barry Goldwater**

Goldwater’s foray into federal politics began with a run for the Arizona U.S. Senate seat in the 1952 election. Goldwater won the seat, defeating the Democratic incumbent Ernest McFarland. According to Goldwater’s personal journal, Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen (Rep.) was his guide to the Senate once he was elected. Dirksen and Styles Bridges, the long-serving New Hampshire Senator, “engineered” Goldwater receiving the Chairmanship of the Senatorial Campaign Committee during Goldwater’s second year in the Senate.<sup>1</sup> Goldwater held the chairmanship for several years, and it proved to be the conduit to his being considered for the Presidential nominee. Due to his extensive travel in this

1. Barry Goldwater, Personal Journal of Barry Goldwater (The Personal and Political Papers of Senator Barry M. Goldwater, FM MSS #1, Arizona Historical Foundation, July 19, 1979), 1.

position, Goldwater was well known outside of the state of Arizona. He quickly developed a reputation for being a constitutional conservative, believing in states' rights over federal rights, and for voting on his principles while in the Senate, which typically meant he supported legislation that promoted free enterprise, a reduction in government-run welfare programs, and a flat tax. In 1956, for example, Goldwater introduced a bill to bar political activities by labour, where a union-shop contract existed. In 1958 he introduced a bill to allow states to control strikes and picketing. He voted consistently against minimum wage increases, against Social Security changes, against national standards for unemployment insurance, and against federal aid to education.<sup>2</sup>

His political philosophy made him a natural ally of the National Association of Manufacturers and the conservative members of the JBS. His voting record and public persona made him an appealing candidate among conservatives seeking a principled and outspoken champion of their political and social values.

These shared values were the foundation upon which Robert Welch attempted to create a political movement of support, or as Welch described it, a “wave” for Goldwater to ride to the presidency. Although Goldwater did not publicly promote or support the “conspiracy” theories created by Welch, Goldwater was positioned by the JBS and other right-wing publications and groups as the political spokesperson for their political and social values. Welch, through the use of conspiracy theories, religion, culture war issues, and conservative politics, created a grassroots movement fully in support of Goldwater as the presidential nominee.

2. Unknown, “What Goldwater Would Do to Labor,” *The Guild Reporter*, October 9, 1964, 6.

An important component of this grass roots movement was the role the JBS played in the old Christian Right. Robert Welch and his grassroots political movement, the JBS, were an influential component of the “old Christian Right” and through this role it was foundational in the beginnings of the culture wars that erupted in the late 1960s. David M. Baxter, a newspaper columnist and ordained minister, noted in an article for *Eternity* magazine the influence that Welch was having on Catholics in particular:

Almost to a man, these Catholic Birchists looked, not to their own church leaders, or even an elected President or Congress to help ‘save’ America and Christianity, but to Welch and his set-up—a *political* movement—ignoring its leader’s peculiar religious views and what they are being offered in place of Communism or our present democratic republican way.<sup>3</sup>

In the same article, Baxter also wrote on the JBS and Protestantism:

The latest classic example of political scheming directed at Christianity is the John Birch Society. Its founder, Robert Welch, ...in his pitch to win over Protestant evangelicals, the bulk of Protestantism, blasts the infidelity, heresy and socialistic opinions of modernists and liberals. To capture fundamentalist organizations and mass followings, he adroitly champions them against supposedly liberal church councils and groups that are anathema to fundamentalists. Thus, thousands of fundamentalists look upon Welch as a great Christian and his John Birch Society as the savior of America from Communism.<sup>4</sup>

3. Baxter, “What About the John Birch Society?,” 36.

4. *Ibid.*, 16.

Welch's influence as an opinion shaper was leaving an impression on the religious conservatives within the JBS. He focused on the moral decline in America and culture war issues that were identified by right-wing media as crucial challenges that needed to be overcome if America was going to fulfill its destiny as a country inspired by God to promote freedom around the world, and especially in areas where the Soviet Union had gained a stronghold. As Goldwater began to contemplate a run for the presidency, Welch had already made inroads into shaping an increasingly important element in the GOP base, namely, politically conservative Christians who could quite easily integrate conservative Christianity, American exceptionalism, fervent nationalism, and anti-communism.

In 1958 Welch wrote a biographical sketch of Goldwater in *American Opinion* where he focused on the strength of his character and “uncompromising expression of his convictions.”<sup>5</sup> Goldwater, according to Welch, demonstrated both these characteristics while standing strong for right-to-work legislation (i.e., a law forbidding “closed shop” union-employer contracts), “a firm position in support of plain oldfashioned [sic] Americanism.”<sup>6</sup> Welch argued that the one motivating force for Goldwater's firm position was “good government; one which adheres faithfully to our constitution, and supports—largely by leaving alone—our free-enterprise economic-political system.”<sup>7</sup> Welch wrote, “Barry Goldwater is a man who makes you proud of America.”<sup>8</sup>

An important topic for the JBS, and eventually for the Goldwater presidential campaign, was the declining morality in American society. Welch, in his speech “New Ameri-

5. Robert Welch, “A Fighter From Phoenix,” *American Opinion*, 1958, 15–25, 20.

6. *Ibid.*, 20.

7. *Ibid.*, 25.

8. *Ibid.*

canism,” expressed the idea that immorality had become the new standard for humanity:

Now, for the first time in all history on any extensive scale—let alone on any worldwide scale—we have the forces of evil openly and brazenly setting up their precepts and values and codes as the acceptable and preferable *mores* of mankind. We see a conscious, deep-rooted, long-range, deliberate, incredibly determined and diabolically cunning attempt to have the evil in man’s nature become revered instead of the good.<sup>9</sup>

Welch thought Christian Western civilization was collapsing, and at fault was the pervasive immorality of American society. He continued:

But today the Christian Constitutionalist weeps as he walks about his country. He sees the spiritual and political faith of his fathers betrayed, by wolves in sheep’s garments. He sees the forces of evil increasing in strength and momentum under the leadership of Satan, the archenemy of freedom. He sees the wicked honored and the valiant abused.<sup>10</sup>

The main threat was evil’s attack on freedom, an important aspect of which was free enterprise. Welch placed the onus upon conservatives to stop this menace. As a potential solution to the continued advancement of liberalism in America, Welch promoted the idea of working for and supporting a “true conservative” politician to lead the nation. Political engagement of the membership was a proactive response to this threat to God, country,

9. Welch, *The New Americanism: And Other Speeches*, 62-63.

10. Benson, “The Christ and The Constitution,” 41.

and family. This attempt by Welch to organize Christians to become active in politics was not a new concept. NAM, Fifield, Graham, and wealthy individuals such as J. Howard Pew had been actively engaged in this mobilization for decades. Learning from each incarnation of mobilization, and making adjustments from lessons learned from each attempt, Welch and the JBS's supporters saw the Society as the latest incarnation of the movement.

Scholars who research religion and American politics or the rise of the Christian Right have not usually regarded Welch's attempts at mobilization as "religious," since they were under the auspices of business groups. They instead frame Welch's efforts as business-oriented or merely as a political movement and this has affected the scholarly research on the political engagement of the Christian Right. According to Clyde Wilcox, a scholar of American and comparative politics, an "old Christian Right" existed in the 1920s. The main issue for these groups, was the teaching of evolution in the classroom. A secondary wave of Christian political mobilization occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. Wilcox links the Christian organizations in the 1950s to a "renewal of evangelical enthusiasm and fundamentalist reaction in the mid 1940s."<sup>11</sup> Wilcox argues that the old Christian Right of the 1950s connected various religious organizations through anti-communism. He argues that the:

1964 election represents the best opportunity to study popular awareness for and support of the old Christian Right. National attention to the role of these groups in the Goldwater coalition raised them to a level of prominence which they had not achieved before and would not soon receive again. Not until the

11. C. Wilcox, "Popular Backing for the Old Christian Right: Explaining Support for the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade," *Journal of Social History*, 1987, 117–132, 118.

formation of the Moral Majority in the 1970s would an organization of the Christian Right again capture the attention of the national media.<sup>12</sup>

While anti-communism was a cohesive banner for the “old Christian Right” to rally under, it also was effective at obfuscating any section of the movement that did not prescribe to these specific values. Scholarship, such as Wilcox’s, includes organizations such as large Christian associations and grassroots organizations with the word Christian in their titles, including, but not limited to, Fred Schwarz’s Christian Anti-Communism Crusade and Rev. Billy James Hargis’s Christian Crusade. The JBS, which used many of the same tactics as these overtly Christian organizations, has been overlooked for its role in the political mobilization of Christians in the 1950s and 1960s. Welch and the JBS strategically positioned themselves by publicly stating they were neither a religious nor a political organization, yet they marketed themselves as simply an anti-communist group. The reality was that they were an anti-communist group created for political action—action that relied on Christianity and conspiracy theories for mobilization. Not only were the JBS a vocal group within the old Christian Right, but it was also positioned as a symbol of the non-religious right-wing:

The organizations of the Old Christian Right (American Council of Christian Churches and the International Council of Christian Churches) reached the pinnacle of their influence in 1964, with the campaign of Barry Goldwater. Goldwater’s issue positions were consistent with those of the Christian Right.

12. Wilcox, “Popular Backing for the Old Christian Right: Explaining Support for the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade,” 119-120.



He had been a supporter of McCarthy, endorsed by the John Birch Society, and was one of the most consistently conservative Senators in Washington.<sup>13</sup>

Continuing this link between religion and political issues, Goldwater, like NAM and the JBS, also supported the responsibility of religious institutions to fight against communism. In an article for *Human Events* entitled “The Church Should Fight Communism,” Goldwater called upon the churches to fight communism and “this evil which is determined to destroy all virtue, decency, thrift, love, friendship, and the dignity of the individual.”<sup>14</sup> In the same article, Goldwater stated that communism was a competing or substitute economic system to free enterprise; however, it was rarely acknowledged by organized religion or theologians for its significance as a “secular atheistic religion which has as its first objective the denial of the existence of God and the refutation of the Judeo-Christian concept of the origin of life, man’s purpose on earth and eternity.”<sup>15</sup> In another article written by Goldwater, entitled “Socialism’s Baited Trap,” he accused the “Socialists, the welfare-staters and the super-planners”<sup>16</sup> of attempting to create “Heaven on earth for man.”<sup>17</sup> He warned that once this heaven on earth is created, the Socialists will have complete control of the rules governing their articulation of heaven.

These ideas were not confined to Goldwater’s writings in the right-wing media. They were reinforced simultaneously in conservative religious media as well. For example J.

13. Wilcox, “Popular Backing for the Old Christian Right: Explaining Support for the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade,” 119.

14. Barry Goldwater, “The Church Should Fight Communism,” *Human Events* XVIII, no. 46 (November 17, 1961): 70.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Barry Goldwater, “Socialism’s Baited Trap,” *Human Events* XVIII, no. 42 (October 20, 1961): 700.

17. *Ibid.*

Howard Pew addressed similar topics for the Christian community. In a tract entitled “Faith and Freedom” Pew wrote:

Liberty is a Christian concept, but people must first have faith in God before they can enjoy the blessings of liberty, for God is the author of liberty. Then they must fight for the preservation of that liberty. Their failure to do so is a crime, the punishment for which is servitude.<sup>18</sup>

Pew, as did Goldwater, equated liberty with morality, and without this morality, there was servitude. As a result, Pew supported and encouraged the churches’ involvement in the battle against communism:

I believe that the Church is the only institution that can save this country from Communism. The reason for this is quite simple: Communism is atheistic – the Church is Christian; the one is the very antithesis of the other. The Church must inculcate in the minds and hearts of its people that God alone is the Lord of Creation. When the Church takes its stand that man is a creature of God, it denies the very concept of Communism.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, Pew argued that communism equated to sin and immorality. He wrote, “Communism, crime, and delinquency are not caused by poverty, bad laws, poor housing, or any other economic, social, or political condition. They are caused by sin. The only way to eradicate sin is by the redemptive power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church is

18. J. Howard Pew, “Faith and Freedom,” (American Tract Society - Oradell, New Jersey, Tom Anderson Papers, University of Oregon Archives, Undated).

19. Ibid.

God's instrument to carry the Gospel to man."<sup>20</sup> The existence of a welfare state, according to Pew, was not due to the shortcomings of capitalism or other economic reasons, but due to immorality and sinfulness. Pew, Welch, and Goldwater infused economic and political ideas with Christianity.

## **6.2 The “Conservative Messiah,” the Paranoid “Conspiracists,” and Goldwater’s Nomination**

### **6.2.1 Drafting the Conservative Messiah**

Pew, H.L. Hunt, Crane, and other wealthy individuals were actively involved in a secret Draft Goldwater movement as early as 1961. In December of that year, a small group of GOP conservatives met to consider strategies for the coming 1964 election and how to defeat Kennedy. After studying statistical data, and based on their own personal knowledge of their districts, they decided upon a strategy that called for the GOP to abandon its reliance on large cities, and instead focus on the American heartland.<sup>21</sup>

Organizing the movement was F. Clifton White, a past regional director for the Young Republican National Federation.<sup>22</sup> Charles Barr, an executive with Standard Oil Co. was

20. Pew, “Faith and Freedom.”

21. Robert R. Richardson, Memo to Howard Callaway, Edward E. Noble, Dillard Munford (F. Clifton White papers, #2006. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, December 7, 1962), 2.

22. New York Young Republican Club, “New York Young Republican Club Proposed Platform for 1952 Republican National Convention,” (William Edward Miller papers, #2391. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, March 20, 1952), 3.

a member of the Draft Goldwater Campaign, as was Roger Milliken (JBS), William Midendorf, and John Rousset, a vocal member of the Society and future Communications Director for the JBS.<sup>23</sup> William A. Rusher, publisher of *National Review*, and White played a central role in the Draft Goldwater movement. Goldwater resisted the idea of the nomination, and was quite upset that White had organized the Draft Goldwater Committee. When Goldwater stated to the group he was not interested in seeking the nomination, committee members and funders began to contact him to try and change his mind. Stephen Shadegg, Goldwater's ghostwriter for the nationally syndicated news articles "How Do You Stand, Sir?" and Goldwater's former Senate campaign manager,<sup>24</sup> sent Goldwater a long letter to convince him to run. Attached to the letter was a one-sheet rationale for Goldwater's acceptance of the nomination. Shadegg wrote:

The Conservative movement, or perhaps it would be better to describe it as the traditional Constitutional movement in this nation, has made great headway in the past ten years. Much of this progress must be attributed to the leadership of Goldwater. He has become the focal point, the Messiah, the spokesman for the aspirations and political faith of the inarticulate masses of Republicans.<sup>25</sup>

Those involved in drafting Goldwater were specifically focused on the main purpose of the initial committee, namely, securing a truly conservative nominee for the GOP, and not another moderate.

23. George F. Hobart, "Inside the Goldwater 'Draft'," (*Advance*, F. Clifton White papers, #2006. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, Undated), 21.

24. Glenn Fowler, "Stephen Shadegg, Goldwater Advisor and Alter Ego, 80," *The New York Times*, May 24, 1990, 1–45.

25. Stephen Shadegg, Political Outline (The Personal and Political Papers of Senator Barry M. Goldwater, FM MSS #1, Arizona Historical Foundation, Undated), 6.

The JBS was also pushing for a candidate who reflected its members religious values and conservative politics. The 13th president of the Latter Day Saints, Ezra Taft Benson, in a speech entitled “Christ and the Constitution,” which was published in *American Opinion*, advocated for infusing God into U.S. politics with God to counter the atheism of communism. The introduction to this piece was penned by Rev. Francis E. Fenton, a frequent presenter in the JBS Speakers Bureau and who later founded the Orthodox Roman Catholic Movement in the United States. Fenton stated:

A restoration of God to His right and just place of honor and supremacy in our American republic demands leaders who will not fear to stand on the side of God and religion and morality, leaders who have the courage to proclaim and defend the rights of God in defiance of those who seek to dethrone Him and to usurp His authority in the affairs of men; leaders who fully realize that effective opposition to, and ultimate conquest of, the criminal conspiracy of atheistic Communism and the manifold sins associated with this diabolical menace demands not merely a profession of allegiance to God but uncompromising proof of that allegiance in daily life.<sup>26</sup>

Fenton was expressing the need for political leaders who made the connection between immorality and communism and, more importantly, who would join in the fight against this “diabolical menace.”

26. Benson, “The Christ and The Constitution,” Introduction.

## 6.2.2 Extremism and the Paranoid Conspiracists

While Goldwater was seen as the “Messiah” of the right, he was justifiably concerned about the label of “paranoid conspiracists” that his supporters had attracted. The activity of the JBS and their vocal support of his candidacy concerned Goldwater, even prior to agreeing to run. In January 1962, William F. Buckley Jr., Russell Kirk, William Baroody, Jay Hall (Goldwater’s publicist), and Goldwater met at a private meeting in Palm Beach, Florida. Goldwater, at this point, had said numerous times that he would not put his name up for nomination. The four men had met to discuss the JBS; Baroody, a close personal friend of Goldwater, broached the topic. Kirk thought that influential conservatives interested in gaining the White House should publicly renounce the JBS and Robert Welch. Goldwater said in response, “Every other person in Phoenix is a member of the John Birch Society. . . I’m talking about the highest cast of men of affairs. Any of you know who Frank Cullen Brophy is?”<sup>27</sup> Whether they knew him or not, Goldwater was identifying a political reality. Brophy was one of the original members of the JBS, and was on the National Council. He was a resident of Arizona and used his wealth, which he gained from banking, ranching, and writing as an amateur historian and political commentator, to support political campaigns such as Barry Goldwater’s.

From this meeting in early 1962 with the intellectual leaders of American conservatism, a coordinated plan was created to deal with the issue of the JBS. The first step, would be for Goldwater to find an opportunity to “dissociate himself from the ‘findings’ of the Society’s

27. William F. Buckley Jr., *Flying High: Remembering Barry Goldwater* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 68.

leader, without, however, casting any aspersions on the Society itself.”<sup>28</sup> In a coordinated effort, Buckley, in the pages of the *National Review*, would disparage the conspiratorial ideas of Robert Welch, and “oppose any support for the Society” unless Welch disassociated himself from the Society.<sup>29</sup> Welch had become the focus of this discussion because of his claim in *The Politician* that President Eisenhower was a “dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy.”<sup>30</sup> The JBS had been labelled as “conspiracists” in 1962 when the contents of *The Politician* had been made public by the *Chicago Daily news*. In many respects, the plan was to focus on Welch’s provocative statements to show more moderate voters that conservative leadership was willing to break with the JBS leaders, all while signalling to those many associated with the JBS that the leadership agreed with their general antipathy toward communism, organizations that sought to undermine traditional American values, and regulations that sought to curb free enterprise.

The challenge was that many in the JBS were more in alignment with Welch than with relatively more moderate, though no less passionate, conservatives such as Buckley and Kirk. For example, the widely held conspiracy beliefs within the JBS can be found in the archives of Goldwater’s running mate William E. Miller. For example, in 1958, Fred C. Koch wrote Miller, requesting that Congress ask the Kremlin to give the “The Order of Lenin” to the US Supreme Court, especially Justices Warren, Frankfurter, Douglas, and Black. According to Koch, the Supreme Court justices had made it easy for the Russians to take over America. Koch felt that they had “made subversion and spying easy,”<sup>31</sup> and that

28. Buckley Jr., *Flying High: Remembering Barry Goldwater*, 69.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Welch, *The Politician*, 66.

31. Fred C. Koch, Letter to William E. Miller (William Edward Miller papers, #2391. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, January 9, 1958).

is was impossible for a communist to lose a case in their court. He declared, “They have usurped the law-making privileges of the peoples’ elected representatives, nullifying states rights, concentrating all power in Washington where some day a dictator can take over.”<sup>32</sup> Koch stated that, through the integration laws upheld by the Supreme Court, led by Warren, the Justices had in effect “put the colored man and the white man at each other’s throats, have set white against white, can well create a situation so that the Communists can take over our country without firing a shot.”<sup>33</sup> Miller kept this letter in a folder with a bright orange label that read “Crank File.” The conspiratorial beliefs of the JBS were not only in the public revelations of Welch. Koch was the founder of Koch industries and a tremendously wealthy supporter of conservative candidates. This letter was sent three months after the JBS was created, and Koch was on the original JBS National Council when he sent the letter to Miller.

Koch’s letter reflects many of the culture war issues propagated by the JBS. The JBS was known for its campaign to impeach Chief Justice Warren for his role in desegregation, as well as its battle against the removal of prayer from schools, and its opposition to what its members saw as the socialist war on free enterprise. Koch’s letter also addressed the fear of communist control of the Civil Rights Movement. Miller’s dismissive response to Koch’s letter is representative of his disregard for the “conspiracy” aspects of the JBS, even when they came from someone as wealthy and powerful as Koch. Goldwater had to put the onus on Welch for the issues surrounding the JBS. The JBS membership and the JBS funders were needed by his campaign to succeed, the label of conspiracist or extremist

32. Koch,

33. Ibid.



had to be removed from them, and placed solely on Welch.

This was a delicate operation. The importance of the wealthy and influential on Goldwater's political career was paramount, while Goldwater had to be seen to be taking a strong position against the "extremists" to win over moderates and undecided voters. Goldwater himself had to balance his anti-Welch statements with his reliance on financial support and advice he was receiving from the leaders of the JBS. This was not an issue that suddenly arose with his nomination—Goldwater had to respond to the JBS leadership well before that point in time.

Correspondence between Goldwater and JBS National Council member Robert D. Love in 1962 is evidence of this balance. Love inquired about Goldwater's comments on the JBS, and his call for Welch to resign from the leadership. He asked to meet with Goldwater either one on one, or with additional members of the National Council. Goldwater stated he would happily meet with Council Members, but then attempted to explain to Love why he had to make a public response to Welch and the JBS:

I [Goldwater] make an average of three speeches a week followed by questions and answers, and almost without exception, the question of the Birch Society comes up and when I supply them with the answer . . . the next is always 'Do you believe in the things that Bob Welch says?' Having carefully kept a catalogue of all the things that he has said in the last year I, frankly, must disassociate myself with most of those statements. Not all of them, mind you, but most of them.<sup>34</sup>

34. Barry Goldwater, Letter to Robert D. Love (American Council of Christian Laymen Records, Wisconsin Historical Society, February 3, 1962), 2.

The press and moderate Republican voters continually raised concerns about Goldwater's ties to the JBS, which posed serious political problems for the Goldwater campaign. In spite of his attempts to distance himself from Welch, Goldwater often found himself being held accountable for Welch's statements. In effect, Goldwater was caught between taking political positions and engaging in political rhetoric that fueled support for his candidacy, and getting linked to Welch's conspiratorial proclamations, including Welch's references to Eisenhower—a war hero, fellow Republican, and popular president—as a communist sympathizer.

Goldwater required the support of the general membership and the other leaders of the Society. He had to balance his remarks to ensure he did not alienate these larger groups:

I think the Birch Society has great potential. I think that he [Welch] has done a fine job at least whenever I am acquainted with their activities. I further think that the only anchors hanging around the organization's neck are the intemperate, unwise, groundless statements that have been made by Bob during the past several years. Remove Welch and the Birch Society cannot be attacked.<sup>35</sup>

Goldwater acknowledged the redeeming qualities of the JBS, and later in his career Goldwater would try to emulate these qualities in his own group, the Free Society of America (FSA). But a major stumbling block for the general public was Welch.

Although he attempted to sever this perceived connection to the JBS, Goldwater continued to be linked to the Society and activists on the right. Goldwater announced he

35. Goldwater, 2.

would seek the Republican Party Nomination for President on January 3, 1964. He ran as a self-described “true conservative” and with the determination as he put it, to do the “best we can in this imperfect world, to protect and perpetuate the sovereignty of the individual, because it is only as individuals that we are capable of expressing the nobility God intended man to achieve.”<sup>36</sup> Goldwater promised in this speech, “I will not change my beliefs to win votes. I will offer a choice, not an echo.”<sup>37</sup> Goldwater had, throughout his political career, stood by his beliefs and looked to them to guide his votes in the Senate. An important commonality with the activists on the right and Goldwater was his beliefs toward communism.

Two weeks prior to the Republican National Convention (RNC), Goldwater gave an interview to the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, in which he stated his view on the prospects of American coexistence with communism: “This struggle today is a struggle between godless people and the people of God ...It’s between slavery and freedom.”<sup>38</sup> This struggle was the cornerstone of his platform as he prepared for the RNC.

### **6.2.3 The Republican National Convention and Extremism**

The nomination of Goldwater as the GOP nominee occurred at the Republican National Convention held at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, California, on July 15, 1964. Before naming its candidates, the GOP convention approved the party platform for the coming

36. Barry Goldwater, “The Conservative Credo,” *Human Events* XVIII, no. 31 (August 4, 1961): 503.

37. Adam Clymer, “Barry Goldwater, Conservative and Individualist, Dies at 69,” *The New York Times*, 1998, 1.

38. George W Dell, “The Republican Nominee: Barry M. Goldwater,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 50, no. 4 (1964): 399–404, 402.

year. The platform was conservative in tone but not necessarily in the specific planks. *The Congressional Quarterly Guide to Current American Government* stated that the convention marked a rejection of the moderate section of the Party.<sup>39</sup> Stressing victory over communism, and a goal of smaller government,<sup>40</sup> the platform was largely in alignment with the JBS vision for the country.

The moderates in the GOP wanted to alter the platform on three main points: civil rights, domestic political extremism, and presidential control of nuclear weapons. Nelson Rockefeller, Goldwater's main opponent and a favourite of the moderates, offered an amendment to the platform that would have denounced extremists, including the John Birch Society. In addition, Pennsylvania Governor William Scranton called on the Republican Party to condemn the JBS. Michigan Governor George Romney responded that the Party should make it clear that it opposes extremism; however, he was against any specific denunciation of the JBS.<sup>41</sup> None of the amendments regarding the JBS or extremism were passed, and Goldwater's refusal to rebuke the Birchers led to much speculation on his sympathies toward the radical right.

In his acceptance speech Goldwater said the now famous words: "Extremism in the defence of virtue is no vice. Moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." The infamous

39. Congressional Quarterly Service Inc., "Fall 1964 CQ Guide to Current American Government Timely Research on Recent Significant Developments," (Congressional Quarterly Service Inc., Washington D.C., Richard L. Stevens papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, 1964), 80.

40. Unknown, "A Report in Depth on Barry Goldwater The Story of the 1964 Republican Presidential Nominee," (*Newsbook*, The National Observer, Dow Jones & Company Inc., William Edward Miller papers, #2391. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, 1964), 10.

41. Unknown, "Scranton Wants Republican Condemn John Birch Society," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 1964, 1-14, 1.

line was applauded by most of the delegates at the Republican National Convention, but the press used the line to reinforce their labelling of Goldwater as an extremist. *The New York Post* wrote in its coverage of the RNC that “racists have never before enjoyed so big a night.”<sup>42</sup> Goldwater’s statement became a focal point for the media. The press linked the quote to Goldwater’s “support” of the JBS and extremists. Despite his attempts to disassociate with the JBS and Welch, the media continued to present him as the “Messiah” of extremists, racists, and conspiracists. During the campaign, President Lyndon Johnson referred to Goldwater as a “raving, ranting demagogue,”<sup>43</sup> supporting the media’s portrayal of Goldwater being a hero to the extremists in America. Remarkably, there was little pushback from the Goldwater campaign. Other than the attempt by Goldwater to disassociate from Welch via *The National Review*, he did not take a strong stance against the JBS as a whole. Even though others in the GOP called for Goldwater to denounce “extremists,” he continued to court the JBS membership as a voting bloc. This calculated strategy to denounce only Robert Welch backfired on the Goldwater campaign. The media, undoubtedly to the satisfaction of the Johnson campaign, continued to link Goldwater to the JBS and extremists, which greatly hindered Goldwater’s ability to appeal to moderates or swing voters.

42. John William Middelndorf II, *A Glorious Disaster: Barry Goldwater’s Presidential Campaign and the Origins of the Conservative Movement* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 6.

43. Karl E. Mundt, “Statements Made in the Present Campaign,” *Congressional Record - Senate*, September 23, 1964,

### 6.3 A “Moral Crisis” Campaign

Leading up to Goldwater’s nomination at the Cow Palace, culture war issues such as pornography, sexual “deviancy,” prayer in schools, and immorality in society and government, had played an important role in development of the campaign platform. After the nomination, morality took an even greater role. F. Clifton White proposed to the campaign committee that the focus should be on a moral crisis in America. In a strategy analysis for the campaign, White wrote, “our greatest single liability, is the ‘trigger happy,’ ‘nuclear warmongering’ image which has been fastened on the Senator.”<sup>44</sup> To counter this image, White suggested the following approach:

the one direction which may be able to rescue the campaign by providing us with a common denominator whose theme will appeal to all major groups whose vote we must obtain—And, at the same time, will strike at Johnson’s only point of real vulnerability. That direction is development and pursuit of a *theme of moral crisis*.<sup>45</sup>

According to White’s analysis, polls were showing that the public felt that the Johnson’s administration were weakest in dealing with the Civil Rights Movement, government spending, juvenile delinquency, abuse of welfare programs, and the morality of public officials.<sup>46</sup>

44. F. Clifton White, Memorandum Strategy Analysis of Campaign Survey: Confidential (The Personal and Political Papers of Senator Barry M. Goldwater, FM MSS #1, Arizona Historical Foundation, 1964), 1.

45. *Ibid.*, 1-2.

46. *Ibid.*, 5.

This theme of moral crisis presented by White was not simply based on the analysis of polls. In his book *Suite 3505: The Story of the Draft Goldwater Movement*, White expanded on why he thought these issues were important:

I came to understand more clearly than I ever had before that, if our society is to be preserved, each of us must accept his full responsibility as a citizen of a free country. To do this requires a grasp of the fundamental fact that it has been our Constitution and the free enterprise system which transformed America, during a relatively short span of history, from a hopelessly undeveloped wilderness into the greatest and most powerful nation the world has ever seen, a nation which has given its citizens far greater freedom and opportunity than any other country on earth. Underlying this conclusion, I [White] will admit in all humility, was my belief that our free society had to be predicated upon a fundamental faith in God. . . . But history has shown that when a people or a nation becomes indifferent to God and turns its face against the traditional values that foster a belief in the worth of the individual, then that nation must one day be cast into chaos. Out of this an authoritarian form of government inevitably rises.<sup>47</sup>

White's personal faith and commitment to free enterprise were the catalyst to his suggestion that the campaign focus on morality in America. These words reflected the message of NAM, Fifield, Graham, Pew, and more importantly, the JBS.

47. F. Clifton White and William J. Gill, *Suite 3505: The Story of the Draft Goldwater Movement* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1967), 29.

Goldwater's campaign focused on this imagery of a decaying society, which resulted from immorality in the White House. This is evidenced in a television campaign commercial where Goldwater's voiceover read the following as images of violence and corrupt politicians were shown:

Is moral responsibility out of style? Our papers and our newsreels and yes, our own observations tell us that immorality surrounds us as never before. We see violence in the streets, in our cities and suburbs, graft and corruption in the highest public offices to which we look for leadership. When scandal in local and national government has become so commonplace that many begin to consider it a way of life, then I say that we, as a nation, are not far from the kind of moral decay that has brought on the fall of other nations and people.<sup>48</sup>

The image of a decaying political system and its resulting social issues were a motivating factor in many of the various campaign programs.

## **6.4 Divisions among Religious Responses to Goldwater and the Theme of “Moral Crisis”**

The media were not the only group to link Goldwater to extremists. Religious leaders also spoke out against Goldwater's appeal and supposed support of the JBS and extremists. The

48. Interpublic: Erwin, Wasey, Ruthrauff and Ryan, Inc., “‘Moral Responsibility,’ Republican National Committee, 1964,” (Museum of the Moving Image, *The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952–2012, 1964*), accessed March 19, 2013, [www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1964/moral-responsibility](http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/1964/moral-responsibility).



focus of religious leaders' criticism of Goldwater was his lack of commitment to social issues, such as social welfare programs, equal rights, and civil rights. The criticism of Goldwater's stance on social issues came from religious leaders across a spectrum of denominations. The Episcopal church, Goldwater's own denomination, was put in a position where it had to balance its own stance on social issues with Goldwater's positions. Shortly after the RNC, Goldwater had stated that two retired Episcopalian bishops had been influential in his life, Rt. Rev. William Scarlett, a retired Bishop of Missouri who baptized Goldwater, and Rt. Rev. Walter Mitchell, a retired Bishop of Arizona. Even though Goldwater had named them as influential figures in his life, both retired bishops were, as the Religious News Service reported, "sharply opposed to the candidate's social and political views."<sup>49</sup>

In late July 1964 the Episcopalian *Living Church* magazine published an interview with Goldwater's Bishop in Arizona. Responses from readers to that article reflected the line between pro- and anti-Goldwater Episcopalians. An Anti-Goldwater reader wrote to the magazine:

Goldwater must be an odd sort of Christian because on some issues he has disagreed with 'the known position of the Episcopal Church as expressed by resolutions of General Convention and the National Council, in pastoral letters from the bishops, and in pronouncements by the Presiding Bishop.'<sup>50</sup>

Conversely, a Goldwater supporter wrote in response to the same interview:

Barry Goldwater is the only hope for a return to decent moral standards and

49. Religious News Service, "Yes, But —," *The Living Church*, August 16, 1964, 4.

50. Editors, "The Goldwater Story," *The Living Church*, August 16, 1964, 10.

the biblical way of living in this country. For too long, crime has been rising, morals have been declining, and the federal government has undertaken to run everything. Senator Goldwater has been taken to task by one weekly news-magazine for injecting morals into the campaign. Isn't it about time somebody did? We'd be better off with a President who was extremely honest than with one who was moderately so. I would also like for the streets of my town to be extremely safe, but I am tired of my Church's being extremely liberal.<sup>51</sup>

These two responses are indicative of tensions that were, in the early 1960s, growing between mainstream Christian voices and Christians attracted to the message promoted by Welch. The 1950s and the 1960s saw the divisions between Protestant denominations veer away from signifiers of theological and social divisions, to more internal splits and mergers amongst Protestant denominations. What these realignments created, according to religion scholar Neil J. Young, was a deliniation between two camps: conservative evangelical and liberal mainline. This brought the conservative evangelicals into political conversation with Mormons and conservative Catholics about theology and politics which Young argues, "shaped the 'restructuring' of American Christianity and influenced the course of American politics and modern conservatism."<sup>52</sup>

The Episcopal Church did not take an official position but allowed lay members to respond. In the pages of the *Living Church*, the editors had to balance between not attacking the candidate as a member of their church and the fact that his political policies

51. Editors, "The Goldwater Story," 10.

52. Neil J Young, *We Gather Together: The Religious Right and the Problem of Interfaith Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 6.

were in complete contradiction to their public pronouncements in support of social issues such as welfare programs, equal rights, and civil rights. In an interview appearing in *Living Church*, Rt. Rev. Joseph M. Harte, Bishop of Arizona, said this of Goldwater and his faith, “I believe Barry has a profound faith in God, and I would emphasize his strong loyalties, his deep personal honesty, and his great integrity to his principles that he has demonstrated. We in Arizona have faith in Barry as a Christian.”<sup>53</sup> Harte continued by speaking of the times that Goldwater had expressed his Christian faith. One example of such a time concerns a conversation between Goldwater and an editor in Tucson, Arizona, in 1952. During this conversation Goldwater was asked what kind of Republican he was. He responded with, “I am a Republican who believes that man’s freedom comes from Almighty God; that man possesses an important human integrity and an immortal soul; that man can never achieve his highest capacities except in a climate of individual freedom.”<sup>54</sup> Goldwater once again linked his religion to a sense of freedom and individuality, the foundation of the conservative perspective.

Political historian Seymour P. Lachman, writing in the late 1960s, argued that this divide between moderates and those who were more conservative within the leadership and the laity of churches was not constrained to one denomination. He stated:

Whereas some Protestant church leaders and church members were most outspoken during the 1960 campaign in their fears of Kennedy’s lack of commitment to the principle of separation of church and state, the nation’s leading moderate Protestant clergy and laymen in 1964 were most outspoken in their

53. Fritzi Ryley, “Barry as a Christian,” *The Living Church*, July 26, 1964, 4.

54. *Ibid.*

fears regarding Goldwater's lack of commitment to Christian social action.<sup>55</sup>

Lachman described this issue in the following terms:

The anomaly of the strong and heated opposition of moderate Protestant opinion to Barry Goldwater was the fact that Goldwater, though never denying his part Jewish ethnic origin, was proud and devoted in his association with Protestantism and especially Protestant Episcopal community. Yet, the Protestant establishment in all their articulateness and Barry Goldwater in all of his inarticulateness represented quite clearly two different strands of American Protestantism.<sup>56</sup>

This conflict between these two strands of American Protestantism was also reflected in the messaging of the JBS, NAM, Fifield, and Graham. NAM, Fifield, and Graham had made a concerted effort to promote conservatism within churches but, in response, mainline churches were resistant to conservative political ideology. Welch, since the inception of the JBS, had accused the leaders of mainline Christian churches of being communist supporters and allowing communists to infiltrate positions of leadership. The very social and civil rights issues the mainline churches had been supporting, and the JBS were against, were used as evidence by Welch and the JBS as examples of the churches' support of communism. The churches were but one example of the growing lack of confidence Welch and those supporting the JBS had in America's traditional institutions. Goldwater's nomination

55. Seymour P Lachman, "Barry Goldwater and the 1964 Religious Issue," *Journal of Church and State* 10, no. 3 (1968): 389-404, 390-91.

56. *Ibid.*, 391.

brought the divisiveness of Welch's criticism of the churches to a head. The anti-Goldwater response focused on anti-welfare and anti-Civil Rights stances, which, they claimed showed the lack of Christian values in Goldwater's political policies. The pro-Goldwater response focused on the moral decline in American society and equated liberalism with communism, or at least sympathy for communism.

On both sides of these arguments, protagonists were only addressing their own followers. The perceived "liberal" churches and institutions, such as the NCC, only held influence with their followers. They dismissed the right-wing supporters of Goldwater as "extremists" or "conspiracists." Likewise, Goldwater supporters and JBS members were not interested in what these religious leaders said, as they perceived them as communists or communist sympathizers. These individuals were the audience of Welch, and other right-wing leaders. Despite these deeply held divisions, both groups focused on "morality," but this concept was interpreted differently on both sides of the debate. For the Christian leaders on the left and the NCC, morality was understood as helping fellow humans through social justice initiatives. Consequently, they were ardent supporters of policies that strengthened welfare programs, unions, and civil rights. These particular actions were perceived by the JBS as symbols of immorality, policies that demonstrated the moral decay of America. To the JBS's way of thinking, the liberal left had lost its bearings and was effectively supporting the atheistic communist control of America.

The connection between the moral decline of society, politics, and religion was also evident in the Goldwater campaign. In "Citizens for Goldwater-Miller: Victory Manual," released in September 1964, Goldwater's most ardent supporters, including many who had been pushed out of the official campaign, boldly stated the battle against liberalism was a

holy war: “the real war is a holy war—a war of the faithful for their long-lost self respect and dignity—a war for individuality waged on the spiritual plane of ideas and principles, the reawakening of hope and faith.”<sup>57</sup> Conversely, the moderates, or liberals were focused on a morality that was not defined in terms of a battle. Morality was defined more in the Social Gospel tradition, that is, through welfare programs for others in society. The opposition of moderate religious leaders to Goldwater’s candidacy only served to reinforce the idea propagated by NAM, Fifield, Graham, and Welch that mainstream, moderate religious leaders were against “Americanism” and were in full support of socialism and communism. This “holy war” for the individual mirrors the JBS understanding of the political arena as a battlefield, where the culture war warriors, spurred on by religious faith, had to fight for individualism and Americanism. In many ways, the public response and discussion by religious leaders on the topic of Goldwater and his campaign was too little, too late.

The theme of immorality within the country as a whole was a theme that attracted many to the Goldwater campaign. In an undated letter from right-wing radio host and vocal JBS National Council member Clarence Manion, a petition signed by 1,000 Protestant ministers announced their support for Goldwater. In announcing their support for the GOP candidate, they clarified that they were “[a]cting as individuals and not in our ecclesiastical capacities.”<sup>58</sup> Their reason for supporting Goldwater was stated in the following terms:

57. Citizens for Goldwater-Miller, “Citizens for Goldwater-Miller: Victory Manual,” (Citizens for Goldwater-Miller, Stephen Shadegg/Barry Goldwater Collection, 1949-1965, Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, September 7, 1964).

58. Unknown, Announcement of 1000 Protestant Ministers, sent by Carl McIntyre to J. Howard Pew (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., Undated), 1.

The moral degradation stemming from the White House itself and permeating our country in the form of pornographic literature, dope, crime, divorce, drunkenness and sexual debauchery is a cause for shame and humiliation. Concurrently with this disgrace the Democratic Party has acceded to the exclusion of the Bible and prayer from the public schools. Senator Goldwater has promised, if elected, to take the leadership in restoring to the states and the local school boards the right of such children and parents as choose to do so to return to the practice of Bible reading and prayer in schools. He will call the whole nation to repentance and to the active, earnest worship of God and the seeking of spiritual guidance and strength.<sup>59</sup>

American moral values and the decline of morality in America were issues that not only drove ministers to speak out on behalf of Goldwater, but they were also the catalysts for others to speak out against him. The Johnson campaign focused on Goldwater as a supporter of nuclear war. A vote for Goldwater could have implications that would be irrevocable if nuclear war, rather than continued disarmament under a Johnson administration, were to occur. Johnson's campaign argued that the real immorality in American society was the prospect of a President who could destroy your family through war. An article for the November 1, 1964, edition of *Presbyterian Life* revealed that for the first time in its 25-year history, the journal *Christianity and Crisis* had aligned itself with a presidential nominee, Johnson, because of Goldwater's record and judgments on the major social issues. The editorial was written by the editors, which included well-known the-

59. Unknown, 2.

ologians Reinhold Niebuhr, John Bennett, and Robert McAfee Brown.<sup>60</sup> Other Christian journals, such as *Christian Century* and *The United Church Herald*, took similar stances supporting Johnson.<sup>61</sup>

*Presbyterian Life* polled its elders and ministers, asked who they were voting for, and included quotes from the responses. A Republican minister from Montana responded, “In my heart I don’t trust Goldwater. I can’t agree with his pussy-footing around on race relations. I don’t trust his alignment with extremist groups. I think he is an opportunist of the first degree, without moral conscience.”<sup>62</sup> Of those respondents to the poll, a large number of those who wrote answers “said that for the first time in memory, election issues hold a deep Christian significance.”<sup>63</sup> Religious leaders were responding that “yes,” this campaign was the first which held “Christian significance;” yet even some conservative clergy were speaking out against Goldwater. While they might agree on the Goldwater’s campaign position on American moral values, religion, and freedom, it was Goldwater’s militarism, links to extremism, and position on civil rights that led them to support Johnson. In effect, the Cow Palace speech confirmed the suspicions of Goldwater’s detractors and framed him as one of the extremists.

60. Editors of *Presbyterian Life*, “Election Issues and Christian Convictions,” (*Presbyterian Life*, J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., November 1, 1964), 6.

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*, 8.

63. *Ibid.*, 9.



### 6.4.1 Billy Graham's Silence on the "Conservative Messiah"

Also significant was the lack of support from Billy Graham. Graham wrote to J. Howard Pew in the aftermath of the 1964 election and stated, "If I had taken sides, I think my ministry of evangelism would have been seriously damaged. I did not feel that there was any possibility of anyone's changing the outcome of the election. In my travels throughout the country, I had become convinced that it was going to be a landslide."<sup>64</sup> The conservative movement that Graham had been a part of through his relationship with Pew, was not enough for Graham to put his ministry at risk. Graham was politically savvy enough to understand that Goldwater was not the "Conservative Messiah," and so Graham opted to protect his own ministry and reputation. American historian Dan T. Carter conducted research on televangelists such as Graham and the right-wing, and in his notes he recorded that Billy Graham was a right-wing spokesperson espousing "some of the more feverish apprehensions of the right."<sup>65</sup> Carter noted, though:

But there was always a fundamental difference; a difference reflected in Graham's desperate desire to please all as he became one of the nation's ten most admired men, a kind of pop-star evangelist on television specials; speaking good of all and criticizing no one in particular. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Graham moved easily from friendship or at least close association with Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and (especially) Richard Nixon.

64. Rev. Billy Graham, Letter to J. Howard Pew (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., November 16, 1964), 1.

65. Dan T. Carter, *Televangelists Notes: Billy Graham* (Dan T. Carter research files, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Undated).

Beyond the comfortable preachments against red perverts and those who failed the usual tests of evangelical clean living there was nothing. Certainly there was never a challenge to the comfortable civic religion which he practiced; a civic religion which emphasized the creation of a culture of 'good habits' in which religion and state were drawn into a seamless webb.[sic]<sup>66</sup>

As Carter has written in his research notes for his research on televangelists, Graham was a central figure in the right-wing movement of the 50s and 60s; yet he never took public positions in the elections of this era. Graham became the religious representative to the Presidents, without regard for party affiliation. Although extremely active in the political movement of the conservative Christians promoting conservatism amongst religious leadership, Graham himself ensured he was not embroiled in the culture war debate, by not speaking directly to these issues and focusing on a privatized form of religion. His magazine, *Christianity Today*, also reflected this position. Lachman noted:

The *United Church Herald* took the position that the church does have a responsibility to speak out on political candidates in special and extenuating circumstances, of which this election [1964] was considered a prime example. With the exception of *Christianity Today*, a prominent conservative fundamentalist bi-weekly journal, almost all leading Protestant publications took the same position.”<sup>67</sup>

Graham and Pew's magazine *Christianity Today* was one of the few Christian publications

66. Carter,

67. Lachman, "Barry Goldwater and the 1964 Religious Issue," 401.

that did not speak out. In fact, as political scientists James D. Fairbanks and John Francis Burke argued, *Christianity Today* actually reduced its coverage of religion as an aspect of the political campaign during the 1964 election. In 1960 the magazine devoted 3% of its editorial content to religion in the campaign, but during the 1964 election, only 1% of the editorials discussed the topic.<sup>68</sup> Graham's exclusion speaks to his political savvy and foreshadows his longevity as a close personal confidant of many future presidents.

## 6.5 White House Immorality

Although many religious leaders seemed to be interested in the decline of American morality, the general public did not demonstrate the same concern. For example, in October 1964, news broke that President Johnson's "right hand man," Walter Jenkins had been arrested on October 7, 1964, on charges of disorderly (indecent) gestures at the YMCA.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, this was consistent with previous behaviour when it was revealed that Jenkins had been charged in 1959 for disorderly conduct (perversion). These charges reflect the "crime" of a homosexual sex act in public. At the same time, a 60-year-old Soldiers Home timekeeper, Andy Choka, was arrested with the exact same charges. Both were charged by two plainclothes officers of the morals division. Jenkins, a father of six, submitted his resignation to Johnson, which was immediately accepted.<sup>70</sup> For Goldwater supporters,

68. James D. Fairbanks and John Francis Burke, "Religious Periodicals and Presidential Elections, 1960–1988," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 1992, 89–105, 91.

69. Henry Gemmill, "The Jenkins Affair Arrest of Johnson Aide Could Bolster GOP's Election Day Changes Issue Seen Making Goldwater Victory Possible, Aiding Other Party Candidates But Few Voters Swayed Yet," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 16, 1964,

70. Unknown, "Arrested, LBJ's Aid Quits," *The New York Daily News*, 1964,

Jenkin's arrest and resignation proved Goldwater and the right were correct in their belief that Johnson and a Democrat-led Congress disregarded American moral values, and that they would also lead America into further moral decline. From their viewpoint, the Jenkins affair was a potential boost for the Goldwater ticket, since he was focusing on moral integrity in the White House in his campaign. It was also further proof, he thought, that America was in a moral crisis, thus validating one of the campaign's central messages. Goldwater's supporters had to be concerned when the *Wall Street Journal* reported that, although newspapers were focusing on this story, it affected very few voters in their choice of candidate.<sup>71</sup> NAM, Fifield, Graham, Pew, and Welch, had prior to the Goldwater campaign, consistently propagated a theme of moral crisis in America. Yet, their message had not struck a chord with a broad enough cross section of Americans.

Even worse, from the Goldwater's campaign's perspective, the focus on this "immorality" in the White House was turning voters off because they were construing the preoccupation with the moral crisis as evidence of extremism. In September 1964, *The New York Times* reported that a group of more than 100 civic, educational, religious, and business leaders, representing both major political parties, had created the National Council for Civic Responsibility.<sup>72</sup> The purpose of the group was to expose the damage being done to the American standards of political discussion. To the newly formed Council "radical reactionary propaganda has reached the point where it is now going far beyond the function merely reassuring the reactionary prejudices of a small fringe group."<sup>73</sup> The National

71. Gemmill, "The Jenkins Affair Arrest of Johnson Aide Could Bolster GOP's Election Day Changes Issue Seen Making Goldwater Victory Possible, Aiding Other Party Candidates But Few Voters Swayed Yet."

72. Martin Gansberg, "Civic Leaders Form Anti-Birch Council," *The New York Times*, 1964, 1-45, 1.

73. *Ibid.*, 1.

Council for Civic Responsibility wanted to use mass media to bring the “truth” about the JBS to the people of America. Referring to the JBS, the newly formed committee stated, “the unchecked increase in this kind of propaganda is degrading the American political dialogue to such a point as to damage our self-respect at home and our reputation for public responsibility abroad.”<sup>74</sup> The NCC, whom Welch had written much about as a communist infiltrated organization, was now speaking out against him and his Society. Naturally, this played into Welch’s framing of the NCC as communist or communist sympathizers who were using this opportunity, like the conservatives, to try and discredit the JBS, because they were “right.”

Although the Goldwater campaign was focusing on culture war issues and American moral values the religious response to his campaign was not. Lachman states that:

such Protestant establishment publications as the *Christian Century* (Interdenominational), *The Churchman* (Episcopalian), *Christianity and Crisis*, (Interdenominational), *The Witness* (Episcopalian), *United Church Herald*, United Church of Christ, and *Renewal*, among others, all espoused their editorial opposition to the candidacy of Barry Goldwater. What was new and different in the position of these leading Protestant publications was that here was an instance where they were not becoming involved in the objective area of issues whether these concerned themselves with fair housing, civil rights, poverty legislation, gambling, or pornography. Rather one finds these publications directly espousing for the first time their opposition to a major political candidate in

74. Unknown, “National Council for Civic Responsibility is Formed,” *Information Service* XLIII, no. 16 (October 10, 1964): 4.

his race for the White House.<sup>75</sup>

These proclamations by the Protestant establishment may have influenced some, the members of the JBS and other right-wing activists believed these organizations to have connections to communism. Their open support of such Social Gospel programs such as civil rights, fair housing, poverty legislation were held as examples of socialistic/communist behaviour.

Welch and the JBS remained focused on the making the presidential race a choice between American moral values, and the moral decline of America. In the JBS Resolutions, Welch established this choice of American moral values as a core principle of the JBS:

So the first limitation of our objective is to a recapitulation of essential elements in the recognized moral code for our Western Civilization. Then we narrow our field immensely further, by codifying only those moral principles, even of our western world, which are or clearly should be accepted and observed by those millions of good people who—whether they realize it or not—are in basic agreement with the views of The John Birch Society.”<sup>76</sup>

The choice was between American moral values or living in a welfare state, and losing the freedom of free enterprise. A return to a moral America society was paramount to the grassroots of the Goldwater supporters.

75. Lachman, “Barry Goldwater and the 1964 Religious Issue,” 395–96.

76. Welch, “The John Birch Resolutions,” 6.

### 6.5.1 Mothers for Moral America

In conjunction with the theme of a moral crisis in America, Mothers for Moral America was founded during the election campaign. Mothers was a group of women across America who organized to publicize the moral crisis, and to promote Barry Goldwater as the person who could stop the decline. The women leading the Mothers for Moral America included the wives of celebrities, such as Dale Evans, wife of Roy Rogers, and Nancy Reagan, as well as Mrs. William F. Buckley, mother of ten, including William F. Buckley Jr.<sup>77</sup> Reminiscent of the marketing to women by the JBS, the Mothers for Moral America stated “As mothers and Americans we deplore the fact that there is a moral deterioration in our country that is creating an unfit atmosphere in which to rear our children.”<sup>78</sup>

The concerns brought up by the Moral Mothers included increased crime, “Payola” (corruption in the American political system), ridicule of law enforcement, addiction to drugs, and the lack of general moral principles, noting that “mothers cannot instill morality in their children when our leaders are not setting an example for Americans to follow.”<sup>79</sup> Further, they declared, “We believe that the basic cause of this condition is the gradual change in our form of government, a change from responsible moral leadership with a strong belief in individual responsibility to a government of paternalism and irresponsibility with a strong belief that Washington will take care of all of us from cradle to grave.”<sup>80</sup> The

77. Mothers for Moral America, Mothers for Moral America Join Goldwater-Miller Forces News Release (Mothers for Moral America, F. Clifton White papers, #2006. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, 1964), 2-3.

78. Mothers for Moral America, “Mothers for Moral America Blueprint for Action,” (Mothers for Moral America, F. Clifton White papers, #2006. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, 1964), 5.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

Mothers for Moral America were linking the immorality in society directly to the Johnson administration, and more importantly were linking the immorality to the welfare-state.

The women did have a solution to this problem—vote for Goldwater, who will protect individualism, freedom, and self-reliance:

We believe that Barry Goldwater will restore the fundamentals in our government of individual freedom and self reliance. We believe that by his moral example and official initiative he will return to the citizens of this country a sense of individual responsibility and personal decency. Barry Goldwater has said ‘If the moral tone of America is to be revitalized, the mothers of America must take a major role. It is they who have the tradition, the moral fibre and the vision that can help bring this revival about.’<sup>81</sup>

In other words, Mothers for a Moral America believed that the moral crisis in America required a revival of individualism, freedom, and self-reliance, and Goldwater was the revivalist to reset the moral tone of America.

To further their mission, the Mothers for Moral America conceived of, and funded, the making of a film entitled *Choice*. The film was narrated by actor Raymond Massey and had a cameo by John Wayne.<sup>82</sup> Wayne was the Chairman of the Committee for Brothers for Goldwater, a partisan group from the Beta Phi Fraternity, whose membership included

81. Mothers for Moral America, “Mothers for Moral America Blueprint for Action,” 5.

82. Mothers for Moral America, Mothers for Moral America News Release (Mothers for Moral America, F. Clifton White papers, #2006. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, 1964).



both Wayne and Goldwater.<sup>83</sup> The Citizens for Goldwater created a publicity plan for *Choice*, which was called “Operation Turning Point.” The main audience target for the operation was “to particularly reach the housewife. She is the one who will get the most out of it at this showing. Since she will have to interrupt her housework to watch, we want to stir her curiosity.”<sup>84</sup>

Their strategy was to build a large audience for the film by playing down the political aspects. The plan was to only promote the subject matter of the film, not the political affiliation. “It is strictly a documentary about the growth of immorality in the United States. It is shocking, and brutally frank.”<sup>85</sup> The main goal of this operation was to “make *no* mention of political affiliation of any kind. . . . If questioned directly as to sponsorship, use the Mothers for Moral America instead of the Republican Party or Citizens for Goldwater-Miller.”<sup>86</sup> Not mentioning the political connection within the film allowed the campaign to avoid the disclaimer required for political ads.

*Choice* juxtaposed what life would be like in America with a Johnson Presidency versus a Goldwater Presidency. The film depicted scenes of immorality ruling America under Johnson with images of sexual promiscuity, moral bankruptcy, and racial unrest. Tranquility, prosperity, traditionalism, and patriotism were the images under Goldwater. Snapshots of lewd dancing, female strippers, and rioting, defined the immoral realities of a Johnson

83. Charles F. Hough, Letter to J. Howard Pew (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., October 1, 1964), 1.

84. Citizens for Goldwater, “Victory Information Program Blueprint for Operation Turning Point,” (Citizens For Goldwater, F. Clifton White papers, #2006. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library, October 19, 1964), 1.

85. *Ibid.*

86. *Ibid.*

presidency.<sup>87</sup> The film envisioned immoral America as the “new America” where “the ancient moral law is mocked. Nation under God? Who is He? By the new laws of the new game, out. Out of the schools, the life, the heart blood.”<sup>88</sup> The film’s closing sequence cited the Gospel of Luke:

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and make good cheer. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night do they require the soul of thee. (Luke 12:19-20) This night is here now. Two Americas and you, you alone standing between them. Which do you really want? Which?<sup>89</sup>

The “choice” was between good and evil, and the choice was to be made by the good, moral citizens of America.

Goldwater had a private viewing of the film and after seeing it, demanded the film not be shown. In fact, he vowed that if it were shown, he would publicly disavow it.<sup>90</sup> The lewd images, focused on fear as a political motivator, and the “extremism” of the film led Goldwater to make this threat. It would not help his campaign to secure swing or moderate voters, and could possibly further the label of “extremists” or “conspiracists” on Goldwater and the campaign. The film never aired on television, but the campaign sent

87. Robert Mann, *Daisy Petals and Mushroom Clouds: LBJ, Barry Goldwater, and The Ad That Changed American Politics* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2011), 94.

88. Unknown, “Choice,” 1964, accessed August 17, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xniUoMiHm8g>.

89. Ibid.

90. John Howard Kessel, *The Goldwater Coalition: Republican Strategies in 1964* (Indianapolis IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1968), 213–214.

copies of the film to supporters across the nation, who held private screenings.<sup>91</sup> Much like Jenkin’s criminal charges, the evidence of immorality in *Choice* spoke directly to those who already believed America was in a moral crisis. The general public did not share those fears. The film would further exposed the fracturing of the public sphere between the far right and the general populace. It also demonstrated the futility of Goldwater’s highly nuanced attempts to disassociate himself from the extremist factions of the political grassroots movement without alienating others in his base.

## 6.6 The Religion of Possession

William Stringfellow, an American lay theologian and social activist, in an article for *Christian Century* magazine coined the term “the religion of possession” to describe the religion of Goldwater’s supporters. In his analysis, he noted the religious link to economics. Stringfellow’s assessment of the religion of possession, and how freedom was defined within these beliefs among Goldwater’s supporters, encapsulated the idea of Americanism that had been created by Welch, NAM, Fifield and Graham. Stringfellow understood Goldwater’s religion of possession in the following terms: “a true man is the acquisitive man: a man is whole if he procures, possesses and profits from property. The greatness of man is dependent upon ‘the sanctity of property.’ Such is the elementary doctrine of this religion that provides the moral criteria by which both man and societies are judged.”<sup>92</sup> He continued:

91. Mann, *Daisy Petals and Mushroom Clouds: LBJ, Barry Goldwater, and The Ad That Changed American Politics*, 95.

92. William Stringfellow, “God, Guilt and Goldwater,” *Christian Century* 81, no. 136 (1964): 1079.

A man who wills to do so—if he is not hindered by government—can perfect his own salvation by obtaining, holding and using private property. Thus salvation is not universal, nor is it in any sense by God’s election; it is competitive and comes to the man whose worth and worthiness are proved by the property he controls, earns or owns. To have property is evidence of moral excellence, defines individual dignity and is the divine reward for self-reliance.<sup>93</sup>

This was a linkage that had been promoted by NAM after World War II through their Clergy and Industry groups, and through their members speaking at church related events. Using excerpts from Goldwater’s acceptance speech at the Cow Palace, Stringfellow argued that, for Goldwater and his supporters, freedom constituted:

a divinely commissioned national purpose for America in the world. ‘The Good Lord raised his mighty Republic to be a home for the brave and to flourish as the land of the free.’ While God is said to be ‘the author of freedom,,’ Americans are freedom’s ‘models’ and ‘missionaries’ on earth because they ‘have earned it.’ With no less formidable a patron than God, nuclear war can be risked on behalf of this concept of freedom. In the name of God, the American mission is to subdue those in the world who do not conform to this idea of freedom.<sup>94</sup>

An example of this “religion” among Goldwater supporters appeared in an interview Goldwater gave in 1960 on the Manion Forum radio show, where Goldwater stated:

93. Stringfellow, “God, Guilt and Goldwater,” 1080.

94. Ibid.

I suggest that, rather than being a nation which contains common people, the United States is a nation of 180 million of the most uncommon people God has ever assembled in the history of earth. And it is this uncommonness that contributes so much to America—the desire of each man to be better—the desire of each man to place himself in a higher niche by his own activities.<sup>95</sup>

In effect, Goldwater placed the role of success and attainment as “evidence of moral excellence,” by “defin[ing] individual dignity” as the “the divine reward for self-reliance.”<sup>96</sup> Speaking of Americanism, Welch wrote, “The *americanist* believes that the individual should retain the freedom to make his own bargain with life, and the responsibility for the results of that bargain—and that means are as important as ends in the civilized social order which he desires.”<sup>97</sup> Goldwater and Welch linked freedom, free enterprise and individuality as a God-given attribute, as did NAM, Pew, Fifield and Graham prior to the founding of the JBS.

Stringfellow, in his analysis, also acknowledged the influence of conservative religious leaders on Goldwater’s supporters:

And while this has been a religion harbored by a good many sectarian Protestants, it cannot be dismissed just because it is espoused by extremists, malcontents and some victims of paranoia. Too many pulpits in mainline Protestant churches have echoed the same idolatry of property and the same teaching of

95. Barry Goldwater, “Manion Forum - Weekly Broadcast, No. 313 - Interview with Barry Goldwater ‘Conservatism The Only Way to Lasting Freedom’,” (*Manion Forum*, John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, September 25, 1960), 2.

96. Stringfellow, “God, Guilt and Goldwater,” 1080.

97. Welch, “One Man’s Opinion,” 11.

justification by acquisition. How often has Norman Vincent Peale assured his listeners that religion is a business asset because God rewards the man who is determined to get what he wants.<sup>98</sup>

This idea of “religion as a business asset” can be linked back to Fifield’s Spiritualization movement or the influence of NAM’s clergy and industry initiative. The relationship between religion and business espoused from the pulpit was not an incarnation simply of the Goldwater era; it had been building since the end of World War II.

Prior to the election in October 1964, the editors of *Christian Century* spoke out against Goldwater and his candidacy. Their editorial focused on the matter of religion in his campaign and how his campaign could be seen as almost a religion for his supporters. Of particular concern for the editors, was the emergence of a new nationalist Christianity. They wrote, “In 1964 the religious issue reaches much deeper than such matters of person and policy. It relates to the whole question of Christianity in the light of its alternatives. In this instance what is offered is a nationalism which is adhered to with a sense of total justification and ultimate concern.”<sup>99</sup> In making their case against Goldwater and this new Christian nationalism, the editors cited Carlton J. J. Hayes’s book *Nationalism: A Religion* (1960), in which Hayes defined nationalism as “a post-Christian heresy, something new under the sun. It represents the real religion of the modern world. It is an all-consuming, totally assured, inverted interpretation of history based on race, language, tradition, and experience. It needs foreign devils and a god who justifies all partisan

98. Stringfellow, “God, Guilt and Goldwater,” 1081.

99. William Stringfellow, “The 1964 Religious Issue,” *Editorial* 81, no. 41 (1964): 1227–1228, 1227.

and national purposes.”<sup>100</sup> In essence, the editors of *Christian Century* were linking the Goldwater candidacy and campaign to a modern religious movement that put nationalism above history. In Lachman’s analysis of the religious response to Goldwater, he stated: “Others, especially in the religious establishment, were appalled by his [Goldwater’s] appeal to extreme nationalism and patriotism as religious virtues.”<sup>101</sup>

Stringfellow’s assessment of this nationalism-based religion, much like the response of mainline church leaders, was in a sense decades too late. Indeed, the use of religion, business, politics, and fear to mobilize Christian conservatives had been the goal of NAM, Fifield, Graham, and Welch since at least the early 1950s. Each new incarnation built upon the foundations created by the earlier attempts. This movement had spread without a response from mainstream religion, or political moderates. While some reporters had questioned the validity of businessmen’s and NAM’s use of religion, the movement had been able to remain unobserved by the majority of church leaders and politicians. Individuals such as Pew and Crane had been able to remain in the background of these movements while providing funding and counsel to Fifield and Graham. The link between Welch, NAM, Fifield, and Pew and how this movement grew, developing from one mobilization to another, was hidden below the media’s focus on extremism and conspiracism of the JBS.

Reflective of Stringfellow’s theory of a religion of possession, Goldwater was quoted by Richard A. Viguerie to writing:

There are literally scores of millions of Americans who are either outside the organized pressure groups or find themselves represented by organizations with

100. Stringfellow, “The 1964 Religious Issue,” 1227.

101. Lachman, “Barry Goldwater and the 1964 Religious Issue,” 403.

whose policies they disagree in whole or in part. These millions are the *silent Americans* who, thus isolated, cannot find voice against the mammoth organizations which mercilessly pressure their own membership, the Congress, and society as a whole for objectives which these silent ones do not want. They, thereby, have become the ‘forgotten Americans’ despite the fact that they constitute the majority of our people.’<sup>102</sup>

Goldwater had become the standard bearer for those he interpreted as the silent Americans on the right. In contrast, his greatest supporters were not silent. The JBS was extremely vocal, and right-wing media was equally outspoken providing Goldwater with one of the loudest voices in many years. He spoke directly to the members of the JBS and the right with his support of God, country and family, his unwavering support for free enterprise, and his call to action in the battle against communism. Goldwater, in many of his written articles for the right-wing media and his speeches, focused on morality and religion and their connection to freedom, economics and politics. He was their choice in the battle against liberalism and immorality.

To the supporters of Goldwater, of which many were JBS members, this was an election to save religion, American moral values, and freedom. That NAM, Fifield, Graham, Welch, and the Goldwater campaign consistently used corporations and their facilities as a pulpit to espouse religion, free enterprise, politics, and freedom is representative of the economic connection to their “religion” as interpreted by Stringfellow. Through the observations of the editors of *Christian Century* and the analysis conducted by Stringfellow what we see is

102. Richard A. Viguerie, *The New Right: We’re Ready to Lead* (Falls Church VA: Viguerie Company Falls Church, Va., 1981), 45-46.



a “political Christianity” which is focused on the economic, and nationalism translated as “patriotism.” With the rise of the JBS, Welch created a message of cohesion of the various Christian groups within the JBS membership. He focused on the idea that morality was the cohesive element. Regardless of dogma or denomination, Christians can agree on values and morals, and how they are reflected in the policies of America. What these assessments and the religion of possession do not include is the motivation for political mobilization.

This motivation was fear, a fear that was stoked through the use of conspiracy. Welch developed the notion of the Insiders, the Illuminati which was controlling the political spectrum of America. Through their control and influence Christianity, free enterprise, American values and morals were all in a position of being destroyed. With reference to the Insiders, Welch created a reason to fight for God, family and country and to fight against communism and the Insiders. They were fighting for the American dream and their God. What we see with the conclusion of the Goldwater election is a pivotal moment for Christianity in America, specifically for the conservative Christians. Throughout the 30s and 40s NAM and some of their members played a key role in the “resetting of the moral tone in America.” Welch perfected the use of fear, conspiracy, and sense of impending disaster to politically mobilize a segment of conservative Christians. As I will argue in chapter seven, this strategy of stoking fear and predicting disaster is what was utilized for the mobilization of the Moral Majority in 1970s. Through lessons learned from NAM and Welch a movement of corporate leaders, businessmen and conservative Christian religious leaders would utilize the lessons learned and create a successful mobilization.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Senator Barry Goldwater's Presidential aspirations ended with the greatest defeat in American presidential election history, losing to Johnson by some 16 million votes.<sup>103</sup> Johnson received 486 electoral college votes to Goldwater's 52. Women accounted for 38% of Goldwater's electoral support compared to Johnson's 62%. Protestants made up 45% of Goldwater's support and 24% were Catholics. Johnson received 55% of the Protestant vote and 76% of the Catholic vote.<sup>104</sup> Goldwater had waged an ideological campaign focusing on culture war issues, and throughout, Johnson refused to be drawn into any of these particular debates.<sup>105</sup> These ideological disputes also exposed deep rifts in the Republican Party along liberal and conservative lines.<sup>106</sup> As Goldwater was linked to the extremism of the JBS, he alienated moderate Republicans, leading to a fracturing within the Republican Party.<sup>107</sup>

The election also influenced the membership of the JBS as evidenced by the 1965 Grupp survey, which indicated that 36% of respondents found their political commitment satisfied by membership in the society but only 8% indicated this was the primary motivation. In contrast, 22% of those responding to the Grupp survey indicated that they had joined during the Goldwater campaign.<sup>108</sup> These new members who joined during the campaign

103. P.E. Converse, A.R. Clausen, and W.E. Miller, "Electoral Myth and Reality: The 1964 Election," *The American Political Science Review* 59, no. 2 (1965): 321–336, 321.

104. Various, "Election Polls—Vote by Groups, 1960–1964," Unknown, accessed March 14, 2017, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/9454/election-polls-vote-groups-19601964.aspx>.

105. Converse, Clausen, and Miller, "Electoral Myth and Reality: The 1964 Election," 321.

106. *Ibid.*

107. *Ibid.*

108. Grupp Jr and Newman, "Political Ideology and Religious Preference: The John Birch Society and The Americans for Democratic Action."

were more oriented toward Goldwater and the Republican Party and less influenced by the “conspiracies” promoted by Welch than earlier members. The resulting increase in membership and activity<sup>109</sup> diluted the ideological purity of the JBS and the Society was identified with the Goldwater ticket.<sup>110</sup> Welch reported in the October *The Bulletin* that, due to the political campaigns, the rise in membership was the largest in the history of the JBS. According to Welch, this rise in membership for Welch meant that “Conservatives [were made] out of waverers, and to send thousands of formerly complacent citizens out into the campaigns as workers for Conservative candidates.”<sup>111</sup> At its membership peak, in the mid-1960s, a Gallup Poll found that 12% of Americans claimed to be impressed by the JBS.<sup>112</sup> The organization was publicly relevant enough that all candidates in the 1964 Presidential race were compelled to confront Welch and the Birchers in the media, their speeches, and in their strategies.

After the election, the right also began to have a greater presence in Washington. The six blocks around the capitol usually inhabited by lobbyists began to house more right-wing organizations. *Human Events*, Liberty Lobby, and the JBS had offices in the area. *The New York Times* described the relationship between these organizations as, “The groups swap mailing lists and sponsors like good neighbors—as well as a special atmosphere of earnestness and frugality that seems to befit these unreconstructed rebels of the right.”<sup>113</sup> Moreover, the right-wing media continued to provide a wide audience for

109. C.A. Smith, “An Organic Systems Analysis of Persuasion and Social Movement: The John Birch Society, 1958–1966,” *Southern Journal of Communication* 49, no. 2 (1984): 155–176, 173.

110. *Ibid.*, 174.

111. Robert Welch, “October Bulletin,” *The 1964 White Book*, 1964, 1–20, 3.

112. R.J. Hart, “There Comes a Time: Biography and the Founding of a Movement Organization,” *Qualitative Sociology* 33, no. 1 (2010): 55–77, 56.

113. Cabell Phillips, “Conservative Groups Set Back 1964, Pursue Their Fight in the Shadow of the

the free enterprise message that NAM, Pew, the JBS, and religious leaders such as Fifield and Graham promoted. These media outlets had been the conduit to building a “wave” of support for Goldwater and his campaign.

The JBS was both a hinderance and a benefit for Goldwater and his campaign. A fine balance had to be maintained between disavowing Robert Welch as the instigator and promoter of conspiracies that embarrassed and marginalized the right and the members and funders and members of the JBS who provided the votes and the financial backing of the campaign. As the political platform provided support to the conservative ideas of the grassroots movement, it also helped to foster a growing culture war. As the incident with Walter Jenkins demonstrated, the general public took very little interest in the concept of a moral crisis in America. Yet for the JBS members, and the Goldwater campaign, this was the heart of the matter. Sin and immorality emanating from the White House was leading America into servitude and communism. The influence on women within the Goldwater campaign regarding these culture war issues was evident in the Mothers of Morality film *Choice*. The depictions of lewd behaviour, sexual immorality and violence was enough for Goldwater himself to disavow the film, but the film was shown privately to large groups of private citizens. In the next chapter I will argue that religion, conspiracy and fear continued to be effective in mobilizing the religious right-wing voting bloc well after the 1964 election.

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Capitol,” *The New York Times*, June 6, 1965,

## Chapter 7

# Onward Christian Soldiers

In this chapter I argue that based upon the lessons learned from Welch's mobilization of the middle-class and the failure of the Goldwater campaign, new politically conservative movements emerged that relied on a politics of moral crisis, a growing sense that the United States was caught up in a culture war, and the belief that Christianity must play an even greater role in politics. These movements learned from the efforts of the Spiritual Mobilization, the National Association of Manufacturers' (NAM) three-pronged public relations campaign, and Rev. Billy Graham's revivals and magazine *Christianity Today*. In the wake of the Goldwater defeat in 1964, various leaders attempted to rejuvenate conservatism by moving the conservative message toward mainstream and away from "extremism." An important element in mainstreaming conservatism was the further use of Christianity to attract and mobilize a broader political base.

To make this argument, I will first focus on two threads of proposed influence that

were initiated during the tumultuous days immediately after the 1964 election. The first thread briefly details the Free Society of America (FSA), a grassroots organization that attempted to replace the conspiracies promulgated by Welch, by focussing on the Republican Party and policies. The second thread of influence stems from wealthy individuals who sought to enact the Prospect Plan, which was an attempt to take control of the Republican Party by bringing forward conservative nominees who represented their political agenda, thereby eliminating or, at least reducing, the influence of moderates in the party. I then consider the developing political backdrop of the mid-1960s and 1970s, a time of chaotic change for both American society on the whole and particularly for those who were working to mobilize for conservatism. This section includes a brief discussion of the presidential elections that responded to the societal changes and upheavals. In the next section, I argue that Tim LaHaye and the Moral Majority arose as a successful conservative Christian movement using four lessons learned from the John Birch Society (JBS): (a) framing culture war issues through an apocalyptic lens; (b) motivating conservatives to save God, country and family from a nebulous enemy; (c) developing and maintaining an organizational structure oriented to distil the message; and (d) selecting and promoting political candidates. Together, these elements served as a formula for a successful political mobilization, with fear, anger, and disgust as essential ingredients. I show how the increasingly relevant conservative Christian movement of the 1970s, and LaHaye in particular, successfully mobilized an emerging new Republican voter base by framing culture war issues as indicative of the demise of Christian America and as motivation to save God, country, and family in political skirmishes within the ultimate battle between good and evil. My final point in this analysis is that LaHaye, a former JBS member, was able to

make adjustments to the strategic plan developed by Robert Welch to build a mobilization structure that continues to influence American politics. In effect, LaHaye was inspired to mobilize conservative Christians through fear via conspiracy theories. LaHaye's initiative differed from the JBS in that his wealthy backers were not publicly acknowledged and the grassroots movement was a morality based political movement, the Moral Majority. These changes in the mobilization led to a success and continued political influence that the JBS was unable to maintain.

## **7.1 Rising from the Ashes: the FSA and the Prospect Plan**

In chapter six, I argued that the Goldwater campaign sought a balance between appeasing Goldwater's core supporters on the far right, who responded with much zeal to attempts to turn the 1964 presidential race into a culture war over immorality while maintaining the support of more moderate conservatives, including the notorious William F. Buckley Jr., who thought the zealotry of Robert Welch and others was politically catastrophic extremism. As the 1964 campaign wore on, the conspiracy theories espoused by Welch began to undermine the support he had garnered through the late 1950s and early 1960s as he implemented his plan to mobilize the middle class. While the JBS, its funders, and members played an integral role in the Goldwater campaign, Welch became a primary reason for powerful politicians and wealthy investors to disengage from the JBS, as discussed in chapter six. Still, those in control of the top-down mobilization named in chapter three,

understood that the “suburban warriors” of the JBS, including the important JBS women, and other similarly aligned right-wing organizations, were needed for political change to occur.

After the defeat of Goldwater, the JBS was not able to fill the void created on the right. The focus on the JBS during the election campaign has stigmatized the organization as conspiracists and extremists. This stigmatization had left the Society without their platform for meaningful direction. Welch was isolated and had lost much of the support of the wealthy businessmen, who wanted to disassociate from the labels attached to the JBS. The JBS itself promoted to its membership that the Goldwater defeat politically was a success in that the membership, through their work, had made an influence on the political sphere. The Society remains a membership organization in America today, although diminished in stature. Welch resigned as the leader of the JBS in 1983.

### **7.1.1 The FSA**

In an attempt to minimize the stigma attached to the far right conservatives, and to harness the political enthusiasm after the 1964 election, William J. Baroody and Denison Kitchel founded the Freedom Society of America (FSA), with Barry Goldwater as the public face of the organization. Despite Goldwater’s defeat, many conservatives thought that Welch’s mobilization plan had achieved a significant level of success—the JBS had, after all, successfully influenced the GOP nomination, highlighted the moral decay in American politics, and prompted a national conversation about the threat posed by liberals in the fight against the Soviet Union and godless communism. The challenge, as it was during the



1964 campaign, was how to maintain the enthusiasm of the far right while at the same time moderating its political positions. As a result, the FSA's declared purpose was "to draw a clear distinction between the principles of the free society and the creeds of 'extremist' groups whose basic and laudable purpose may be the preaching of anti-communism but whose hallmark, resulting in strong public antipathy, is irresponsible leadership and untenable positions."<sup>1</sup> In principle, the FSA's objective to "draw a clear distinction" seemed to be a straightforward attempt to distance the GOP from its immoderate and politically toxic figures such as Welch and other prominent members of the JBS. However, once again, Goldwater sent what appeared to be mixed messages. He specifically stated that JBS members were welcome in the Association—the only individuals not welcome were members of the KKK or communists.<sup>2</sup> This statement reinforced the earlier position of Goldwater during the presidential campaign. Goldwater was aware that the membership of the JBS was needed for votes, but the stigma attached to the JBS as an organization needed to be decried. In essence, by stating the FSA welcomed the JBS members, the association was once again separating the conservative voting bloc of JBS members from Welch, the JBS, and their conspiratorial positions.

The FSA was, in other words, an attempt to grow the Republican Party by building on the mobilizing achievements of the JBS without the "extremist" or "conspiratorial" labels. The FSA, like the JBS, was a politically conservative membership organization, which supported the idea of a "truly conservative" nominee. Goldwater was the figurehead,

1. Denison Kitchel, Memorandum on The Free Society Association (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., Undated), 1.

2. Unknown, "Goldwater Launches Voter Education Group Invites All But Reds and KKK," *Inquirer*, June 18, 1965,

much as Welch was for the JBS. Both organizations used similar marketing techniques, such as a member specific newsletter which interpreted the news and politics through a specific lens. Both organizations called for a political mobilization. The JBS and the FSA, incorporated a speakers' bureau and a "Bible" of sorts, with a new version of *The Federalist Papers* in the works, to disseminate their message. By creating a similar organization with familiar goals, the FSA hoped to disengage the association of the term "extremists," for their movement, and build a "legitimate" movement linked directly to the GOP.

In the end, the FSA failed miserably, eventually disbanding in 1967.<sup>3</sup> Culture war issues, such as sexuality, women's rights, gay rights etc., and a Christian worldview that incorporated free enterprise and American nationalism, had been a driving force that mobilized JBS members. Asking them to join the FSA and organize under the GOP was akin to asking them to stop fighting against the "Insiders" who, in their view, were partly responsible for the downward spiral of American values and morality. Heading into the 1964 election, Goldwater may have been the "conservative messiah" as the GOP nominee, but the Republican establishment's attempt to bring JBS members under the more moderate GOP tent demonstrated a fundamental lack of understanding of the motivations of JBS members.

The FSA did not include the use of religious apocalyptic thought nor improvisational conspiracism to stoke fear within its membership. The FSA, as well as Goldwater himself, seemed to miss the role of Christianity in the movement to secure Goldwater the nomination. Whether due to willful ignorance or political astuteness is difficult to say, but the

3. Denison Kitchel, Letter to Jeremiah Millbank Jr. (The Personal and Political Papers of Senator Barry M. Goldwater, FM MSS #1, Arizona Historical Foundation, June 8, 1967), 3.

FSA's and Goldwater's lack of acknowledgement of the roles that Christianity and conspiracy theories played in Goldwater's nomination had the effect of allowing them to avoid any responsibility for cultivating extremist conservative voices. Years later, Goldwater continued to avoid acknowledging the role that extremist religious views and a preoccupation with culture war issues played in his his nomination and campaign. In a 1994 interview, for example, Goldwater warned about the rise of the Christian Right: "When you say 'radical right' today, I think of these moneymaking ventures by fellows like Pat Robertson and others who are trying to take the Republican Party away from the Republican Party, and make a religious organization out of it. If that ever happens, kiss politics goodbye."<sup>4</sup> Missing in Goldwater's warning was the realization that religiously framed culture war issues, which were linked to the moral crisis plaguing America, and wealthy Christian conservatives, were a driving force behind his own 1964 presidential run. In other words, many of Goldwater's supporters in 1964 were the ones who sought to infuse the Republican Party with conservative values stemmed from a Christian worldview, and wealthy donors such as J. Howard Pew, Jasper E. Crane, and H.L. Hunt sought to use their significant resources to pull the Republican Party further to the right. Out of synch with moderates in the GOP, this group of donors rejected the FSA in favour of their own movement, the Prospect Plan.

### **7.1.2 The Prospect Plan**

While the FSA was an attempt to bring the JBS, and other far right conservatives, under the control of the GOP establishment, J. Howard Pew, Jasper E. Crane, and H.L. Hunt

4. Lloyd Grove, "Barry Goldwater's Left Turn," 1994, accessed July 5, 2017, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/daily/may98/goldwater072894.htm>.

sought to enact a plan that would wrest control away from moderates in the GOP and replace them with leaders who shared their more radical views. Already in March 1963, Hunt sent a proposal for a “Prospect Plan” to Pew that would develop candidates, “prospects,” for future elections for the Republican Party.<sup>5</sup> To prepare them for success, the prospects were encouraged to read right-wing publications, accept invitations to speak on conservative radio and television shows, write editorials and opinion pieces for newspapers, and to give speeches at local events and Chamber of Commerce meetings. Hunt wrote, “This should be done without *Prospects* being notified or made aware that they are considered potential candidates.”<sup>6</sup> The belief was that the prospect, through these actions, would become a recognizable community leader who could build a grassroots movement for their political campaigns. The positioning of the prospect would be done anonymously, creating the impression for the prospect and their followers that the leader’s political rise was an organic process. With the Prospect Plan, the architects were embedding the prospect into the political realm. The prospect would be secretly shaped by the architects of the plan, but allowed the freedom for the creation of new grassroots movements.

Hunt drafted a list of characteristics each prospect needed before they could be considered for selection. The most important characteristic, according to Hunt, was a commitment to ensuring that God remained the core of America’s social and political foundations. Hunt wrote:

5. In Harry Hurt’s biography of the Hunt family *Texas Rich*, he states that the prospect plan was created by H.L. Hunt’s son-in-law Albert Galatyn Hill Sr. (Harry Hurt, *Texas Rich: The Hunt Dynasty, from the Early Oil Days Through the Silver Crash* [Manhattan, NY: WW Norton & Company Incorporated, 1981], 221)

6. H. L. Hunt, “Prospect Plan” enclosure in a Letter to J. Howard Pew (J. Howard Pew Papers, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE., March, 1963), 1.

Finally, and most important; a *Prospect* should be eager to familiarize himself with the anti-God crusade to destroy ‘belief in God’ which would soon result in the closing of our churches and the murder or imprisonment of clergymen. After acquainting himself with this grave danger he should dedicate himself to preserve our nation’s independence under God, and to saving religious life in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

In naming this characteristic as the most important, Hunt was promoting the conservative conspiratorial narrative that Christians were under threat in America from both foreign enemies, in the form of godless communists, and domestic enemies, in the form of liberals and progressives who variously supported the social gospel, civil rights reform, secular education, and other social justice initiatives. Consistent with the message of the JBS and the extreme right wing of the conservative movement, Hunt was highlighting not only a sense of fear of persecution, but also a sense of duty or social heroism in “saving” or fighting for religious life in the nation.

The two movements, the FSA and the Prospect Plan, built upon two aspects of Welch’s strategic plan for mobilization through the JBS. The FSA focused on the organizational structure of the JBS, with Goldwater as the figurehead, the use of publications for “education,” a dedication to conservative principles, and a membership organization. The Prospect Plan used Welch’s notion of creating a “wave” for a candidate to ride into an elected position. Hunt’s plan also included the important role of religion, and religious persecution as an aspect of the prospect’s appeal to far-right supporters. What was miss-

7. Hunt, 4.

ing from the Prospect Plan was the creation of an enemy who was attacking religion, and who the people could fight against in their mission to save God, country and family. While organizational structure and religion were important components to the movement created by Welch, these components in isolation proved ineffective as a means to mobilize voters throughout the 1960 and 1970s.

## 7.2 A Backdrop of Political Upheaval and Unrest

Stephen Prothero, in his book *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When They Lose Elections)* described the evolution of the culture wars of the late 1960s and of today in the following terms:

In the contemporary culture wars, the maw of cultural politics opened wide and nearly swallowed civil society whole. Culture warriors continued to fight over religion, family, sexuality, race, education, and evolution, but now they fought as well over issues that had previously been considered nonpartisan. As the modus operandi of cultural warfare became the MO of politics writ large, Americans were drawn into a Culture War of Everything, which saw liberals and conservatives taking up sides on the arts, sports and foreign policy.<sup>8</sup>

The 1960s was an era of struggle and confrontation. For example, the 1964 Civil Rights came to an apex during this decade. The 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination in public places, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act eliminated poll taxes, literacy requirements,

8. Prothero, *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When They Lose Elections)*, 184.

and other means used by white southern political leaders to prohibit African Americans from voting. Yet, these laws did little to alleviate racism or poverty. Simultaneously, women were demanding equal rights, as reform seemed to be moving slowly.<sup>9</sup> Both the Civil Rights Movement and the Feminist Movement became more vocal in their approach to political change. As a response to the shifting political environment in the United States, and a general feeling that traditional institutions and social values represented a bygone age, the hippie movement became a countercultural movement characterized by drugs, sex, and “dropping out.” Birth control also impacted both the women’s rights movement as well as the call to a return to traditional family values. The birth control pill came to symbolize individual freedom for women. Conversely, it also symbolized for many conservatives the breakdown of the American family and the unsettling of a basic social institution.

The Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act were part of the “Great Society,” a project begun under President Kennedy and continued under President Johnson. Johnson’s additions to the Great Society included Medicare (which provided affordable healthcare for seniors), Medicaid (which assisted the poor with healthcare), and the Older Americans Act of 1965 (which created services such as home care and nutrition programs for the elderly). Johnson’s administration also ushered in programs such as the Food Stamp Act and the Work Incentive Program, which funded training programs for childcare for women on welfare.<sup>10</sup> The Great Society did not, however, lead to an American consensus as Johnson had hoped. Instead of consensus, Johnson’s policies contributed to further social division

9. Rodney P. Carlisle and J. Geoffrey Golson, *America in Revolt During the 1960s and 1970s* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 52-53.

10. J.D. Marx, “American Social Policy in the 1960’s and 1970’s,” 2011, accessed May 17, 2017, <http://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/war-on-poverty/american-social-policy-in-the-60s-and-70s/>.

and alienation. For instance, regarding domestic political matters, Republicans reacted to the policies of the Great Society by decrying them as socialist.<sup>11</sup>

Regarding responses to international politics, Johnson's decision to escalate America's commitment to the war in Vietnam was particularly divisive, especially given that Johnson had run as a peace candidate against Goldwater in 1964, and now he was seeking to increase the number of men drafted into the military. The costs of the war adversely affected Johnson's War on Poverty, which he introduced in 1964, with many coming to the conclusion that the country could not have both "guns and butter."<sup>12</sup> By the end of the Johnson administration, the Vietnam War had spawned major domestic protests. The failed Tet Offensive in Vietnam, which began in early 1968, was a pivotal moment for many Americans because, in spite of official statements claiming success, there was increasing concern that the war could not be won. Even Johnson's Democratic Party split on the issue of whether or not to support the ongoing involvement in the war, which led Johnson to announce in April 1968 that he would not seek re-election.

American voters reacted to the social and political unrest of the 1960s by electing a "law and order" conservative Richard M. Nixon in 1968.<sup>13</sup> Shortly after assuming office, Nixon began to dismantle many of the welfare state policies that Johnson had instituted in his War on Poverty. Furthering the instability on the left was the assassination of both Martin Luther King Jr., and Bobby Kennedy in 1968. Nixon deemed those who had elected him the "silent majority;" that is, they were against the counterculture that had emerged

11. Carlisle and Golson, *America in Revolt During the 1960s and 1970s*, 52.

12. *Ibid.*, 55.

13. Gallup Poll, "Election Polls — Vote by Groups, 1968-1972," unknown, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/9457/election-polls-vote-groups-19681972.aspx>.



in the early 1960s, and supported his calls for a return to law and order.<sup>14</sup> Although the Vietnam War was fueling much of the unrest in the United States, and there was little support for it, Nixon's administration chose not to retreat from the war. Instead, his administration attempted to make the war more palatable to the public by placing limits on the draft and putting an emphasis on less American military by shifting responsibility for the war from American troops to the South Vietnamese military. In 1970, when the United States secretly bombed Cambodia, protests broke out across the country. On May 4, 1970, National Guardsmen shot four student protestors at an anti-war rally at Kent State University. Ten days later, police officers killed two black students at a protest at Jackson State University in Mississippi. In reaction, Congress attempted to limit Nixon's powers by revoking the Gulf of Tonkin resolution which authorized the President to use military force in Southeast Asia without Congressional approval. In June, 1971, the *New York Times* began publishing "The Pentagon Papers," which questioned the government's justification for the war and undermined the credibility of the Nixon administration. With the signing of the Paris Accords in January 1973, the Vietnam War ended without the United States declaring victory—instead, the Nixon administration used the phrase "Peace with honour," which left American troops to come back to a country that was ambivalent about how to honour their service.

The social upheaval associated with domestic political issues lingered into the 1970s. For example, women, African Americans, indigenous peoples, "gay rights"<sup>15</sup> advocates,

14. Carlisle and Golson, *America in Revolt During the 1960s and 1970s*, 208.

15. I am using this term to reflect the vernacular of the time period, and that the rising was predominately for rights for those who identified as male homosexuals. In contemporary vocabulary the term I would prefer to use is LGBTQ2SA which identifies a larger community of those who identify as lesbians, gays, bi-sexual, transgender, queer, two spirit and/or asexual.

and other marginalized people continued their fight for equality. In June of 1972, five men were caught burgling the office of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), which was located in the Washington, D.C. Watergate building. Nixon, after being linked to the crime, demanded that the investigation by the FBI be immediately stopped and instructed his aides to cover up the scandal. In April of 1974, a Congressional committee approved three articles of impeachment for obstruction of justice, misuse of federal agencies, and defying the authority of Congress. Before he could be impeached, Nixon resigned, and Gerald Ford took over the position of the President and immediately pardoned Nixon. President Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal led many, including political moderates, to question the integrity of the American political system.

In 1976, Jimmy Carter, a Democrat and a Southern Baptist, was elected President. Under his administration, there was no impetus to reignite the social welfare systems of the Johnson administration. Rather, Carter placed his policies under an umbrella of deregulation and tighter monetary policies.<sup>16</sup> The monumental social and political changes of the 1960s and the 1970s effectively came to a head during the Carter administration: the failures associated with the Vietnam War led to disgruntled Vietnam veterans feeling abandoned by their political leadership and their country, the populace uneasy about their military leadership, portions of society choosing to opt out of the politics, continued social fracturing, record high economic inflation, and increased reliance on exports for affordable goods and commodities, especially cars and oil. After almost three years in office, on July 15, 1979, Carter gave his famous "malaise speech," which was originally supposed to focus on energy and conservation. Instead, offering a commentary on the state of being in the

16. Carlisle and Golson, *America in Revolt During the 1960s and 1970s*, 57.

United States, Carter quoted a citizen who wrote him to complain about how America was on the decline. Carter said, “This kind of summarized a lot of other statements: ‘Mr. President, we are confronted with a moral and a spiritual crisis.’” He continued:

The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that stroked at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our Nation. The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America.<sup>17</sup>

Carter noted in this speech that this crisis of confidence was not spontaneous, and that America had seen an erosion in their confidence evolving throughout the generation before his election. The crisis of confidence was eroding faith in the institutions of America, resulting in a general culture of disrespect toward government, churches, and schools. Carter was not only coming to terms with the fact he, as President, had failed to lead the country spiritually and morally, but also that the generation before had begun the decent into crisis as the trust in institutions that were the fabric of American democracy declined. Although Carter did not name them, NAM, Fifield’s Spiritual Mobilization, and the JBS had joined in with disgruntled progressives in their distrust of the government, churches, schools, and the media.

At the same time that social movements such as the JBS were protesting the dete-

17. Jimmy Carter, “Address to the Nation on Energy and National Goals: ‘The Malaise Speech’,” July 15, 1979, accessed July 7, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32596>.

rioration of American society, the institutions themselves seemed to be collapsing. The Vietnam War had been a failure, the economy was stagnant, and Nixon's presidency led many to believe the government was corrupt.<sup>18</sup> Carter's election was heavily supported by evangelicals who hoped that Carter's own Southern Baptist faith would be used to denounce the immorality permeating America, and to do something about it.<sup>19</sup> As Neil J. Young, a historian of American politics, points out, Southern Baptists in the mid-1970s were undergoing a doctrinal shift while at the same time re-envisioning their role in the American political process. Young writes:

alongside the concretizing of biblical literalism at the heart of Southern Baptist theology and denominational identity, fundamentalists also moved their denomination away from muddled stances on political issues like abortion and the ERA to hardline positions articulated through and justified by the language of scriptural absolutism. These developments happened hand in hand as fundamentalists used abortion, homosexuality, and the ERA to make abstract theological leanings visible through uncompromising political resolutions, underscoring the religious basis of Southern Baptists' rightward shift.<sup>20</sup>

The shifts in evangelical doctrine and political engagement meant that Carter, and his administration's policies on matters, such as the ERA, abortion, and homosexuality, were no longer consistent with moderate evangelical positions, but were now considered by evan-

18. Carlisle and Golson, *America in Revolt During the 1960s and 1970s*, 57.

19. Neil J. Young, "'Worse Than Cancer and Worse Than Snakes': Jimmy Carter's Southern Baptist Problem and the 1980 Election," *Journal of Policy History* 26, no. 04 (2014): 479–508.

20. *Ibid.*, 481.

gelicals as liberal, and on the margins of evangelicalism.<sup>21</sup> The SBC and other evangelicals often questioned Carter's Christian faith, as it was represented in the policies of his administration. More generally, conservative-leaning evangelicals began to form the opinion that their born-again Christian President had alienated them by promoting policies that undermined traditional institutions.

The evangelical backlash against Carter's term as President led to the creation of the Moral Majority in 1979, and contributed significantly to the election of President Ronald Reagan in 1980. The Moral Majority was founded as an organization that was, as the leaders declared, "pro-life (anti-abortion), pro-moral, and pro-American."<sup>22</sup> Jerry Falwell as one of the founders of the organization, argued that the political arena was the battlefield for culture war issues, such as women's rights, gay rights etc., and as such, religion and politics could no longer be separated.<sup>23</sup> Falwell and the Moral Majority were on a mission not only to save individual souls, but also to save the soul of America. According to Prothero, the Moral Majority was battling against immorality, unions, government overregulation of the economy, high taxes, policies that did not privilege Israel, and underfunding of the military.<sup>24</sup> According to the Moral Majority, big government played a key role in the country's moral decline because, being guided by the ideology of secular humanism, it routinely undermined institutions that provided social and moral guidance, particularly the local schools, Christian churches, and the family. For the Moral Majority, then, culture war battles were not merely skirmishes against big government intrusion into

21. Young, "Worse Than Cancer and Worse Than Snakes': Jimmy Carter's Southern Baptist Problem and the 1980 Election," 482.

22. Prothero, *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When They Lose Elections)*, 190-91.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, 191.

the private lives of a few religious people, but a righteous struggle for a particular way of life, which sometimes fell under the aegis of “family values.” As the Christian Right began to emerge in the late 1970s as a political force in the run-up to the 1980 election, the JBS plan to mobilize people politically to save God, country, and family, by invoking culture war issues and linking them to religious foundations in the late 1950s and early 1960s found fertile ground in this new movement.

### **7.3 Mobilizing the Christian Right: Tim LaHaye and the JBS**

In many ways, the social upheaval during the formation of the JBS was simply a prelude to the culture war issues of the late 1960s. In 1976, with the Southern Baptist Convention calling for greater political involvement of its membership, and the eventual interpretation of Carter’s administration as a failure to lead America spiritually and morally, the Moral Majority sought to mobilize politically conservative Christians to rebuild America, to “make American great again,<sup>25</sup>” as Ronald Reagan said in 1980. It was within this environment that Tim LaHaye rose as a recognized leader through the Moral Majority.

In 1979, Rev. Jerry Falwell was, as the journalist Craig Unger wrote, “looking for a plan to mobilize people of faith in this country.”<sup>26</sup> In search of organizers, Falwell contacted

25. Ronald Regan used this slogan during his election campaign, as a reaction to Carter’s perceived presidency as weak and ineffectual. Reagan’s use of this term was to return America to the prestige it once had. Trump’s use of the slogan reflected his impression that America was not being put “first” with jobs, immigration, trade etc.

26. Craig Unger, “American Rapture,” *Vanity Fair* 8443, no. 544 (2005): 6.

LaHaye, who had just organized Californians for Biblical Morality, a coalition of ministers who fought against gay rights.<sup>27</sup> He had also been involved with the JBS as a religious leader spokesperson and a workshop leader.<sup>28</sup> After visiting LaHaye in San Diego, Falwell was reportedly impressed with LaHaye's ability to "confront the state government on moral and social issues."<sup>29</sup> Soon after their initial meeting, Falwell brought LaHaye into the Moral Majority fold.<sup>30</sup>

In his book *Rapture Under Attack* (1998), LaHaye wrote about his time in the JBS. It is important to note that his book is one of the few sources of information on his involvement with the Society, as LaHaye's own personal files are not yet available. There are nonacademic works, including conspiracy websites, that do provide perspective on LaHaye and the JBS, but they are highly unreliable resources. In *Rapture Under Attack*, LaHaye described what occurred during his ministry and his time in the JBS, writing that many of the JBS members in San Diego County came to his church and became baptized. LaHaye admitted that he had often spoken at JBS training seminars and that he had known "Mr. Welch and shared Christ personally with him one morning at breakfast before he died."<sup>31</sup> According to JBS documents, LaHaye had also been a ministry or religious leader spokesperson for the JBS in a recruitment film entitled *Film #2*.<sup>32</sup>

27. Unger, "American Rapture," 6.

28. Tim F. LaHaye, *Rapture (Under Attack): Will You Escape the Tribulation?* (Colorado Springs, CO: Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers Inc., 1998), 147.

29. Unger, "American Rapture," 6.

30. Ibid.

31. LaHaye, *Rapture (Under Attack): Will You Escape the Tribulation?*, 147.

32. Thomas N. Hill, Memo from Thomas Hill to All Major Coordinators (John Birch Society Records, 1928–1990, Brown University Archives, August 9, 1965), 1-2.

### 7.3.1 Lessons Learned: The Evolution of a Movement

In the analysis of the Moral Majority movement, commonalities with previous conservative Christian movements discussed in earlier chapters become apparent. Tim LaHaye made significant changes within these common elements that continue to influence the American political landscape. There are at least four areas that LaHaye built upon to mobilize the conservative Christian Right: (a) framing culture war issues through an apocalyptic lens; (b) motivating conservatives to save God, country, and family from a nebulous enemy; (c) developing and maintaining an organizational structure oriented to distill the message; and (d) selecting and promoting a political candidate. Through the Moral Majority, LaHaye implemented these elements to create a sustainable movement on the right.

LaHaye's book *The Battle For the Mind*, published in 1980, provides an insight into LaHaye's use of fear, conspiracy, religion, and politics to motivate conservative Christians. LaHaye's book is where we can see that the JBS radically influenced the rise of the Christian Right. *The Battle For the Mind*, is basically the *Blue Book* for the Moral Majority membership and revised to address the pressing enemy of the day. Where Welch in *The Blue Book* focused on the role of communists in the formation of a New World Order (NWO), LaHaye, following the same plot pattern named secular humanists as the enemy of Christians and, because they are virtually indistinguishable, traditional American values. Moreover, both Welch and LaHaye developed a narrative that integrally linked together conservative political policies, Christianity, and free enterprise. The enemy in this narrative, whether communists or secular humanists, had to be thwarted in their attempts to limit Christianity, replace individualism with collectivism, destroy capitalism, uproot



the Christian moral foundations of America, and replace traditional American values with godless values. Falwell promoted LaHaye's book by stating that "all Christians must follow its tenets if America is to be saved from becoming another Sodom and Gormorrah."<sup>33</sup>

### **7.3.2 Fear and Culture Wars: From Communists to Secular Humanists**

The first of the common elements is an appreciation of culture war issues, the use of "commonly held" Christian values, and a specific definition of morality. Culture war issues such as abortion, women's rights, "gay rights," and traditional family values, are held as emblematic of the deterioration of morality within the nation. LaHaye, in *Battle For the Mind*, focused on culture war issues. He put these issues into a context of attacks on morality, Christianity, the traditional family unit, and America itself. For LaHaye, secular humanists were enemies of America. Under an umbrella of "morality" LaHaye used these issues as the glue that held the various religious groups together in the Moral Majority, "Such pro-moral political leaders may be Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, or Jews. Though differing in theology, they are in harmony on such issues as abortion, homosexuality, pornography, prostitution, murder, integrity, and the responsibility of government to protect the family, not destroy it."<sup>34</sup> LaHaye, as did Welch in the JBS, highlighted the commonalities in the various conservative Christian groups and this was the cornerstone to both LaHaye and Welch in the creation of movements for political action.

33. Unger, "American Rapture," 8.

34. Tim F. LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1980), 175.

Through a biblical lens, LaHaye defined a virtual landscape of Christian persecution in America. He wrote, “Today humanists ridicule the Puritan work ethic, free enterprise, private ownership of land, and capitalism—even though these concepts, which emanated from biblical teaching, have produced the greatest good for the largest number of people in history.”<sup>35</sup> For LaHaye, humanists were ushering an America where, where, “the humanist (in spite of all historical evidence to the contrary) has this strange concept about man’s innate goodness; The poor are good—all they need is better housing, food, and money; the rich are bad, particularly capitalists; government leaders are good.”<sup>36</sup> LaHaye incorporated religion, politics, and free enterprise, while creating an “other,” an enemy of America.

According to LaHaye, for humanists to be able to “usher in a system of socialism into America” they had to be in positions of power. This was accomplished through the infiltration of major institutions. LaHaye, much like Welch, created a narrative where the enemy had infiltrated, and in some cases controlled, major institutions.<sup>37</sup> In the introduction to the book LaHaye argues that ignorance regarding humanism is why and how American “culture, families and country”<sup>38</sup> are being destroyed. As he explains, “Most of the evils in the world today can be traced to humanism, which has taken over our government, the UN, education, TV, and most of the other influential things in life.”<sup>39</sup>

35. LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind*, 39.

36. *Ibid.*, 121.

37. *Ibid.*, 27.

38. *Ibid.*, 9.

39. *Ibid.*

### 7.3.3 Organizational Structure

The second common element is the organizational structure used by the JBS and the Moral Majority. The institutional organizations all included a leading council or board of directors, a leader who was the spokesperson guiding the membership, and a behind-the-scenes financial group of supporters. The JBS and the Moral Majority<sup>40</sup> used similar communication methods including newsletters, magazines, books, films, radio and television that not only interpreted current events through the lens of apocalyptic thought, religious persecution, and fear, but also were used as a conduit to identifying a common enemy who were orchestrating the attacks on American values, religion, and morality in the nation. Both the JBS and the Moral Majority encouraged its membership to become politically active in an attempt to stop these attacks. This encouragement was also found in the materials from NAM as well. This political activism was both through active engagement in PTAs, boards of institutions like libraries, municipal politics as well as in federal and state politics, through voting and volunteering for campaigns for candidates who represented their beliefs.

Both the JBS and the Moral Majority encouraged their members to consider running for political office, as LaHaye wrote, “start with small offices and work your way up.”<sup>41</sup> LaHaye, as did Welch, encouraged members to join local, state and national pro-moral organizations.<sup>42</sup> Both Welch and LaHaye incorporated opinion shapers in their organization, actively fostering relationships with clergy, women’s groups and youth organizations. In

40. Note: NAM, Spiritual Mobilization and Billy Graham’s movement also used these same communication methods.

41. LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind*, 235.

42. Ibid.

many cases using clergy, women and youth as spokespersons. Many of their publications were created specifically for these opinion shapers to disseminate their stances on culture war issues.

The most significant change to the organizational structure that LaHaye made was through his founding of the Council for National Policy (CNP). The CNP was comprised of GOP representatives and politicians, Christian organizations, membership organizations such as the National Rifle Association (NRA), wealthy individuals, and the fifth estate. It is important to note that the CNP itself is not a religious organization, but a conglomerate of conservative Christian groups, political groups and representatives and corporate entities. The CNP is not simply an umbrella group of far right organizations, it is a conduit to the financial support this movement needs to mobilize and pooling of its resources. Most importantly, the CNP is a mechanism to spread a cohesive message to various conservative groups.

Sociologist William Martin argues that the leaders of organizations such as the Christian Coalition headed by Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed, James Dobson's Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council headed by Reagan advisor Gary Bauer, Concerned Women for America led by Beverley LaHaye, and the American Family Association come together to meet under the CNP.<sup>43</sup> The CNP membership, from Martin's research, includes heads of media outlets (radio, print and television) and congressional figures such as Republicans Tom Delay, Trent Lott and Jesse Helms. People no longer needed to join a JBS or the Moral Majority. Their church affiliated groups or hobby groups like the NRA

43. William Martin, "The Christian Right and American Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy*, 1999, 69.

disseminate a message to all of the groups within the CNP. If a person is a member of more than one of these organizations, they will receive similar messages, which acts to reinforce the message being sent. The groups within the CNP are organized and “they identify constituencies, establish organizations, set up networks for communication, provide programs and candidates to rally around, and point people toward the voting booth.”<sup>44</sup>

Of the founding of the CNP, LaHaye said in a speech, “And I [LaHaye] realized that the leadership that was springing up all over the conservative movement was made up largely of clerics. Hard-driving leadership compulsive people that run everything and I could just see them colliding with each other. And I thought, wouldn’t it be neat if we had a group that could get together on a regular basis and become friends.”<sup>45</sup> In an interview for the *New York Times* Right wing leader Richard Viguerie said of the CNP, “We have never had, up to now, any kind of broad, all-inclusive organization of conservative-thinking people, people who have a lot of leverage,”<sup>46</sup> he continued that the CNP would fill that gap. In 1981, former Louisiana lawmaker, Woody Jenkins (and the CNP’s first Executive Director) told *Newsweek* “One day before the end of the this century, the Council will be so influential that no president, regardless of party or philosophy, will be able to ignore us or our concerns or shut us out of the highest levels of government.”<sup>47</sup>

44. Martin, “The Christian Right and American Foreign Policy,” 69.

45. Tim F. LaHaye, “The Council for National Policy,” Undated, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://www.cfnp.org/page.aspx?pid=405>.

46. Adam Clumer, “Conservatives Gather in Umbrella Council for a National Policy,” *The New York Times*, 1981, accessed August 23, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/20/us/conservatives-gather-in-umbrella-council-for-a-national-policy.html>.

47. Jeremy Leaming and Rob Boston, “Behind Closed Doors,” *Church & State* 57, no. 9 (October 2004): 8–12, accessed August 24, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/docview/219190979?accountid=14906>.

In essence, the CNP brought together the leaders of conservative Christian groups with the far right members of the Republican Party. The success of this coalition led the editors of the advocacy group *Church & State* to conclude that: “From the beginning, the CNP sought to merge two strains of far-right thought: the theocratic Religious Right with the low-tax, anti-government wing of the GOP. The theory was that the Religious Right would provide the grassroots activism and the muscle. The other faction would put up the money.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, the CNP would be the leadership of a mobilization of a large contingent of conservative America. This merger reflected the movement from NAM, Spiritual Mobilization, Billy Graham’s revivals and most importantly the JBS. The leaders of the conservative Christian movements would be in direct connection with the right leaning members of the GOP. This allowed the religious members to express their opinions about political policies to those in power, and it allowed politicians to have a direct conduit to conservative voters.

The creation of the CNP was one of the most significant organizational moves that LaHaye accomplished. Journalist Michael Standaert has argued that LaHaye was “central in influencing the direction of the political side”<sup>49</sup> of the conservative Christian movement. Standaert states that “through his [LaHaye] writings, his activism, and his network-building that reaches from the church to the White House via the organizing machinery of the Republican Party,”<sup>50</sup> LaHaye has been an integral aspect of the organization of the conservative Christian movement. In 2001, Wheaton’s Institute for the Study of American

48. Leaming and Boston, “Behind Closed Doors.”

49. Michael Standaert, *Skipping Towards Armageddon: The Politics and Propaganda of the Left Behind Novels and the LaHaye Empire* (Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull Press, 2006), 42.

50. Ibid.

Evangelicals named LaHaye the most influential evangelical leader in the United States for the last quarter century.<sup>51</sup> The Institute gave him this title due to his having been “a driving force in the organizational efforts of evangelicals, including the Moral Majority and the respected political think tank Council for National Policy.”<sup>52</sup> Journalist Lee Fang credits LaHaye and the CNP with “cementing the role of the religious right within the modern Republican Party.”<sup>53</sup> LaHaye’s organizational skills, and his ability to market and disseminate the apocalyptic into a contemporary political landscape, was and is instrumental to the political mobilization of conservative Christians in America.

For LaHaye the enemy was redefined as internally placed secular humanists, not communist outsiders located in the Soviet Union. NAM and the JBS operated in a society where they interpreted the enemy as an external force. By the 1980s communists and foreign threats were not the concern, it was internal threats that sprang from universities, political philosophies, and mainline Christian churches. The culture war issues of abortion, prayer in schools, etc. were no longer symbolic of an external enemy destroying God, country, and family; these threats were homegrown. Where Goldwater with the FSA tried to harness the movement and link them directly to the Republican Party, LaHaye followed in Welch’s footsteps and linked the movement directly to culture war issues. Whereas Welch strategized to keep the religious links below the radar of public scrutiny, LaHaye and the Moral Majority made religion the centrepiece of their movement. According to scholar Rosemary Duward:

51. Unknown, “Tim LaHaye ‘Most Influential Leader,’” Accessed: 13/09/2017, June 2, 2001, <http://www.wnd.com/2001/06/9474/>.

52. Ibid.

53. Lee Fang, *The Machine: A Field Guide to the Resurgent Right* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 68.

LaHaye's books opened the door for Christians to discuss their fears and beliefs about social and political situations and express wanton revenge on 'outsiders' without fear of being labelled fanatical. Shifting the focus of religious voters away from the social gospel and toward a vengeance oriented perception of the Godless world, proved to be one of the most powerful identity permutations that delivered frightened vengeful support.<sup>54</sup>

Welch and LaHaye, as Prothero described in his definition of culture wars, created an "other," a group of "unAmericans" who supported liberalism as defined by these economic and social issues.

The media approaches by both LaHaye and Welch are significant aspects of the motivation of fear within the political realm. Political scientist Mark Major argues that conservatives created a "conservative counter-sphere" during the civil rights era in America. Conservatives in this era, according to Major, felt marginalized due to the social upheaval and articulated this through a critique of mainstream media.<sup>55</sup> Major argues that "the conservative counter-sphere provided a critical foundation to develop a rhetorical assault against the news media."<sup>56</sup> His research of alternative conservative media included *Human Events* magazine, and what he found was that the mainstream media was perceived as "undermining the national interests and values of America. Again, right-wing morals and goals were synonymous with the national interests, so to be against the conservative

54. Rosemary Durward, *Religion, Conflict and Military Intervention* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 99.

55. Mark Major, "Objective but Not Impartial: Human Events, Barry Goldwater, and the Development of the "Liberal Media" in the Conservative Counter-Sphere," *New Political Science* 34, no. 4 (2012): 459.

56. Ibid.



cause is to be against the national interests of America.”<sup>57</sup> Major’s conclusion was that “the right-wing critique of the news media represents something more than just criticism. The rhetorical assault on the news media was part of a broader project of dismantling the welfare state and regulation of capital.”<sup>58</sup> LaHaye capitalized on this through the CNP. The CNP included organizations with their own publications specific to their own memberships, as well as media outlets such as FoxNews and in later years Breitbart. This allowed a cohesive message to be sent to a large swath of conservatives while by-passing the mainstream media outlets.

### **7.3.4 Expertise and Guidance Against a Nebulous Enemy**

The third common element is the use of fear, anger, and disgust by each of these groups as both a source of motivation and a powerful mobilizer. Robert Welch and the JBS perfected this. Fear became a motivator for the membership and was linked to attacks on Americanism, Christianity, free enterprise, American values, and morality. The enemy was nebulous. Although a specific title was given to the enemy, such as communists or humanists, one never knew who specifically was a communist or a humanist. This enemy could be the leader of a local church, the dean of a university, or even the President of the United States. Welch in building fear as motivator created a improvisational conspiracism, which incorporated apocalyptic thought, radicalism, the occult, and stories about the Illuminati. He positioned himself as an expert in stigmatized knowledge, who could expose

57. Major, “Objective but Not Impartial: Human Events, Barry Goldwater, and the Development of the “Liberal Media” in the Conservative Counter-Sphere,” 462.

58. *Ibid.*, 468.

the secret hidden forces controlling human destiny through government policies forwarding “liberal” attacks on America. Welch interpreted current events, political policies, and social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and women’s rights, through a lens of improvisational conspiracism for the JBS membership. Each “victory” for the movement was celebrated, but another attack was elucidated keeping, not only the “danger” or possible “disaster” continuously at the forefront, but also as a motivator to continue to fight to save God, country and family.

In his book *Battle For the Mind*, LaHaye described the battle between good and evil in radically dualistic terms. According to LaHaye, humanists served as the conduit for godless evil while Christians were called by God to be a force for good in a sinful world. Indeed, godlessness defined the humanist, LaHaye wrote:

Simply defined, humanism is man’s attempt to solve his problems independently of God. Since moral conditions have become worse and worse in direct proportion to humanism’s influence, which has moved our country from a biblically based society to an amoral “democratic” society during the past forty years, one would think that humanists would realize the futility of their position. To the contrary, they treacherously refuse to face the reality of their failures, blaming them instead on traditional religion or ignorance or capitalism or religious superstitions.<sup>59</sup>

LaHaye’s definition of humanism is a clear articulation of a culture war enemy which he would link to the Illuminati.

59. LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind*, 26.

A later manuscript of LaHaye's *Rapture Under Attack* (1998) provided LaHaye with an opportunity to delve deeper into his improvisational conspiracy. LaHaye wrote "I myself have been a forty-five-year student of the satanically-inspired, centuries-old conspiracy to use government, education, and media to destroy every vestige of Christianity within our society and establish a new world order."<sup>60</sup> LaHaye continued, "Having read at least fifty books on the *Illuminati*, I am convinced that it exists and can be blamed for many of man's inhumane actions against his fellow man during the past two hundred years."<sup>61</sup> In other words, LaHaye was establishing himself as an expert on the *Illuminati* and the conspiracy to create the New World Order (NWO), a role echoing back to Welch who would provide analysis of world events, through the lens of an expert in the *Insiders*.

According to LaHaye, "The spread of dispensational truth and a second-coming-awareness of the at-any-moment-coming of Christ to rapture His church demands more than a human explanation. Of necessity it requires something special, far more distinctive than the machinations of the *Illuminati*. It was the work of the Holy Spirit!"<sup>62</sup> For LaHaye, "The teaching of the Rapture has never neutralized a single Christian. What has done so is the pietistic movement's error that politics is evil and that heavenly minded Christians should not be involved in changing society through government."<sup>63</sup>

By linking humanists to the *Illuminati*, LaHaye created an improvisational conspiracy theory that linked Christian apocalyptic thought with conspiracy. Humanists, like the communists of the 1950s and 1960s, were being defined and defiled as a tool of a much

60. LaHaye, *Rapture (Under Attack): Will You Escape the Tribulation?*, 138.

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*, 146.

63. *Ibid.*, 147.

greater evil. To aid in the creation of fear, and the need to save God, country and family, LaHaye described how humanists hate all that the Christian members of the Moral Majority believe in. LaHaye wrote that humanists “become so vicious in their expressed hatred of Christianity and its absolutes. To humanists, Christian thought is a mortal foe. They often become obsessed with the idea that they render a service for humanity by stamping out Christianity.”<sup>64</sup> He continued, “Knowledgable humanists look upon the church and its doctrinal absolutes as the greatest enemy of mankind.”<sup>65</sup> In sum, LaHaye had not sought to explain why there was such hatred against Christians but had attempted to lay the foundations for a movement of Christian heroes to fight against this foe.

### **7.3.5 Political Candidate**

The mobilizations of the JBS and the Moral Majority also needed a political candidate or representative on which to focus support. This politician needed to be able to tap into the culture war issues and provide a mechanism to mitigate the fear. The political candidate became the voice of the movement, bringing the fears and concerns of its members to the political process. No longer would members of the group be disenfranchised from the political realm, as its chosen candidate expressed their concerns over culture war issues, attacks on Christianity, and would ultimately stop the decline of morality in the nation. The candidate through their political policies, if elected, would be able to return America to a society in which individualism was fostered, common Christian values were the source of public culture, and free enterprise and “freedom” were guaranteed. In effect, the political

64. LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind*, 29-30.

65. *Ibid.*, 78-79.

candidate would put a stop to the advancement of the enemy of America, and win the war against evil.

LaHaye promoted political action for the Moral Majority and Christians as a whole. LaHaye, through his writings, links control of the American political realm to the humanists and Illuminati. He links the symbolic culture war issues as a evidence of the “humanist” control of American politics:

A humanist is just not qualified to be elected to public office by patriotic, America-loving citizens. The major problems of our day—moral, educational, economical, and governmental—are primarily caused by the fact that over 50 percent of our legislators are either committed humanists or are severely influenced in their thinking by the false theories of humanism.<sup>66</sup>

LaHaye also links his version of improvisational conspiracism to the political battlefield when he wrote:

It is all very simple, if you face the fact that we are being controlled by a small but very influential cadre of committed humanists, who are determined to turn traditionally moral-minded America into an amoral, humanist country. Oh, they don't call it humanist. They label it *democracy*, but they mean humanism, in all its atheistic, amoral depravity.<sup>67</sup>

This concept of America being politically controlled by the Illuminati is used by LaHaye as the fear-based motivation to elect “truly conservative” politicians.

66. LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind*, 78.

67. *Ibid.*, 142.

In 1998 in his book *Rapture Under Attack* LaHaye reflected on the election of Ronald Reagan. He linked Reagan's win to his own narrative of improvisational conspiracism when he wrote:

Those who accepted the pre-Tribulation rapture may have adopted this unscriptural idea of pietism, but the two are unrelated. In fact, one reason the *Illuminati* conspirators are running far behind their schedule to usher in the new world order is that the Religious Right in the 1980s registered and got out the vote of a record number of evangelical Christians in the election of President Ronald Reagan. His election didn't solve all our national problems; it wasn't intended to. But it lit the way for other Christians who could turn the conspirators back another decade. Christians are the only group in America large enough to vote out of office a sufficient number of liberal humanists to return this country to some degree of moral sanity before the twenty-first century.<sup>68</sup>

LaHaye, much like those before him, linked religion to politics as well as the role of morality as the catalyst to voting. LaHaye states that to ensure that the "advance of the Kingdom of Christ that our forefathers established"<sup>69</sup> only 10 percent more Christians need to be registered to vote. "That should be the bottom line of Christian responsibility for people living in a free country."<sup>70</sup> Almost echoing Welch, LaHaye writes that "it will be the tragedy of the ages if 60 percent of the Christian community refuses to get involved and by its silence lets the liberals turn America into a Soviet-style socialist 'paradise,' which some have been

68. LaHaye, *Rapture (Under Attack): Will You Escape the Tribulation?*, 147.

69. *Ibid.*, 148.

70. *Ibid.*

working on for over 80 years. If we let them, these liberal humanists, by overtaxation and exorbitant government spending, will do for America what Communism has done to the former Soviet Union.”<sup>71</sup> The Moral Majority linked its political support to Ronald Reagan, who was the voice of their discontent with the immorality in America, big government, and Carter’s administration.

## 7.4 Conclusion

LaHaye, through the Moral Majority, had formulated a new mobilization of conservative Christians building upon the success of past mobilizations. He had made adjustments to respond to the failings of the JBS mobilization. Welch had created a movement where conspiracy was forefront, with the religious nature undisclosed. Even now, when we look at scholarship on the JBS, we see the organization dismissed for its conspiratorial stance with very little to no discussion of the role of religion in the organization. For the Moral Majority, Christianity was at the forefront and the conspiracy theories below the radar. The structure of the JBS mimicked the cultural norms at the time of its formation and so to join the JBS one had to be approved, and membership information of the JBS was kept secret. In essence, Welch created a secret membership organization, that appeared to be motivated by conspiracy theories. In retrospect, this inadvertently stigmatized being a member of the JBS. Recognizing this, LaHaye and the other leaders of the Moral Majority created a movement where no membership was required, other than being Christian. To be a Christian was not stigmatized by the greater society, although a sense of persecution was

71. LaHaye, *Rapture (Under Attack): Will You Escape the Tribulation?*, 148.

fostered to highlight the decay of the Christian American society. With the Moral Majority, individuals can belong to any group, such as Focus on the Family, their local church, the National Rifle Association, or Concerned Women of America. The Moral Majority was naturally framed as an umbrella organization working with the leadership of numerous groups.

LaHaye used his connections with religious leaders and businessmen to begin the Moral Majority and the Council for National Policy (CNP). Understanding that the missing factor in mobilizing conservative Christians, fear and conspiracy, LaHaye and other Christian leaders used conspiracy, fear, and a sense of social heroism, to mobilize the Christian Right. LaHaye, continued in this aspect, building upon the experience of the JBS, through subtle changes to Welch's approach. Focusing on the religious aspects publicly and keeping the conspiracy out of the public realm allowed there to be less reason for dismissal of the movement. LaHaye also circumvented another of Welch's weaknesses: Welch positioned himself as the leader and spokesperson of the JBS, allowing the media, wealthy investors and the general public to have an individual to castigate as the catalyst to the movement. With the founding of the CNP, LaHaye was able to create a conduit for connecting "extremists" within the right-wing to moderate conservatives and to business leaders without providing individuals to blame or attack. The CNP and the Moral Majority mirrored the two-tiered economic approach that Welch created in the JBS, but instead of the membership organization being the "secret" entity, LaHaye created a open membership of the Moral Majority, and a secretive leadership organization for mobilization in the CNP, ensuring its prolonged success.

While the Moral Majority is no longer a force in the US political arena, its legacy con-



tinues, and the CNP is still a major player in politics. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) reported that Donald Trump and five other GOP presidential candidates each spent 30 minutes addressing the CNP during the primaries in 2016. *The National Review* reported that from these talks the CNP membership favoured Trump as the presidential nominee.<sup>72</sup> According to the SPLC in 2016 the most important issues for the CNP membership were Islamophobia, sexual morality/anti-gay rights and economic reform.<sup>73</sup> The CNP membership still includes large conservative Christian organizations such as Focus on the Family, Concerned Women of America, the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute, the American Family Association, and the Family Research Council.<sup>74</sup>

NAM started a conservative movement in the 1940s, which has continued to affect the American political arena. Through the decades of this movement various “eruptions” of mobilizations such as Fifield’s Spiritual Mobilization, the JBS and the CNP have furthered the success of this overall conservative movement. Each incarnation has used fear, anger, and disgust to motivated conservative Christians to the polling booth.

72. Beirich Heidi and Potok Mark, “The Council for National Policy, A Highly Secretive Group, Is A Key Venue Where Mainstream Conservatives And Extremists Mix,” May 17, 2016, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/05/17/council-national-policy-behind-curtain>.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

## Chapter 8

# Conclusion: Eruptions in Time and Implications

In the opening chapter I encouraged readers to consider Judith Butler's theory, which she developed while wrestling with the work of Walter Benjamin, that political action motivated by nostalgia is not the end result of people seeking a return to an ideal past. It is, rather, that nostalgia-inspired political action is a response to the memory of suffering, which erupts in time with a hope of future justice. While it is difficult to conceive of wealthy individuals who fervently promoted the idea that free enterprise was divinely sanctioned as suffering from injustice, they nevertheless shared the belief with millions of other Americans in the middle of the twentieth century that both traditional Christianity and America were under attack from both internal and external enemies. Their response was not to re-instate some bygone era in American history to deal with twentieth-century problems but, rather, to draw on traditional American Christian and nationalist narra-

tives to mobilize an electorate to support conservative, pro-capitalist policies for America. In crude terms, the combination of faith in God and faith in free enterprise provided a foundation for the emergence of a mid-twentieth century conservative movement that intricately linked together big-business, Christianity, and the Republican Party in an effort to combat perceived attacks on religion, country, and traditional values. As this movement developed, charismatic leaders learned from one another how to engage specific audiences and to complement each other's work. One overarching objective in this movement was the political mobilization of Christian conservatives to ensure that free enterprise would remain the economic basis of the country, and thereby combating the evils of liberalism, communism, and other ideologies that ran counter to their view of a Christian America.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that organizations such as the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), Rev. James Fifiield's Spiritual Mobilization, Rev. Billy Graham's revivals and the magazine *Christianity Today*, the John Birch Society (JBS), and Tim LaHaye's Council on National Policy (CNP), and the Moral Majority attempted to mobilize individuals based upon an appeal to shared Christian values, a fear of the declining morality in America, the belief that a small network of international leaders was conspiring to undermine the American political system, and the conviction that fighting to save God, country, and family was the moral duty of God-fearing Americans. While the masses galvanized around culture war issues, such as women's liberation and gay rights, corporations and wealthy backers of these organizations stood to benefit from policies geared toward protecting free enterprise and increasing wealth for the rich. Emerging in the wake of Roosevelt's New Deal expansion of government in the 1930s and the economic transitions following the end of World War Two, these organizations (or structured at-

tempts at mobilization) became a driving force of a conservative movement that sought power and credibility under the Eisenhower administration. The continual nurturing of organizations by a core group of architects that strive for justice was not sufficient to induce fundamental political change—missing was a discourse of injustice that could appeal to the masses and be broadly accepted by populations inspired by nationalistic political rhetoric. A prime example of the discourse of injustice taking shape was Robert Welch’s revisionist account of John Birch’s martyrdom. When stories of injustice resonate with a society or group of people who think of themselves as a nation, there is an eruption in time where people respond to the call to right wrongs, real or perceived, and the weight of their collective resistance to the status quo generates political action.

Recalling Butler’s thoughts on the eruptions in time, I have asked readers to envision each of the movements discussed in this thesis as an eruption. NAM’s original public relations campaign to women, youth, and religious leaders was an attempt to resist the New Deal, unions, and liberalism. This campaign was, at its core, a movement intended to influence directly the voting public through campaigns created specifically for the opinion shapers, including women and religious leaders. NAM, as argued in chapter two, realized women were, at that time, the largest voting bloc in the country, but they did not vote. NAM systematically promoted politics, economics, and family values to women’s groups across the nation in an attempt to inspire women to become politically active. NAM took a similar approach with religious leaders. A committee of religious leaders and corporate leaders was formed to shape religious leaders’ understanding of business, which NAM meant as working *on* religious leaders to create a vision of corporations with a “heart.” Along with NAM, James Fifield’s Spiritual Mobilization also sought to influence voters

across the nation in support of conservative political and economic policies—or as Kevin M. Kruse, in his book *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, has referred to this connection of faith, freedom, and free enterprise, in support of “Christian libertarianism.”<sup>1</sup> Although Fifield’s attempt to “get out the vote” campaign for conservative Christians was well funded and had, at times, the support of influential Christian business leaders, his attempt to rally voters was spectacularly unsuccessful. As Fifield’s success and support waned, Billy Graham was a charismatic preacher with a message that appealed to Christian business leaders associated with NAM and the masses. Graham’s partnership with oil magnate J. Howard Pew, for example, led to the creation of the magazine *Christianity Today*, which enabled Pew and other Christian business leaders to influence clergy with their message of faith, freedom, and free enterprise.

While NAM was a driving force in cultivating politically conservative Christian leaders, the fact that it did not reach out to the so called “middle-class” meant that its scope of activity was limited. Robert Welch, a seemingly born salesman who became the leader of a candy company, recognized that an effective conservative movement needed both wealthy backers and an outreach strategy, akin to a marketing strategy, to engage the middle-class. With this objective of engaging the American middle-class in mind, Welch created the John Birch Society. Telling the story of the American hero and defending Americanism against communism, liberalism, and atheism, Welch and the JBS could claim that they successfully influenced the 1964 presidential election, with the Republican Barry Goldwater as the candidate of choice for conservatives convinced by the faith, freedom, and free enterprise message. A decade and a half after the defeat of Goldwater, Rev. Tim LaHaye with the

1. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, 7.

formation of the Moral Majority and the Council for National Policy, revisited aspects of the Welch and JBS strategy to rally conservative Christians to the polling booths for Ronald Reagan in the 1980 presidential election.

## **8.1 Religion and A Conservative Christian Movement**

At the core of this thesis is the argument that the JBS influenced a number of influential conservative Christian leaders, such as LaHaye and Phyllis Schlafly, who helped transform religious conservatism into a political force in the 1970s and 1980s. I pursue this argument even though the JBS never claimed to be a religious organization, it never attempted to align with an organized denomination or religion, and none of its leaders ever attempted to promote a particular theological system or tradition. Yet, one of the architects of the Christian Right, Tim LaHaye, learned valuable lessons from the JBS on how to mobilize politically conservative Christians around culture war issues, conspiracy theories, and an apocalyptic battle to defend God's place in America. Moreover, the JBS regularly presented itself as a viable and authentic alternative to organized religion, which, according to the JBS, had been corrupted by liberalism and other destructive ideologies. With this study, I am attempting to generate new discussion among religious studies scholars and scholars of the Christian Right about the role the JBS in particular in the rise of the religious-political movement that continues to affect American politics. While there has been a great deal of research into the turbulent late 1960s and 1970s and what this era meant for religion and politics in the United States, my work shows that the roots of the Christian Right, including its appeal to free enterprise, nationalistic rhetoric, conspiracy

theories, and culture war politics, were already taking shape in the 1950s.

I opened this thesis with a discussion of NAM because it was foundational to the rise of a politically conservative Christian movement. In chapter two, I established that NAM served as a model for the JBS, especially with regard to reaching targeted audiences and how to begin the process of mobilizing those audiences for political action. NAM's research had found that women, youth, and religious leaders were the most influential opinion shapers in society, and, with that knowledge, NAM targeted its pro-free enterprise marketing to these three groups. NAM, with its three-pronged public relations program, sought to link business leaders to religion and religion to business in an attempt to sway religious opinion shapers to support free enterprise. The messaging from NAM was clear: God supports free enterprise and the "American way of life."

At a public presentation, JBS National Council member Thomas J. Anderson stated, "unless we have a grassroots rebellion it will become a way of death of the free enterprise system, more commonly called the American way of life."<sup>2</sup> Anderson was reiterating a dominant JBS narrative that America's free enterprise system needed to be "saved" from the attacks of liberalism and the JBS was created to be a vanguard of this heroic work. The JBS used religious foundations to help define political conversations and set a perspective for political action. This is evidenced in the arc of its development that stemmed from earlier movements, such as NAM's program and Fifield's Spiritual Mobilization. In essence, the JBS was not simply an anti-communist movement, as characterized by a preponderance of the current literature, but actually a mobilization, a call to arms to the opinion shapers

2. Anderson, "Bi-Partisan Treason."

of the American middle-class. NAM and some of its members' influence helped to develop and move forward this overarching conservative mobilization. A conservative Christian political movement stemmed from the original NAM public relations program. Essentially, NAM and some of its most influential supporters helped to set and fund the JBS and the Moral Majority movement into motion in the mid-20th century. Historian Kevin M. Kruse in his book *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* linked NAM to James Fifeild and a movement of religious leaders and corporations in America. Kruse researched religious leaders and Christian organizations to establish a "Christian libertarianism" developed in the 1940s. Chapter two links NAM to the JBS, a non-religious organization, but an organization that used religious belief, apocalypticism, and fear to this Christian libertarian movement, a link which is new within this scholarship.

Chapter three introduced the role of religion and a faith in free enterprise in mobilizing the leaders of the JBS. Christianity served as a cohering structure that synthesized the ideas of free enterprise, power, and social hierarchy with the JBS's calls for action, ideology, and most importantly, political mobilization. Welch's strategy was to create an organization that would allow the JBS to address a two-tiered audience: one tier being the wealthy, who were the leadership and the silent funders; the second being the middle-class membership. For example, Welch's initial magazine *One Man's Opinion*, which was published prior to the founding of the JBS, was marketed to an audience of business leaders, professionals, and the wealthy. This magazine pitched a narrative that the American dream was an "inheritance" handed over to America's business leaders, or as Welch referred to them "God's Angry Men," who needed to rise up to protect that inheritance from communism and other



godless ideologies. Once God's Angry Men were secured as funders and supporters, Welch founded the JBS in 1958 as a way to mobilize the middle-class. Promoting social heroism was a central element in his strategy to mobilize both socio-economic groups. Welch's nationalistic but historically dubious interpretation of the death of Captain John Birch was crucial in the development of this narrative because it provided the movement with a hero who made the ultimate sacrifice for God, country, and family. In this chapter I show that although the JBS claimed not to be political it was established for political activism and mobilization. I also argue that although the JBS claimed not to be religious, the establishment of God's Angry Men as the leaders of the Society set the foundation for the use of religious ideas, beliefs, and hierarchy for the membership at large.

In chapter four, I examined the role of Christianity within the JBS as well as the Society's precarious relationship with certain major Christian institutions. I argued that Welch's writings created an environment of sustained and increasing fear for members of the JBS by focusing on apocalyptic themes connected to conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories promoted and, in many cases, created by Welch reinforced the idea that American institutions and political system were being infiltrated by atheists who could only be stopped through an ultimate battle between good and evil. In developing his conspiracy narratives, Welch connected current events to signs and symbols of biblical apocalyptic prophecies. By establishing doubt in and fear of American institutions, including all levels of government and the churches, particularly, the National Council of Churches (NCC), Welch presented the Society as the one institution that Americans could trust. Once that trust was established among its members and those sympathetic to the Society's message, Welch sustained the fear by linking contemporary events with an over-arching conspir-

acy. For example, he linked the Civil Rights Movement and socio-political upheaval in America to the rise of communism and a covert controlling body, which he called “The Insiders.” Welch claimed that the Insiders were comprised of liberal wealthy leaders who wielded political control in America. It was the Insiders, Welch believed, that were causing socio-political turmoil, fear, and the sense of powerlessness in America.

In chapter four, I also introduced the concept of improvisational conspiracy as a way to explain Welch’s Insiders. Improvisational conspiracy is a term coined by scholar Michael Barkun to characterize an eclectic form of conspiracy that combines apocalyptic thought and conspiracy, and emerges during times of crisis<sup>3</sup> The Insiders, the conspiracy theory went, wanted to gain control to create a New World Order (NWO) in which religion would no longer exist, the family structure would be destroyed, and free enterprise would be replaced by socialism. Christians would be exterminated or become enslaved to the Insiders. Using Barkun’s work on improvisational conspiracism, as well as his work on millennialism and sense of impending disaster, I analyzed Welch’s use of the Insiders, apocalypticism, and sustained sense of fear within the membership to mobilize. These ideas had a powerful influence on the movement, and they were sustained and built upon for generations, recurring in the movements spawned by the JBS decades later. The sense of impending disaster is never relieved as contemporary events become emblematic of the advancement of the evil cabal in their New World Order (NWO) agenda, to create a distrust of institutions and to instigate the motivation to fight back.

For Welch and the JBS, one sign that America had been weakened by the onslaught of

3. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, 2.

communism, liberalism, and other anti-American enemies was the spread of immorality in American society. Welch and other right-wing leaders linked immorality in society to the rise of communism, the Illuminati (or Insiders), and the anti-Christ. JBS publications, predominately written by Welch, defined issues such as illegal drug usage, delinquency, sexual freedoms, abortion, feminism, and gay rights as symbolic of the power of liberalism and the Insiders to destroy America, traditional families, and Christianity. In JBS literature, immorality was the thermometer of how successful the forces of evil were within American society. Both the JBS and NAM used these attacks on American morality primarily in their marketing to women, which encouraged women not only to become politically active but also to promote the principle that women were the protectors of morality, family, and Christianity in America.

In chapter five, I examine the effect of the JBS's targeted marketing to women and the influence it had on the Christian conservative movement generally. The JBS, and to some extent NAM, focused its marketing on the private sphere issues: individual morality, the family, and the declining influence of religion. Women were the largest voting bloc in the United States in the 1960s but they were also the least likely to vote. In essence, Welch defined these private sphere issues as the catalyst for the Christian conservative political JBS movement, with opinion shaping women as the suburban warriors of the mobilization. Using Stephen Prothero's work on culture war issues and US politics, I analyzed the materials marketed to women in the JBS and found that culture war issues that became the hallmark of the 1970s were aimed at women on the right. Arguments against feminism, abortion, gay rights, and other issues were used to define what it meant to be American, or what America itself stood for. The "immorality social issues" and ideas

spilled over from the pages of JBS and far-right conservative literature to the political realm through individuals such as Senator Barry Goldwater. Most importantly, these “morality” issues were used to define who was and was not a “true American.” They served to create an “other,” a group that is marginalized for being different from theirs. A major aspect of his strategy was recruiting women writers who, through their books, articles, and speeches, helped to create a narrative that portrayed the women of the JBS as Americanist heroes. Authors such as Taylor Caldwell, Julia C. Brown, and Elizabeth Linington wrote as women who were fighting for morality in America. Each of the JBS women authors addressed specific societal moral issues through first person accounts. These first person accounts helped to create a sense of friendship with the authors and of a community united in a common battle, and a common enemy.

Chapter six turns to the political ramifications of the JBS movement. Barry Goldwater was the political voice of the movement, but the leadership of the JBS posed a problem for the Goldwater 1964 presidential campaign. Goldwater’s campaign built upon the “moral crisis” in America under a Democratic Party government and provided an alternative, a return to American values under GOP leadership. In an appeal to women, the Goldwater campaign worked with the Mothers for Morality. These women highlighted the immorality in America under the Johnson administration. During the nomination process, the Goldwater campaign focused on the issues that Welch used to foment the activism of the JBS membership. Later, the campaign suffered from its perceived connection to the “extremism” of the JBS. Goldwater and his campaign attempted to appeal to the general public, the JBS membership, and the JBS funders, while disavowing Welch and his conspiratorial proclamations. Mainstream religious organizations also joined the political discussion,

many denouncing Goldwater's anti-welfarism, his position on the Civil Rights Movement, and his support of free enterprise. The Goldwater election campaign ended in the greatest defeat in American presidential election history. The JBS was successful in politically activating a portion of Christian conservatives in America. Unfortunately for the Goldwater campaign, the elements used to mobilize these individuals—fear, conspiracy, and a deep mistrust in the institutions of America—were also the elements that turned off a large majority of voters.

In chapters five and six, I highlight the role of culture war issues in the mobilization of JBS members. Welch motivated members to rise up against "immorality social issues," and the Goldwater platform specifically addressed the moral crisis in America. These culture war issues were important instigators to a political movement prior to the late 1960s. Prothero in his book *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When They Lose Elections)* states that contemporary culture wars "began in the fight over the sixties, not in the 1960s themselves, and that fight did not begin until the Right started to protest. Reagan declared war on the 'bad sixties' as early as 1966, when he launched his political career by denouncing student protestors and sympathetic faculty at the University of California."<sup>4</sup> I argue that contemporary culture wars stemmed from the late 1950s with the outreach efforts of NAM and especially the JBS. As evidenced in chapter six, the American public as a whole were uninterested in the culture war issues that were mobilizing the Christian conservatives in the 1950s and early 1960s. A prime example is when President Johnson's assistant was caught allegedly engaging in sexual behaviour with another man in a YMCA bathroom and arrested for perversion. The Goldwater campaign and the right were incensed, and they

4. Prothero, *Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars (Even When They Lose Elections)*, 184.

believed this scandalous event would be a turning point for the campaign. The electorate, however, disregarded the affair.

Chapter seven examines the political and social chaos for the right after Goldwater's defeat and establishes a link between the JBS and the the Moral Majority movement in the 1980s. This chapter highlighted the lack of organization and inability on the right to mobilize conservative voters after the Goldwater presidential defeat. Between 1965 and 1980 American society and American politics were in upheaval. Issues that Welch used as evidence of the moral decay of America under the leadership of the Insiders and liberals for his political movement became foundational for the right and the left during these decades. Based upon the lessons learned from Welch's JBS and the failure of the Goldwater campaign, new politically conservative movements emerged that relied on a politics of moral crisis, a growing sense that the United States was caught up in a culture war, and the belief that Christianity must play an even greater role in politics. Individuals associated with NAM, building on Goldwater's position as the "conservative messiah," founded and funded the Free Society of America (FSA). Goldwater's FSA attempted to mimic the organizational structure of the JBS. The FSA was an attempt to use Goldwater's success as the political leader of the movement, but, without the fear based motivation of Welch's JBS. The FSA would not be a success. Meanwhile, Pew and wealthy oil magnate H.L. Hunt were working on their own strategy to takeover the GOP with the "Prospect Plan," which sought to foster new prospects for political nominations across the nation. These prospects would be true conservatives, who understood that America was facing an anti-od crusade and that conservatives were needed to save religious life in America. The Prospect Plan seemingly attempted to use the same techniques of the "Kingmakers" or

“Insiders” to establish potential political nominees to usurp the power of moderates in the GOP.

Through my analysis of these emerging conservative political movements between the 1940s and 1980s, I found four common elements. The first was the promotion of a cohesive understanding of “values” for conservative Christians regardless of differing denominations or dogma. Christians in these conservative movements believed that their values were under attack by the nation’s major institutions. Second, there was a commonality in the organizational structure of the movement, including the use of print, radio, television, and speakers bureaus to get their message out, which focused on cultivating a worldview informed by biblical references and conspiracy theories. Christians in these conservative movements interpreted current events, as they were presented, as an attack on the Christian values of the nation. The various forms of communication are also directed to those who are considered the “opinion shapers:” women, youth, and clergy. Third, a powerful motivator, and in the case of the JBS, was perceived attacks culminating in fear. Leaders of the conservative movements created an “enemy of America” through the use of culture war issues, politics, and current events. This forms a delineation of who is a “true American” and who is not. Those who are the “other” are linked to a much larger conspiracy of a powerful cabal who are controlling the political realm. With each “battle won” a new battle arises. The leaders of these conservative movements frame these political battles as skirmishes in the ultimate battle between good and evil. Through apocalyptic thought and conspiracy, conservative Christians in these groups are mobilized politically to “save” America from evil. The fourth, and final common element needed is a political candidate who can lead and win. This is a candidate who can articulate and fight on behalf of the

conservative Christians against this enemy.

To support this argument I devoted most of chapter seven to the movement created by former JBS supporter Tim LaHaye. LaHaye's founding of the Council for National Policy and his leadership in the Moral Majority show that the overarching conservative movement had not disappeared after the Goldwater defeat or after the diminishing influence of the JBS after 1965. LaHaye was linked to the chain of charismatic leaders who have risen as the "face" of a movement controlled and guided by wealthy individuals and corporations. Through an analysis of his writings in founding the Moral Majority and the CNP, the four common elements are each highlighted to analyze this continuation of the conservative Christian movement.

LaHaye was involved with the JBS and a frequent workshop leader. Where LaHaye succeeded in furthering the movement of conservative politics and Christianity was via the CNP. The CNP ensures that the leaders of various Christian Right organizations can come together and create a unified movement focusing their membership on specific topics and specific political candidates. The CNP also enables these religious leaders to interact with politicians and wealthy individuals. The CNP is an umbrella organization whereby "extremists," wealthy individuals, religious leaders, lobby groups like the National Rifle Association, and politicians can meet. There is a definite level of secrecy about the group, even while all of the member organizations are very vocal and active. LaHaye took the best aspects of the JBS and created a more robust movement where the leaders could hide in the shadows, their indiscretions hidden, while the various memberships were open to the public. The Moral Majority and the CNP developed by reaching out to a variety of religious groups, including Catholics, evangelicals, and even Jewish groups, which like the



JBS allowed this politically conservative movement to bond together regardless of dogma or denomination under “common Christian” or sometimes “Judeo-Christian” values. While the Moral Majority is no longer active in American politics, the CNP is still, as of 2018, an active political force. The CNP is an ideal tool for the leaders of the overarching conservative movement to mobilize and motivate political movements as eruptions against the liberal or progressive politics of America. Republican political nominees are invited to present their platforms to the CNP membership who in turn disseminate this information to their various membership organizations or members of their religious organizations. The wealthy leaders of the overarching conservative movement can remain hidden within the CNP but can instigate “eruptions” for conservative Christians to mobilize. In essence, NAM’s legacy remains intact in American politics.

## **8.2 Scholarship and Further Research**

Current scholarship into the rise of Christian conservatism and the role of corporations and wealthy individuals includes research from historians Kevin M. Kruse, Jonathan P. Herzog, Randall Balmer, and Nancy MacLean, as well as investigative journalist Jane Mayer. Their combined works create a timeline of the involvement of wealthy individuals as architects of a top-down revival to mobilize a portion of the American electorate for conservative political candidates. While Kruse and Herzog connect religious themes to these movements, their focus is predominately on religious leaders and organizations that publicly pronounced their religious affiliations. My work links the John Birch Society, a previously believed non-religious organization to this conservative movement. Mayer

argues that the JBS was the model upon which the Koch brothers, David and Charles, based their contemporary political associations. I build upon this idea of the JBS as an influential model for the Moral Majority and the Council for National Policy, through Tim LaHaye. MacLean in her research argues that Charles Koch made a “peace” with religious leaders to further her interpretation of his attempt to subvert democracy in America. My research argues that powerful individuals heading conservative movements are quite aware of the importance of religious beliefs and hierarchy in mobilizing for political gain.

Sociologist Martin Seymour Lipset in his book *The Politics of Unreason*, argued that the John Birch Society was not a religious organization. This argument was based on a word search content analysis conducted by his then-undergraduate student Edgar G. Engleman, who searched the JBS magazine *American Opinion* for the word “anti-clergy” and substantiated his theory with a review of the covers of the magazine. Engleman’s content analysis found that the JBS did not use the word “anti-clergy” and that there were no religious leaders featured on the cover of the magazine. My content analysis counters Engleman’s. Through reading the magazine, as well as communications to the membership, speeches delivered by Welch and other leaders of the Society, I found that the JBS used religious themes such as apocalyptic thought in much of their publications. Examples of these apocalyptic tales can be found in chapters 3, 4, and 5. One such example is the fables that Welch wrote under an alias describing the future of America under “evil” communist rule, where Christians were persecuted, the American dream lay ruined, and hope was lost because no one had risen to “save” America before evil atheists took control. In addition Welch and the JBS demanded religious affiliation as a requirement of membership—in fact, atheists were not accepted as members of the JBS. JBS literature included writings

from religious leaders and most importantly positioned the political movement to mobilize to “save” Christianity. In Welch’s interpretations of the communist threat, the eventual outcome was the persecution of Christians and the demise of religion. The battle against communism and liberalism was positioned as the ultimate battle between good and evil. This positioning was also used by Tim LaHaye for the Moral Majority movement.

Most importantly my research argues that conspiracy, fear, anger, and moral disgust play an important role in these movements. The linking of apocalyptic thought to conspiracy, such as the Illuminati or the Insiders is important in creating a continuous sense of fear and disaster for the members of these movements. Evidence of the forward movement of this powerful cabal is presented through what we now refer to as culture war issues. Moral issues in society are expressed through a religious lens of common Christian values, and policies representing LGBTQ2SA rights, feminism, and civil rights is interpreted as an attack on these religious values. As these policies change it is seen as evidence of the eradication of religion in society and a precursor or sustaining of persecution of Christians. Previous scholarship on the JBS has focused on the conspiratorial aspects of the Society. My research expands past the veneer of “extremism” and conspiracy to reveal a political organization that used religion and conspiracy to mobilize. Further, my research links the JBS to both past and contemporary conservative movements. In essence, I argue that the JBS was a political organization that used religious themes and conspiracy, and in doing so was an important precursor and foundational step leading to the rise of the Christian Right in the 1980s. From the outset, Welch claimed that the JBS was neither religious nor political. My dissertation shows that the JBS was in fact created as a political mobilization that used religion as a motivator.

My methodology for this research was historical analysis. This encompassed traveling to various archives across the United States, including but not limited to, Brown University in Rhode Island, Cornell University, Emory University, the University of Delaware, the Hagley Museum in Delaware, Arizona State University, the Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Toronto, and Southern Methodist University in Texas. Through a detailed analysis of the existing JBS literature, supplemented with JBS archival files, and the archival files of many of the JBS leaders and financial supporters, I inferred the connections between the various individuals within an overarching social structure. Through this elaborate process, a pattern of connectivity emerged of common elements used to effectively motivate individuals with an end goal of mobilizing conservative candidates and conservative values. These tactics included fear, anger, and moral disgust. In the future I hope to access the archival files of individuals such as Phyllis Schlafly, Tim LaHaye, William J. Baroody, and Billy Graham to provide further context for their specific roles in this new body of research. Further, research into Christian libertarianism would also lead me to continue to follow the trail of H.L. Hunt's Prospect plan, which unfortunately could not be continued within the context of this dissertation.

The connection between LaHaye, the CNP, and the Moral Majority is an area that requires further research in a coming project. To encourage voting by Christians and politics and religion LaHaye, Paul Weyrich (Heritage Foundation)<sup>5</sup>, Nelson Bunker Hunt (son of H.L. Hunt), Kendavis Oil Company president T. Cullen Davis, and William H.

5. David D. Kirkpartick, "The 2004 Campaign: The Conservative; Club of the Most Powerful Gathers in Strictest Privacy," *The New York Times*, August 28, 2004, accessed August 23, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/28/us/2004-campaign-conservatives-club-most-powerful-gathers-strictest-privacy.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/28/us/2004-campaign-conservatives-club-most-powerful-gathers-strictest-privacy.html?_r=1).

Cies (wealthy businessman from the steel industry and JBS National Council Member) founded the Council for National Policy (CNP) in 1981.<sup>6</sup> Original members also included Phyllis Schlafly and Joseph Coors.<sup>7</sup> Coors was a financial supporter of many right wing organizations including the JBS. According to a *New York Times* article the LaHaye and Weyrich “said at the time [of founding the CNP] that they were seeking to create a Christian conservative alternative to what they believed was the liberalism of the Council on Foreign Relations.”<sup>8</sup> The CFR was an organization that the JBS was very vocal against, as they believed the CFR was detrimental to American free enterprise through a liberal foreign policy agenda. According to journalist Russ Bellant, the CNP was founded “in part to develop alternative foreign policy initiatives to oppose those offered by the Council For Foreign Relations.”<sup>9</sup>

Richard Viguerie, who had used Goldwater’s campaign mailing list, was also within the original group for the CNP. This mailing list, according to political journalist Russ Bellant, provided the organizational and financial basis for the Christian Right. Viguerie used this list for single issue, and direct mail fundraising projects which “raised both money and consciousness among conservatives and rightists.”<sup>10</sup> Weyrich and Viguerie initiated the Moral Majority, with Jerry Falwell as its leader.<sup>11</sup>

6. Frederick Stecker, *Podium, the Pulpit, and the Republicans, How Presidential Candidates Use Religious Language in American Political Debate: How Presidential Candidates Use Religious Language in American Political Debate* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 10.

7. Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, *Holy Terror: The Fundamentalist War on America’s Freedoms in Religion, Politics and Our Private Lives* (New York: Doubleday Books, 1982), 339.

8. Kirkpartick, “The 2004 Campaign: The Conservative; Club of the Most Powerful Gathers in Strictest Privacy.”

9. Russ Bellant, *The Coors Connection: How Coors Family Philanthropy Undermines Democratic Pluralism* (Brooklyn, NY: South End Press, 1991), 45.

10. *Ibid.*, 44.

11. Leaming and Boston, “Behind Closed Doors.”

The Southern Poverty Law Centre acquired a copy of the CNP membership book from 2014. The book contains all past and current members as well as the guiding principles of the group. The mission statement of the CNP is “to advance freedom by bringing together business, cultural, defense, educational, religious and public policy leaders to address the great issues confronting America.”<sup>12</sup> Their vision statement is “A united conservative movement to assure, by 2020, policy leadership and governance that restores religious and economic freedom, a strong national defense, and Judeo-Christian values under the Constitution.”<sup>13</sup> JBS connections include Roger Milliken, the Coors family, Phyllis Schlafly, Hans F. Sennholz, Cleon Skousen, Larry McDonald the second President of the JBS, and Robert Stoddard.<sup>14</sup> The Southern Poverty Law Centre states of the CNP membership directory that “it reveals how the CNP has become a key meeting place where ostensibly mainstream conservatives interact with individuals who are, by any reasonable definition, genuinely extremist.”<sup>15</sup>

The links between the CNP and the supporters and funders of the JBS are many and significant. For example, the executive committee of the CNP included Viguerie, Howard Phillips, head of the Conservative Caucus at the time. Members included Morton C. Blackwell, special assistant to President Reagan; Robert Billings, former leader of the Moral Majority; Joseph Coors; Ed Fuelner, head of the Heritage Foundation; Nellie Gray, head of the national antiabortion group, March for Life; Herbert and Nelson Bunker Hunt, (H.L

12. Various, “Council for National Policy Membership Directory 2014,” 2014, 1, accessed August 23, 2016, [https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/cnp\\_redacted\\_final.pdf](https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/cnp_redacted_final.pdf).

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 8-9.

15. Heidi Beirich and Mark Potock, “The Council for National Policy: Behind The Curtain,” May 17, 2016, accessed August 23, 2016, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/05/17/council-national-policy-behind-curtain>.

Hunt's sons); Reed Larson of the National Right to Work Committee; and Phyllis Schlafly.<sup>16</sup> For example, according to Harry Hurt, the Hunt family biography, H.L. Hunt, father of Nelson Bunker Hunt, in his later years stated that Robert Welch, Rev. Billy James Hargis, and J. Howard Pew were amongst those who had shaped his political thinking.<sup>17</sup> Bunker himself, following in his father's footsteps, was also quite politically active. He stated to Hurt, that Robert Welch was his mentor, and "became a kind of surrogate ideological father for Bunker, educating him on the Bircher outlook and advising him on how to help the cause."<sup>18</sup> Additionally, Nelson Bunker Hunt was a member of the JBS National Council. In 1984 JBS Chairman A. Clifford Barker and JBS Executive Council Member William Cies were members of the CNP. According to Bellant, "Other JBS leaders also joined the Council. Five board members of Western Goals, essentially a JBS intelligence-gathering operation (and later used to funnel aid to the Contras), joined the CNP as well."<sup>19</sup> Western Goals was founded by Larry P. McDonald, who was to replace Welch as the leader of the JBS, but was killed in a plane crash in September 1983. The organization was founded to be a anti-communist research organization that collected dossiers of people that Western Goals believed were subversives. The Board of Directors included Taylor Caldwell and Roy Cohn,<sup>20</sup> Joseph McCarthy's chief council during the Army-McCarthy hearings, and mentor to current President Donald Trump. Investigative Journalist Chip Berlet in his book *Right Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (2000) reported that addition JBS links

16. Clumer, "Conservatives Gather in Umbrella Council for a National Policy."

17. Hurt, *Texas Rich: The Hunt Dynasty, from the Early Oil Days Through the Silver Crash*, 194.

18. *Ibid.*, 221.

19. Bellant, *The Coors Connection: How Coors Family Philanthropy Undermines Democratic Pluralism*, 45-46.

20. Anson Shupe and John Heinerman, "Mormonism and the New Christian Right: An Emerging Coalition?," *Review of Religious Research*, 1985, 148-49.

to the CNP included Charles E. Rice, a member of *American Opinion* editorial board, Scott Stanley Jr., the editor of the JBS publications *Review of the News* and *American Opinion*, Robert Stoddard, JBS National Council member and former NAM board member, and John A. Stormer, author of *None Dare Call it Treason* and JBS speaker were all members of the CNP Board of Governors.<sup>21</sup> Cleon Skousen, vocal JBS member and a member of the JBS speaker's bureau, founded the Freeman Institute in 1971. The Institute was a non-profit educational foundation what specialized in Constitutional studies.<sup>22</sup>

To understand the emergence of the Moral Majority and the CNP, it is important to look at the division religion eventually caused in the JBS. In 1963 Robert Welch penned a short speech on the topic of "Neutralizers," which he defined in these terms:

We call these ideological wedges 'the neutralizers.' The objective for which they are used is to pull members right out of the Society, onto some one of several narrowly restricted courses for opposing the Communist menace; or to get members so preoccupied with some one approach to the problem that, even if they remained in the Society, they become innocuous passengers at best and increasingly disruptive disputants at worst.<sup>23</sup>

Welch believed there were several different "philosophies" or "arguments" which brought about the neutralization of the JBS members.<sup>24</sup> These included "anti-Semitism, religious

21. Chip Berlet and Matthew Nemiroff Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too close for Comfort* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000).

22. Shupe and Heinerman, "Mormonism and the New Christian Right: An Emerging Coalition?," 147.

23. Welch, *The Neutralizers*, 2.

24. *Ibid.*



neutralism, academic neutralism, political neutralism, and tangentitis (the splintering which arises over what to fight).”<sup>25</sup> Welch wrote:

one of the most common roads to neutralism is made possible by the deeply religious nature of most earnest anti-Communists. They understand that, underlying the struggle in which we are now engaged, there is the age-old conflict between the forces of good and evil. Members of The John Birch Society, in particular, are often led closer to their personal religions by the aims and ideals of the Society, and by their own thinking, labors, sacrifices, and courage in connection to those ideals. This is as it should be. But this very fact makes many of our members especially susceptible to a theological theme which is probably as old as religion itself. It is that prayer alone is the answer to all human needs and obligations.”<sup>26</sup>

In other words, Welch was competing against prayer rather than political action, and with this speech he attempted to neutralize these possible “philosophies,” which were diminishing the mobilization of the membership. In chapter three, I argued that the Welch and the JBS had developed a response to this argument between prayer versus action in their correspondence with JBS members. In his 1963 speech, Welch reiterated this issue when he wrote:

But there is an additional parallel path which has been made very appealing to many of the most fundamentalist Protestant groups. This is the doctrine

25. Welch, *The Neutralizers*.

26. *Ibid.*, 12.

that there is nothing we could do anyway, about the forthcoming spread of the Communist scourge over the whole world, and the resulting total chaos and destruction, because it is all prophesied in the Bible.<sup>27</sup>

Welch was publicly addressing the the issue of religious leaders' promotion of the coming rapture and tribulation. Religious leaders within the JBS, such as Tim LaHaye, themselves were breaking away from the JBS and promoting the coming Rapture:

Even many of our members become convinced that we are now living out the last few remaining years of life on this planet, leading up to the 'destruction of fire' prophesied in the Bible. They firmly believe that they will become 'the chosen ones' if, instead of participating in any anti-Communist activities, they simply fall on their knees and pray — and leave it all in the hands of God. Some go further, and believe that, as the chosen ones, they will be 'air lifted throughout the fire to come; and that when it is all over they will be returned to earth to start a new civilization.<sup>28</sup>

This belief system for Welch, was neutralizing the members' battle against communism, in the belief that "the struggle against Communism is being waged on an ethereal plane, far above their power as individuals to participate in the struggle or affect its outcome."<sup>29</sup>

In the speech Welch provided a history of the "British-Isreal" sect. Referring to them as a cult, Welch wrote that they "are members of various Protestant fundamentalist churches,

27. Welch, *The Neutralizers*, 12.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., 13.

who over a period of years or decades, have been brought to believe in all or in a large part of the doctrines of ‘British-Israel,’ without even recognizing that they are members of an immense cult, carrying out the wishes of the ‘priesthood’ of that cult.”<sup>30</sup> It is important to recall that in *And Some Obiter Dicta* Welch had accused Billy Graham of being a member of the Insiders and promoting a British-Israelism. For Welch, “The prophecies of doom, and all of the other facets of what we call ‘religious neutralism,’ are being utilized in a usually amorphous but always unceasing and now increasingly extensive drive to splinter our membership and slow down our recruiting.”<sup>31</sup>

The sentiments expressed by Welch in his 1963 speech about Neutralizers, were repeated in a 1978 book by JBS coordinator Robert L. Pierce. The book, *The Rapture Cult: Religious Zeal and Political Conspiracy* was sold by the JBS, and focused on the role of religious leaders promoting the rapture as a form of neutralization of the activism of Christian conservatives. Twenty years after the publication of this book, Tim LaHaye penned a response within the page of his book *Rapture Under Attack*. There exists no publicly available information why twenty years later LaHaye felt the need to respond to a book written and sold by the JBS, but it does raise questions as to the effect the concept of neutralizers was having on the group of Christian conservatives LaHaye was attempting to mobilize through the Moral Majority. LaHaye, obviously felt a need to respond to the JBS accusations of religious neutralizing. Although LaHaye was writing in 1998, he chose to respond to a book written in 1978. This would seem to denote that there was still some hesitancy amongst the conservative Christian political movement who still clung to the

30. Welch, *The Neutralizers*, 14.

31. *Ibid.*, 21.

idea of the Illuminati control and interference in their religious movement.

My research into improvisational conspiracism and American politics through the JBS provides an exciting new perspective of the membership organization, and further research into archival files would undoubtedly reshape this area of scholarship. An area I am particularly interested in is the comparison of the conservative Christian improvisational movement of the Cold War era with that of the emerging conspiracy movement under the Trump administration. In parting, I should make a brief mention of the politics on the far left in contrast to those of the far right. In particular, the far left, much like the right of the 1950s, are developing leaders of conspiracy theories and “resistance movements” through social media. Moreover, these leaders appear to depend on many of the elements of those who were influenced by the right. This fascinating parallel across party lines must at this point remain a topic for further study. Hopefully the framework of this thesis will provide some guidance for future researchers that choose to explore these confluences of religion and politics that continue to erupt and have contemporary value.

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