

**A Modern American Conservative: How Ronald Reagan Legitimized the Religious Right and
Helped Reshape the American Zeitgeist**

by

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Abstract

The late 20th century saw the rise of three closely related phenomena: modern American conservatism, Ronald Reagan, and right-wing Christianity. This dissertation explores the ascent and convergence of these three forces, which combined to bring about a remarkable shift in the American zeitgeist during the 1980s. This transformation was characterized by a fusion of conservative religion and politics, most evident in the swift upsurge of the Religious Right, a loose coalition of religious-based political action groups, founded by fundamentalist and evangelical leaders with the assistance of conservative political activists. Over the course of Reagan's presidency, the movement and its "moral agenda" became a significant factor in United States politics and an influential force within the Republican Party. Key to this ascendance was the role played by Reagan himself, who held a more complete interpretation of modern American conservative ideology than has been recognized. This nuanced view helped facilitate his relationship with the Religious Right. Though their understanding of the Christian religion and God was not always congruent, Reagan and evangelicals and fundamentalists shared similar values and spoke the same language regarding moral, social, and cultural expectations. Reagan and his administration publicly supported and actively worked to advance the movement's moral agenda, fostering an environment conducive to Religious Right values. In the process he legitimized these activists and the social issues they advocated for in the public and political spheres, something that was, at least in the long term, as or more valuable than any political legislation, and in doing so reshaped the national discourse, the modern American conservative movement, and the Republican Party.

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Introduction

The late 20th century saw the rise of three closely related phenomena. The first, modern American conservatism, emerged as an intellectual movement in the wake of the Second World War, spurred on by revivals in traditional conservative (also known as social conservative) and classical liberal (later referred to as libertarian) thought. Despite the antithetical nature of these two ideologies, the former rooted in virtue, order, and authority, and the latter in freedom and individual liberty, they united in opposition to what they perceived as common threats - New Deal liberalism at home and communism abroad. As the intellectual movement was evolving into political action in the early 1960s, philosopher and activist Frank Meyer proposed a theory, dubbed fusion, first articulated in the writings of scholar Richard Weaver, that sought to link the central tenets of traditional conservatism and classical liberalism by suggesting that the two were dependent on each other. Fusion did not really address the fundamental ideological differences inherent in the two philosophies, as pointed out by several scholars representing both schools of thought. Some intellectuals never fully accepted the idea, while others rejected it outright. Despite this opposition, fusion would serve to act, in theory at least, as the underlying basis for a modern American conservative political movement. If irreconcilable differences remained, they were, for most, largely suppressed by their shared hostility towards the left, which continued to be the strongest unifying bond between the two groups. Intent on displacing the liberal status quo and in need of a vehicle with which to do so, these “new conservatives,” as they were also known, launched a war against the liberal-moderate establishment for control of the Republican Party.

First guided by Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, the movement’s leadership would pass to a former actor and political neophyte who would go on to help reshape, not only the political landscape of the United States, but the socio-cultural one as well. Already known to Americans from his roles in Hollywood movies, Ronald Reagan would burst on to the political scene in 1964 with a campaign speech in support of Goldwater’s presidential run. Two years later he would win the governorship of California, going on to serve two terms. While Reagan’s political philosophies were rooted in classical liberal

thought, rather than traditional conservatism, his religious upbringing and the cultural and moral values it imparted, left him predisposed to Meyer's idea that freedom and virtue were inextricably linked. He expressed this belief on numerous occasions, sometimes in an oblique manner and at other times quite explicitly, as when he addressed a meeting of the Knights of Columbus: "There can be no freedom without order, and there is no order without virtue," he declared.¹ While the theory of fusion may be ideologically unattainable, given the inherent contradictions between classical liberalism and traditional conservatism, Reagan came about as close to embodying the thought as is probably possible.

The post-World War II period also saw a religious revival in the United States, in large part a response to communism, which touched the intellectual, cultural, and social fabric of the country, accompanied by the re-emergence of conservative Protestant evangelicals (and to a lesser extent fundamentalists), following a very public losing battle against modernist forces and what amounted to a twenty-odd year essentially self-imposed exile. Beginning in the 1950s, and spurred on by growing concerns that the country was moving in the wrong direction with the emergence of deepening cultural conflicts and a socio-cultural shift to the left in the late 1960s and 1970s, growing numbers of evangelicals and fundamentalists waded into the public-political discourse. Christian conservatives decried the decline of religion in the public square, including public school classrooms, and lay the blame for what they perceived to be societal ills, particularly feminism and gay rights, at the feet of "secular humanism," with its more immediate roots in the modernism of the early twentieth century. In the process of their activism, they developed ties to the conservative movement and the Republican Party.

While not the focus of this study, it is important to note the role that racial resentment – which is touched on at various points in this account - played in transforming Southern white evangelicals from Democrats to Republicans and the subsequent ramifications of that political shift. Much like their 19th century descendants had defended the practice of slavery, 20th century evangelicals supported the South's

¹ Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Centennial Meeting of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus in Hartford, Connecticut (August 3, 1982)," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1982*, volume 2, July 3 to December 31 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 1010.

racially based socio-cultural order, rooted in the practice of segregation, and the various state and local branches of the Democratic Party which upheld that system throughout the region. When Democratic members of Congress came out in support of desegregation and the administration of Lyndon Johnson pushed for civil rights legislation, passed in 1964, evangelicals saw this as a betrayal and an abuse of federal power, an attack aimed at destroying “the one-party state that governed the region under a regime of white supremacy.”² Much like Southern conservatives generally, evangelicals began to desert the Democratic Party for the Republicans - a trend that continued into the 1980s, interrupted, only slightly by Jimmy Carter’s 1976 presidential run – bringing Southern evangelicals together with their fellow northern, already largely Republican, evangelical counterparts. This political realignment helped facilitate a more cohesive approach to evangelicals’ activism and lay the foundations for their response to another race-related intervention on the part of the federal government over the issue of segregated private schools and tax exemption.³

As the 1970s were coming to a close, Christian conservatives, largely Protestant fundamentalists but also evangelicals, led by individuals such as Rev. Jerry Falwell and Francis Schaeffer, and aided by right-wing political activists, significantly Paul Weyrich and Howard Phillips, came together under the banner of the Religious Right (also referred to as the Christian Right, New Religious Right, or New Christian Right), a loose coalition of religious-based organizations, of which Moral Majority was the most prominent. Originally founded to oppose taxation on Christian schools, the movement came to promote what was referred to as the “moral agenda,” centred around what were termed “family values.”

² On the role of race in the rise of Sunbelt conservatism, see, for example, Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: race in the conservative counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge, La.; London: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011); Curtis J. Evans, “White Evangelical Protestant Responses to the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 102, no. 2 (April 2009): 245-273; Joseph Crespino, “Civil Rights and the Religious Right,” in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, ed. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian Zelizer (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 90-105; and Wayne Greenhaw, *Elephants in the Cottonfields: Ronald Reagan and the New Republican South* (New York: Macmillan, 1982); quote taken from Seth Dowland’s External Examiner’s Report submitted for the author’s Dissertation Defense.

³ On political realignment, see Daniel K. Williams, *God’s Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Encompassing a whole host of issues, it included, among other things, support for school prayer and tax exemptions for Christian schools, and an opposition to feminism and gay rights. The most controversial issue, and the one around which the Religious Right built its movement, was abortion. Historically, the practice, which many Catholics strongly opposed, had never been a real concern for evangelicals and fundamentalists. But it came to encapsulate many of the social issues associated with what came to be known as the culture war, most significantly feminism, which conservatives saw as a threat to the traditional family and thus the nation's moral fabric. It was an ideal and convenient issue upon which to unify religious and secular conservatives and build a national movement to advance a broader socio-political vision.

In the 1980s, these three phenomena, modern American conservatism, Ronald Reagan, and right-wing Christianity, converged to bring about a dramatic shift in the American zeitgeist, which included a blend of religion and politics, best characterized by the rise of the Religious Right. For over a half-century, since the fallout from the 1925 Scopes "monkey trial" surrounding the teaching of evolution in public schools, right-wing evangelicals and fundamentalists, often labeled "zealots" and "extremists," had been ostracized, relegated to the fringes of American society. But by the mid-late 1980s, Christian conservatives and their "moral agenda" had become an important factor in United States politics and an influential force within the Republican Party. Political Scientist Bruce Nesmith, among others, has pointedly noted that during and since the Reagan administrations "religious-related issues have prominently occupied all three branches of the federal government and many state governments as well."⁴ Not surprisingly, then, the rise of American political conservatism over the last forty years has been accompanied by the ascendance of the Religious Right.

It was not mere happenstance that the Religious Right flourished during Ronald Reagan's presidency (1981-1989). Rather, he played an integral role in the movement's success. Reagan had a more complete

⁴ Bruce Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition: the Reagan Campaigns and White Evangelicals* (New York: P. Lang, 1994), 137.

interpretation of modern American conservative ideology than has been recognized. This nuanced view helped facilitate his relationship with the Religious Right, a movement he made greater contributions to than the literature suggests. Though their understanding of the Christian religion and God was not always congruent, Reagan and evangelicals and fundamentalists shared similar values and spoke the same language regarding moral, social, and cultural expectations. Reagan and his administration publicly supported and actively worked to advance the movement's moral agenda, fostering an environment conducive to Religious Right values. In the process he legitimized these activists and the social issues they advocated for in the public and political spheres, something that was, at least in the long term, as or more valuable than any political legislation. In doing so, Reagan reshaped the national discourse, the modern American conservative movement, and the Republican Party.

This dissertation was initially driven by one broad question: what was the relationship between Ronald Reagan and the Religious Right? More specifically, what contributions did he make toward advancing the movement's moral agenda? While it remains a Reagan-centred study, and these questions are the central focus of the research, it has evolved to incorporate a broader examination of Reagan within the context of both the Religious Right and modern American conservatism. There are three key reasons for this shift. First, grappling with the questions posed above required an appreciation of Reagan's religious and political philosophies, which necessitated moving beyond his presidency to explore the foundational influences in his life. Second, it became apparent that any exploration of the Religious Right and the fundamentalist and evangelical leaders who led it required a more complete understanding of the movement's deep historical roots, which can be traced, in some respects, as far back as colonial America and the Puritans. The third reason was an appreciation of how important modern American conservative ideology and the movement that sprang up around it were in both bringing the Religious Right into being and facilitating the relationship between Reagan and evangelicals and fundamentalists.

Within this broader analysis, there are several secondary issues and related questions, listed below in the order in which they are addressed in the dissertation chapters, that serve to lay the foundation for an exploration of the intersection between these three forces:

- 1) What are the roots of the Religious Right? In other words, what are the connections between the Religious Right and the history of religion and religious movements in the United States?
- 2) What is modern American conservatism?
- 2) What were Reagan's religious and political philosophies?
- 3) How has the issue of abortion been viewed historically in the United States, and what are its connections to Christian conservatives and Ronald Reagan?
- 4) What was the relationship between right-wing evangelicalism and fundamentalism and the modern American conservative movement?
- 5) What is the Religious Right, what brought it into being, and what was the movement's agenda?

In addressing the questions and issues outlined above, this study utilizes a wide array of primary sources. The principle source for the unpublished material is the archive at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, which includes, but is not limited to, personal and official correspondence, policy papers, press releases, and inter-office memos. The published sources that focus on Reagan include his autobiographies, *Where's the Rest of Me: Ronald Reagan Tells His Own Story* (1965) and *An American Life* (1990), his books, *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation* (1984), *The Creative Society: Some Comments on Problems Facing America* (1968), and *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches* (1989), as well as his diaries (two volumes, edited by Douglas Brinkley). In addition to these are edited collections of his personal writings and correspondence, significantly *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan* (eds. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe), *Dear Americans: Letters from the*

Desk of President Ronald Reagan (eds. Ralph Edward Weber and Ralph A. Weber), *Reagan, in His Own Hand* and *Reagan: A Life in Letters* (eds. Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Graebner Anderson, and Martin Anderson), *Sincerely, Reagan* (ed. Helene von Damm), and *A Time for Choosing: The Speeches of Ronald Reagan, 1961-1982* (eds. Alfred A. Balitzer, and Gerald M. Bonetto). Speeches, public addresses, and policy papers, drawn from *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1981-1989* as well as the National Archives and Research Administration (NARA) and The American Presidency Project have also been incorporated into the study.

Complementing these sources are books, newsletters, and speeches, written by influential evangelical and fundamentalist leaders, significantly Jerry Falwell, Francis Schaeffer, Tim LaHaye, Pat Robertson, and Billy Graham, as well as church newsletters, journals, and magazines. Discussions centred around modern American conservatism and its roots are largely based on the writings of leading intellectuals that helped to shape the movement, including Frank Meyer, William F. Buckley Jr., Friedrich Hayek, Russell Kirk, and Richard Weaver, as well as individuals such as Barry Goldwater and Phyllis Schlafly. Rounding out the primary source base are Republican and Democratic Party platforms, polling data, and newspapers, significantly the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*. Finally, numerous secondary sources addressing a wide range of issues within the parameters of this study provide the broad foundational context.

Countless volumes have been written on Ronald Reagan. Broad studies concentrate on what has been termed the “Reagan Era,” or the “Age of Reagan,” a time span that has been defined by scholars as covering as wide a period as that between the mid-1960s and the early twenty-first century. These works often emphasize one or a combination of cultural, social, economic, and/or political approaches in their analysis.⁵ Other writers have chosen to focus on Reagan’s presidency,⁶ while some have attempted to

⁵ See for example: Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History: America in the Reagan Years* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991); Steven F. Hayward, *The Age of Reagan: the Fall of the Old Liberal Order, 1964-1980* (Roseville, CA: Forum, 2001); John Ehrman, *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (Princeton, N.J.:

deconstruct the man himself.⁷ Still others have sought to study Reagan within the context of foreign policy and the Cold War.⁸ Finally, there are an assortment of works that emphasis various issues and events including the 1980 and/or 1984 elections,⁹ the conservative movement,¹⁰ and race and civil rights.¹¹

Princeton University Press, 2005); Michael Schaller, *Right Turn: American Life in the Reagan-Bush Era, 1980-1992* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Robert Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008); William Kleinknecht, *The Man Who Sold the World: Ronald Reagan and the Betrayal of Main Street America* (New York: Nation Books, 2009); Will Bunch, *Tear Down This Myth: How the Reagan Legacy Has Distorted Our Politics and Haunts Our Future* (New York: Free Press 2009); David Sirota, *Back to Our Future: How the 1980s Explain the World We Live in Now – Our Culture, Our Politics, Our Everything* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2011).

⁶ See for example: B.B. Kymlicka and Jean V. Matthews, *The Reagan revolution?* (Chicago, IL: Dorsey Press, 1988); Carter Hodding, *The Reagan Years* (New York: G. Braziller, 1988); Martin Anderson, *Revolution: the Reagan legacy* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1990); Michael Schaller, *Reckoning with Reagan: America and its president in the 1980s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); William E. Pemberton, *Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan* (Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 1997); Deborah H. Strober and Gerald Strober, *The Reagan Presidency: An Oral History of the Era* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1998); Richard Reeves, *President Reagan: The Triumph of Imagination* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005); Matthew Dallek, “Not Ready for Mount Rushmore” *The American Scholar* 78, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 13-23.

⁷ See for example: Lou Canon, *President Reagan: The Role of A Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 1991); Dinesh D’Souza, *Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader* (New York; London: Free Press, 1997); Peggy Noonan, *When Character Was King: A Story of Ronald Reagan* (2001); Kyle Longley, Jeremy D. Mayer, Michael Schaller, and John W. Sloan, *Deconstructing Reagan: conservative mythology and America's fortieth president* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2007); James D. Garrison, *An Empire of Ideals: The Chimeric Imagination of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁸ See for example: Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1995); Beth A. Fischer, *The Reagan Reversal: Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997); Frances FitzGerald, *Way Out There In the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York; London: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Peter Schweitzer, *Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph Over Communism* (2002); Melvin P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang 2007); James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (2009).

⁹ See for example: Austin Ranney, *The American Elections of 1980* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1981); Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover, *Blue Smoke and Mirrors: How Reagan Won and Why Carter Lost the Election of 1980* (New York: Viking, 1981); Donald John Devine, *Reagan Electionomics: How Reagan Ambushed the Pollsters* (Ottawa, IL: Green Hill Publishers, 1983); Andrew Busch, *Reagan's Victory: The Presidential Election of 1980 and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005); Jeffrey D. Howison, *The 1980 Presidential Election: Ronald Reagan and the Shaping of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014).

¹⁰ See for example: Clifton F. White, and William J. Gill, *Why Reagan Won: a Narrative History of the Conservative Movement 1964-1981* (Chicago, IL: Regnery Gateway, 1981); Elliot Brownlee and Hugh Davis Graham, eds., *The Reagan Presidency: Pragmatic Conservatism and Its Legacies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003); Thomas E. Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of his Conversion to Conservatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Jules Tygiel, *Ronald Reagan and the Triumph of American Conservatism* (New York; Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2006); Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts:

The scholarship concerning Reagan and religion has received less attention. Most studies, including the literature referenced above, do weigh in on the subject, with interpretations ranging from a man of deep faith¹² to one who, while not “divorced from Christianity,” was not particularly “strict in his beliefs.”¹³ But these discussions are brief, offering little in the way of critical analysis, as religion and religious-related issues are not the focus of their research. One of the exceptions to this assessment is Justin D. Garrison’s *An Empire of Ideals: The Chimeric Imagination of Ronald Reagan* (2013). Probing this connection in much more depth, the author explores the ways in which “religious ideas” strongly influenced Reagan’s understanding of the United States and its role in the world as providential in nature, as well as his political positions on even seemingly secular issues such as taxes and the role of government.¹⁴

Of the studies that take religion as their concentration, there are relatively few.¹⁵ Included in this literature are a small but growing number of writers who have recognized the central role Reagan’s faith played in his life and politics. One of the earliest to write about it was Paul Slosser. His 1984 book, *Reagan, Inside Out*, traces the roots and maturation of the president’s spiritual beliefs, revealing a man of deep, but often quiet, faith, well-versed in biblical Scripture, and reliant on prayer.¹⁶ Richard Hutcheson’s

Harvard University Press, 2007); David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

¹¹ See for example: Wayne Greenhaw, *Elephants in the Cottonfields: Ronald Reagan and the new Republican South* (New York: Macmillan, 1982); Robert R. Detlefsen, *Civil Rights Under Reagan* (San Francisco, CA: ICS Press, 1991); Steven A. Shull, *A Kinder, Gentler Racism?: The Reagan-Bush Civil Rights Legacy* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1993); Nicholas Laham, *The Reagan Presidency and the Politics of Race: In Pursuit of Colorblind Justice and Limited Government* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998).

¹² See for example, Collins, *Transforming America*, 31; Troy, *Morning in America*, 20; and Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 9-10.

¹³ See for example, Bunch, *Tear Down This Myth*, 32, 198-199; and Ehrman, *The Eighties*, 178.

¹⁴ Garrison, *An Empire of Ideals*, 160.

¹⁵ See for example: Bob Slosser, *Reagan, Inside Out* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984); Gary Wills, “Nelle’s Boy: Ronald Reagan and the Disciples of Christ,” *The Christian Century* 103, no. 34 (November 12, 1986): 1001-1006; Richard G. Hutcheson, *God in the White House: How Religion has Changed the Modern Presidency* (New York: Macmillan, 1988); Stephen Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President: Reagan and the Dixon Disciples of Christ,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25, No. 1, *The Bully Pulpit and the Reagan Presidency* (Winter, 1995): 109-127; Mary Beth Brown, *Hand of Providence: The Strong and Quiet Faith of Ronald Reagan* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Current, 2004); Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004); John P. Diggins, *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007).

¹⁶ Bob Slosser, *Reagan Inside Out*.

God in the White House: How Religion Has Changed the Modern Presidency (1988), suggests that “it appears that Ronald Reagan is not a conventional institutionally centred, churchgoing, income-tithing Christian. But there is no reason to doubt that on his own terms he is a deeply convinced Christian whose religious faith is quite genuine.”¹⁷ And Mary Beth Brown’s *Hand of Providence: The Strong and Quiet Faith of Ronald Reagan* (2004) determined that Reagan was “a deeply religious man who cannot be adequately appreciated or explained without understanding his Christian faith.”¹⁸

Two noteworthy articles, Gary Wills’ “Nelle’s Boy: Ronald Reagan and the Disciples of Christ” (1986) and Stephen Vaughn’s “The Moral Inheritance of a President: Reagan and the Dixon Disciples of Christ” (1995), also offer valuable insight into Reagan’s influential relationship with his pious mother and, in connection, the First Christian Church of Dixon and its pastor, Ben Cleaver.¹⁹ Wills’, noting that “church life and discipline” were central elements of Reagan’s “entire youth and early manhood,” argues that the future president was “as close to being a ‘preacher’s kid’ as one can be without actually moving into the parsonage.”²⁰ Vaughn, focusing on the central tenets of the Disciples of Christ faith, suggests that Reagan’s expressed views often mirrored those of the church, though the writer is uncertain as to whether they also constituted his sincere beliefs.²¹

Perhaps the two most ambitious explorations of Reagan’s faith are Paul Kengor’s *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (2004) and John Patrick Diggins *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History* (2007). Though there was disagreement as to how Reagan interpreted the Christian religion, both authors portray him as a deeply religious man whose “faith” guided every aspect of his life.

¹⁷ Hutcheson, *God in the White House*, 172-173.

¹⁸ Mary Beth Brown, introduction to *Hand of Providence: The Strong and Quiet Faith of Ronald Reagan* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Current, 2004), xvi.

¹⁹ Gary Wills, “Nelle’s Boy: Ronald Reagan and the Disciples of Christ,” *The Christian Century* 103, no. 34 (November 12, 1986): 1001-1006.

<http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=4079dd78-fff1-4de6-a242-539e0df8143f%40sessionmgr4005&hid=4112>; Stephen Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President: Reagan and the Dixon Disciples of Christ,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 1 *The Bully Pulpit and the Reagan Presidency* (Winter, 1995): 109-127.

²⁰ Wills, “Nelle’s Boy: Ronald Reagan and the Disciples of Christ,” 1006, 1003.

²¹ Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President: Reagan and the Dixon Disciples of Christ,” 120, 119.

Kengor, in the same vein as Slosser and Brown, argues that Reagan's upbringing, heavily influenced by his pious mother and the Disciples of Christ Church, imparted to him a life-long dedication to the "practical Christianity" espoused in the church's philosophy. The author concludes that it is "impossible to understand Ronald Reagan fully – and especially his Cold War actions – without grasping the influence of religion on his thought."²²

John Patrick Diggins also sought to portray Reagan as a man of faith, but a very different one than Kengor. Identifying Reagan as a "romantic liberal" (read classical liberal), Diggins challenged any notion that the fortieth president was "a religious moralist" who expected Americans to "sacrifice in the name of God and country," or submit to a "national religion." Instead he argued that the most remarkable "thing about his sense of religion is how much it enables us to forget religion." Indeed, "the genius of Reagan was to keep God and get rid of guilt."²³ Diggins does well demonstrating Reagan's identification with classical liberal ideals, but he does not really address Reagan's support for Christian conservatives' moral agenda, particularly his ardent opposition to abortion, or his religious rhetoric so charged with moral certitudes, which are hard to reconcile with some of the conclusion he draws.

Despite the close connection between the fortieth president and the Religious Right, and the long-term ramifications of this association evident in contemporary American society, culture, and politics, the subject has received, perhaps, the least scholarly attention. Much like religion, nearly every book on Reagan at least briefly touches on the subject. Most accounts advance a fairly standard interpretation. Representative is William Pemberton, who - to his credit - offers a more nuanced though still inadequate account for the purposes of this study. Pemberton suggests that while Reagan "had spoken forcefully on the social issues over the years...he had always subordinated them to Reaganomics. He kept his religious followers happy through rhetoric and symbolic gestures, rather than through effective action on their

²² Kengor, preface to *God and Ronald Reagan*, xiii.

²³ Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, xx-xxi, 21-27.

agenda.”²⁴ The overwhelming literature suggests that he did little for the movement that helped sweep him into office. Arguing that he failed to implement much legislation favourable to Christian conservatives, it concludes that Reagan’s contribution to their cause amounted to little more than rhetoric, which writers tend to discount as empty and without much influence. The collective implication seems to be that the Religious Right received lip-service in return for their support.

While the majority of the Reagan scholarship neglects or even eschews the Religious Right, there are a few noteworthy contributions.²⁵ In his article, “Ronald Reagan and the Splintering of the Christian Right,” (2006), David John Marley acknowledges “the very fact that the president of the United States appeared to agree with the agenda of the Christian Right...gave them legitimacy in the public square.” But Marley, measuring success in terms of legislation, ultimately concludes that “For religious conservatives, the Reagan era was a time of photo opportunities, kind words, and little else.”²⁶ In “Reagan’s Religious Right: The Unlikely Alliance between Southern Evangelicals and a California Conservative” (2008), which focuses on the president’s anti-communism and foreign policy, Daniel K. Williams acknowledges that “Reagan shared evangelicals’ belief that the nation had experienced a moral crisis and was now ready for revival,” but argues that the president “failed to deliver on the evangelical agenda.”²⁷ While Williams recognizes that the movement “achieved political prominence during his (Reagan’s) presidency, and it did so partly because of his actions,” both Williams and Marley still measure success largely in terms of the passing of legislation, and subsequently conclude that Reagan did

²⁴ Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 137.

²⁵ Bruce Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition: The Reagan Campaigns and White Evangelicals* (New York: P. Lang, 1994); David John Marley, “Ronald Reagan and the Splintering of the Christian Right,” *Journal of Church and State* 48 (2006): 851-868; Daniel K. Williams, “Reagan’s Religious Right: The Unlikely Alliance between Southern Evangelicals and a California Conservative,” in *Ronald Reagan and the 1980s: Perceptions, Policies, Legacies*, ed. Cheryl Hudson and Gareth Davies (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 135-149; and Eric Robert Crouse, *The Cross and Reaganomics: Conservative Christians Defending Ronald Reagan* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013).

²⁶ David John Marley, “Ronald Reagan and the Splintering of the Christian Right,” *Journal of Church and State* 48 (2006): 866, 852.

²⁷ Williams, “Reagan’s Religious Right,” 138, 146.

little to advance the social issues associated with the moral agenda.²⁸ As such, they do little to investigate these issues in any depth. Nor do they explore the notion of legitimacy in any depth and the role that it played in fundamentally changing not just the Republican Party and the Religious Right, but the social, cultural, and political milieu in the United States.²⁹

Also noteworthy is political scientist Bruce Nesmith's examination of Reagan and the Religious Right through the lens of the 1980 and 1984 campaigns. In *The New Republican Coalition: the Reagan Campaigns and White Evangelicals* (1994), Nesmith explores the efforts "to include white evangelicals in his (Reagan's) electoral coalitions..." The author argues that these efforts produced a successful alliance which came about as a result of efforts on the part of both groups. Reagan sought out the white evangelical constituency while prominent religious leaders, significantly Jerry Falwell, were looking for political representation. And though Reagan was not an evangelical, he showed a "clear affinity with the issue positions and traditional moral values advocated by white evangelical leaders."³⁰

More recently, economic historian Eric Crouse suggested, in his book *The Cross and Reaganomics: Conservative Christians Defending Ronald Reagan* (2013), that finances, foreign policy, and by extension the military were equally as important as social/cultural issues to those on the Religious Right. Crouse demonstrates that conservative Christians were among the strongest champions of limited government (when it suited them), free enterprise (particularly small business), and anticommunism, the latter of which suggested an affinity with free-market capitalism and support for a strong and sometimes interventionist military.³¹ As such, he credibly argues that Reagan did much for this constituency, and in doing so helps demonstrate that past assessments of this relationship have been too simple and incomplete.

²⁸ Williams, "Reagan's Religious Right," 135.

²⁹ Williams does credit Reagan with being "partly responsible for the Christian Right's prominence in the Republican Party." See Williams, "Reagan's Religious Right," 146.

³⁰ Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 2, 5, 75.

³¹ Crouse, *The Cross and Reaganomics*, 67, 129-130, 132-133.

Given the lack of scholarly research on Reagan and the Religious Right, what few serious studies exist are welcome additions to the field. While Marley largely concludes that evangelicals and fundamentalists received little more than rhetoric from Reagan, he acknowledges the credibility that flowed from that. As does Williams, who ascribes greater value to Reagan's contributions, particularly in terms of foreign policy. Nesmith offers a valuable contribution to the literature but his principle concern is politics, how the Religious Right factored into Reagan's victories in the 1980 and 1984 elections and the ability of the GOP to sustain that political coalition, rather than a broader examination of the relationship between Reagan and the Religious Right and/or the ramifications of that association beyond the Republican Party structure. Crouse explores the relationship through a primarily economic approach, and while he demonstrates that financial and foreign policy issues were as important to Religious Right activists as social policy, he still measures success largely in terms of legislation.

This dissertation seeks to contribute to the literature in a few different ways. In totality, it is an attempt to reassess Ronald Reagan within the broader contexts of the Religious Right and modern American conservatism, while weaving together an interconnected history of these three forces. Within this framework, it looks to build on the scholarship of writers such as Daniel K. Williams, David John Marley, Bruce Nesmith and Eric Crouse by contributing to a more complete history of Ronald Reagan's relationship with the Religious Right, particularly his role in advancing the movement and its social agenda. Second, in reconsidering the relationship between Reagan's political and religious philosophies in the context of Frank Meyer's theory of fusion, it also offers a re-evaluation of his identification with modern American conservative thought.

The chapters in this dissertation are arranged thematically, but there has also been an attempt to maintain a chronological flow. Key terms are highlighted in the following outlines, but their more complete definitions are addressed within the context of the corresponding chapters themselves.

Chapter 1: “Puritans, Evangelicals, and Fundamentalists: Laying the Foundations for the Religious Right”

Religious Right leaders of the late twentieth century, such as Jerry Falwell and Francis Schaeffer, drew on deep philosophical and theological foundations/traditions rooted in American culture, society, and politics. Chapter one explores these roots, beginning with the Puritans, from whom they derived their understanding of the relationship between religion and government, particularly their understanding of a covenant between the people (represented by government) and God. With the emergence the Great Awakening (1730s-1740s), which gave rise to the evangelical movement, and the Second Great Awakening (1790-1830), which “Christianized American society,” the United States shifted away from Puritanism to evangelicalism.³² Evangelicalism de-emphasized the notion of theological expertise in favour of an appeal to religious enthusiasm, reshaping religion in the American colonies and the United States by democratizing the relationship between church leadership and congregants, stressed a conversion, or “born again,” experience, and provided a series of tenets upon which the faith was based. Evangelicals built an infrastructure and pioneered methods for spreading their message, while acquiring effective methods of fundraising.

The evangelical movement evolved from its origins in the early-mid 18th century, including a schism between moderates and conservatives in the face of modernism (symbolized by socio-cultural shifts and an intellectual revolution in science and philosophy), which gave rise to fundamentalism in the early 20th century. In what some have referred to as the first religious right movement, these fundamentalists organized and fought back against the rise of modernism. Discredited, in the wake of this losing battle, fundamentalists retreated into their separatist sub-culture, which began to mirror that of evangelicals, and faced a schism of their own when moderate conservative members broke from the hardliners and found the neo-evangelical movement. In the wake of the Second World War, and in the context of a religious revival fueled by an anti-communist sentiment and a renewed interest in traditional conservative thought,

³² Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 5.

small numbers of evangelicals and fundamentalists, led by the neo-evangelical Billy Graham, began to re-engage with the public and political sphere. These were the seeds of what would eventually blossom into a second religious right movement in response to the rise of a renewed assault by “modernist” forces.

Chapter 2: “Fusion: Classical Liberals, Traditionalists, and the Making of the Modern American Conservative Movement”

Surveying the early history of the modern American conservative movement enables a better understanding of Ronald Reagan’s political ideology and the path he followed in the 1980s vis a vis the Religious Right. As importantly, the history of right-wing Christianity in the second half of the 20th century was closely intertwined with that of modern American conservatism. The Religious Right was itself a product of a collaboration between fundamentalist and evangelical leaders and secular conservative political activists. The timeline for this examination begins in the post-World War II period with the emergence of an intellectual movement through its manifestation in political activism in the 1960s, during which time it established itself as a viable alternative to the liberal status quo. Simultaneously, there was an early rapprochement between these new conservatives and the evangelical and fundamentalist activists re-engaging with the public-political sphere in the early days of the Cold War.

Modern American conservatism was the product of an attempt to hybridize two existing schools of thought: traditional conservatism and classical liberalism. These two philosophies represented antithetical positions: the first, rooted in religion, valued virtue, order, and authority, while the second placed freedom and individual liberty at the fore. In the face of these differences, the two groups originally united in opposition to a common enemy - the left, manifest in communism abroad and 20th century social democratic liberalism, or New Deal liberalism, at home. In an attempt to provide some semblance of ideological consistency, Frank Meyer introduced a theory, fusion, which posited that the two schools of thought were interconnected. Fusion served as a framework for a modern conservative political

movement, but it never really reconciled the fundamental differences between classical liberalism and traditional conservatism, nor could it.

Exploring the roots of these two ideologies and the intellectual movements, led by the likes of Fredrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, Richard Weaver and Russell Kirk, that brought them back into scholarly discourse in the late-1940s and early 1950s provides the context for a discussion of the political activism that followed. Here, particular attention is paid to the nation's shifting socio-cultural milieu, Frank Meyer and the concept of fusion, the struggle waged by conservatives to take control of the Republican Party (with which to manifest their political objectives), and a handful of key activists, including William F. Buckley Jr. and Phyllis Schlafly, and politicians, chiefly Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan.

Chapter 3: "Will and Destiny: The Roots of Ronald Reagan's Political and Religious Philosophies"

Reagan's conservatism has been almost universally understood in terms of classical liberalism, while his appeals to traditional conservatism have been largely disregarded as disingenuous opportunism. Exploring Reagan's youth through his years in Hollywood and the evolution of his party identification, from Democrat to Republican, focusing on the foundational political and religious influences in his life, offers a more nuanced interpretation of his ideological outlook. The most important influences were his parents and the Disciples of Christ Church. His father, Jack, instilled in the young Reagan the basic tenets of classical liberal thought, individual rights and free will, while his mother, Nelle, and his pastor, Ben Cleaver, reinforced these principles within the context of a religious spirit rooted in basic traditional moral and cultural values and the belief that God "has a plan for everyone." Not only did Reagan accept these two contradictory concepts, will and destiny, to be true, they helped to define his political and religious philosophies, which he viewed as inseparable from one another. This understanding also helps to explain his embrace of modern American conservatism and the inconsistencies inherent in its ideological framework.

Reagan, more than has been recognized in the literature, subscribed to, what Richard Weaver alluded to and Frank Meyer later articulated in his theory of fusion, the idea that classical liberalism and traditional conservatism were, if not inseparable, at least closely linked. It is true that his political philosophies were rooted in classical liberal thought, but Reagan was not a libertarian masquerading as a traditional conservative when it suited him. Rather, accepting that these philosophies were not mutually exclusive, he was about as close to the embodiment of a true modern American conservative as is probably possible.

Chapter 4: “Abortion: Building a Movement on a Myth”

Exploring the origins and subsequent evolution of the philosophical, legal, religious, medical, and social attitudes toward abortion in the United States enables a better understanding of the role the issue played in the history of the Religious Right and its relationship with Ronald Reagan. Of early significance is the debate, rooted in ancient Greece, surrounding whether an embryo/fetus constitutes a life and whether its destruction constitutes murder, the concept of quickening (the point at which movement is perceived in the womb), abortion’s status under British Common Law, and the first anti-abortion campaign that led to its criminalization by the late 19th century. The re-emergence of the issue in the early 1960s, the shift in public attitudes, and its subsequent legalization, first by individual states and then nationally are also important here, as is an examination of the origins and early years of the second anti-abortion campaign.

The central issue upon which the Religious Right built their movement was chosen, not for any historical or highly principled reason – in fact, evangelicals and fundamentalists initially showed little interest in the issue - but rather for what amounted to a practical and, in many ways, a political one. In this way, the 20th century anti-abortion campaign as it evolved, shared much with its 19th century predecessor – both appropriated the issue to further a broader agenda. The first crusade, in which evangelicals played almost no role, saw regular doctors, looking to secure control over the medical field in the United States,

weigh in definitively on what had until then been a debate among philosophers and theologians – when does a life begin? The latter campaign, initiated by Catholics in the wake of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, was co-opted by Religious Right leaders and political activists to further a broader socio-political vision.

Chapter 5: “A Conservative Coalition”

Before the issue of abortion helped build the Religious Right, Protestant conservatives, including most evangelicals and fundamentalists expressed greater concern with the counterculture, the growing acceptance of feminism, and the agitation for gay rights, which they perceived as far more serious threats to the moral fabric of society. In the mid-late 1960s, social issues such as these helped shift the conservative movement’s agenda, though anti-communism and opposition to social democratic liberal economic policy remained priorities. Concurrent with this socio-cultural shift, which intensified as the 1960s gave way to the 1970s, was the continuing struggle for control of the Republican Party. Barry Goldwater’s 1964 presidential defeat saw efforts to purge conservatives and their influence from the GOP, which faced resistance from politicians, significantly Ronald Reagan, and activists like Phyllis Schlafly. By the late 1960s and through the 1970s, Republicans’ political fortunes improved, making gains in the House and Senate, but failing to take either one. Some of these new members of Congress were conservatives, as were several new state governors, including Reagan who was elected to two terms in California (1967-1975).

As the culture wars deepened through the 1970s, growing numbers of evangelicals and fundamentalists turned to political activism, but their numbers were still quite small relative to their community as a whole. Neither women’s rights or gay rights, nor school prayer or abortion, served to ignite any large-scale activism on the part of this constituency. They may have had strong feelings about some, or all, of these issues, but none of them presented a real threat to their insular world. What spurred action on the part of evangelicals and fundamentalists was the issue of tax exemptions for Christian private schools. During the Nixon administration, the Internal Revenue Service had begun to enforce the

Civil Rights related non-discrimination policy, threatening to revoke tax exempt status from private schools that continued to practice segregation. In early 1975, Bob Jones University, an established fundamentalist institution, was informed they were in violation of the policy. In what seemed almost fortuitous, it was an election year and Protestant conservative Christians had one of their own on the ballot. The Democratic candidate (and then president), born-again Baptist Jimmy Carter, was a pivotal figure, both in terms of reinvigorating the political discourse with a religious spirituality and in mobilizing an evangelical voting bloc. But disappointment with his policies, including a failure to abandon a lawsuit brought by the IRS against Bob Jones University, ultimately drove this constituency into the Republican Party.

In response to the ongoing lawsuit, and spurred on and assisted by conservative political activists, several leading fundamentalists and evangelicals founded a loose coalition of organizations, including Moral Majority, collectively referred to as the Religious Right. The movement promoted a “moral agenda,” which covered a wide range of issues, including opposition to feminism and gay rights, centred on morality and the family. One highly controversial issue, though, would come to symbolize the movement. Conservative political activists and evangelical and fundamentalist leaders, despite having expressed little opposition in the past, co-opted the abortion issue, much as the 19th century physicians had. Abortion came to encapsulate many of the social issues associated with the culture war, most significantly feminism, which conservatives saw as a threat to the nation’s moral fabric, symbolized by the traditional family. As such, it provided New Right and fundamentalist leaders an ideal issue upon which to unify religious and secular conservatives and build a national movement to advance a broader socio-political vision. The Religious Right burst on to the scene during the 1980 presidential election, throwing their support behind the Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan.

Chapter 6: “Pastor to the Nation: Ronald Reagan and the Religious Right”

Having embraced the basic concept behind fusion, that freedom and virtue were connected, and sharing the same general concerns as Christian conservatives when it came to the ills of society, Reagan was sympathetic to the Religious Right and its “moral agenda.” Political theorist James D. Garrison notes: “Like a number of his supporters, Reagan believed the American people were under direct attack from radical, secular values.”³³ Reagan pointed to the various ways in which secularism corrupted both politics and society and argued that “Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged.”³⁴

During his eight years in office, the president served as a virtual spokesman for the Religious Right and their policy objectives, which he supported through traditional conservative-friendly policies, administration and judicial appointments, intervention in the courts, congressional legislation, and liberal use of the bully pulpit. He endorsed Christian conservatives’ participation in politics, embraced Religious Right influence in the Republican Party, and afforded its leadership unequalled access to the White House. The president and members of his administration appeared with prominent Religious Right leaders at public events, met with them in private meetings, and corresponded frequently on a series of matters. The mainstream press as well as fundamentalist and evangelical leaders emphasized these connections in their respective newspapers and television broadcasts giving the movement a great deal of publicity. Reagan and his administration prioritized three key subjects, tax exemptions for Christian schools, school prayer, and abortion, the issue that came to most closely symbolize his relationship with Christian conservatives. As president, he took the unprecedented step of penning an essay, “Abortion and

³³ James D. Garrison, *An Empire of Ideals: The Chimeric Imagination of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 90.

³⁴ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, March 8, 1983,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan: 1983*, volume I, January 1 to July 1, 1983 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing office, 1984), 361.

the Conscience of the Nation,” for *Human Life* magazine, which was later published, along with two other anti-abortion polemics, in a book by the same name.³⁵

In providing this support, Reagan helped to mainstream the movement and its moral agenda, providing his most valuable contribution to their cause – credibility. While he was not able to popularize the Religious Right, or much of its social agenda, with the majority of the American people, he cultivated an environment conducive to the values endorsed by its leadership, while helping to legitimize and fuel the intensifying culture war. More broadly, he helped transform discourse in the United States by injecting religion and religious rhetoric into politics on an unprecedented level, regularly referencing God, the Bible, and Scripture, while proclaiming 1983 the “Year of the Bible.”³⁶ Ultimately, Reagan raised, in rhetoric and in policy, issues associated with traditional conservatives and the Religious Right, significantly abortion and school prayer, to a place of prominence, if not always equality, with those of libertarians. And while tensions between classical liberals and traditional conservatives were not eliminated, nor could they be for reasons noted above, Reagan had succeeded in moving the conservative movement, and by extension the Republican Party, closer towards Meyer’s vision as expressed in his theory of fusion. In the process, he helped to elevate the importance of “religious commitment and

³⁵ Ronald Reagan, “Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation,” *Human Life Review* 6, no. 1 (February 3, 1983): 1-6; Ronald Reagan, *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation*, (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1984) (also included in the book were essays by C. Everett Koop, “The Slide to Auschwitz,” and Malcolm Muggeridge, “The New Holocaust,” both of which had previously appeared in *Human Life Review*, (Spring 1977 and Winter 1980 respectively)); Reagan also proclaimed a National Sanctity of Human Life Day in every year of his second term. See, for example, Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5292 - National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 1985 (Jan. 14, 1985),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1985*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986), 39.

³⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5018 - Year of the Bible, 1983 (Feb. 3, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 179; Stecker, *The Podium, the Pulpit, and the Republicans: How Presidential Candidates use Religious Language in American Political Debate*, 49; Kevin Coe and David Domke, *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 61 (Note: While it seems commonplace today, prior to 1980, “God bless America” had been used only once in a major national address by Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal); Kevin Coe and David Domke, “Petitioners or Prophets? Presidential Discourse, God, and the Ascendancy of Religious Conservatives,” *Journal of Communication* 56 (2006): 317-318.

theological conservatism” in terms of “voting behavior,” while making “public religiosity ... a central component of Republican Party strategy.”³⁷

While Reagan’s impact on the American zeitgeist has largely been framed in terms of foreign policy, economics, and his views on limited government, one of his most profound and enduring legacies was the seminal part he played in reshaping religion’s role in politics and, by extension, society in general. When his second term ended and the fortieth president retired to his ranch in California, he left behind a dramatically different socio-political landscape, marked by a fusion of religion and politics, manifest in, and epitomized by, the influential presence of the Religious Right. More than forty years later, the movement remains an important constituency in the Republican Party and a fixture in American politics.

³⁷ “Religious commitment...” and “voting behavior” quoted in Ronald E. Hopson and Donald R. Smith. “Changing Fortunes: An Analysis of Christian Right Ascendance within American Political Discourse,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 1 (March 1999): 4-5; “public religiosity...” quoted in Coe and Domke. “Petitioners or Prophets? Presidential Discourse, God, and the Ascendancy of Religious Conservatives,” 325; also see Hugh Heclo, “The Mixed Legacies of Ronald Reagan.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (December 2008): 30.

Chapter #1

Puritans, Evangelicals, and Fundamentalists: Laying the Foundations for the Religious Right

While the loosely structured group of organizations and individuals that comprised what came to be known as the Religious Right did not emerge until the late 1970s and-early-1980s, the movement did not simply manifest from nowhere. The immediate impetus for their organized political activism can be found in the united response of conservative Christians to the 1976 Internal Revenue Service's case against Bob Jones University and the Goldsboro Christian Schools over the issue of Civil Rights legislation and tax exemption.³⁸ Still, not only did fundamentalists and evangelicals draw on deep philosophical and theological foundations/traditions rooted in American culture, society, and politics, the late-twentieth-century iteration of the Religious Right, as a socio-political movement, was long in the making.

When journalists and pundits (both religious and secular), and some scholars, shocked and apprehensive in the face of “the emergence of moral majoritarianism” in the late 1970s and early 1980s, were struggling to explain the rise of the Religious Right, Lutheran pastor (and later Roman Catholic cleric) Richard John Neuhaus was one of the first to suggest “that politically militant evangelical and fundamentalist protest against the naked public square has been building for decades.” And contrary to the perception of many, the interjection of religion into politics in the United States was no late 20th century phenomenon. Neuhaus prefaced his influential book, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, with this observation: “Politics and religion are different enterprises, and it is understandable that many people would like to keep them as separate as possible. But they are constantly

³⁸ See Randall Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America*, (Amherst, N.Y.: Perseus Books, 2006), 14; also see, for example, Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: race in the conservative counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge, LA.: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); and Joseph Crespino, “Civil Rights and the Religious Right,” in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, ed. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian Zelizer (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 90-105. Note: Paul Weyrich, one of the political architects of the Religious Right has admitted as much: see Paul Weyrich, “Comments,” in *No Longer Exiles*, ed. Michael Cromartie (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center), 25-26; Charles Babcock, “Religious Right Decries Shift on Tax Exemptions,” *Washington Post*, January 28, 1982, A4; and George G. Higgins, “The Pro-life Movement and the New Right,” *America*, 13 September 1980, 108.

coupling and getting quite mixed up with one another. There is nothing new about this. It seems likely that it has always been the case in all societies.”³⁹

And so, it is the case in the contemporary United States, just as it was in the American colonies where “it was assumed that religion and politics went together.” But there was something unique about the way in which Protestantism manifested itself in the United States, as observed by the liberal French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville roughly fifty years after the American Revolution. He wrote, in his seminal work *Democracy in America* (1835), that while religion “never mixes directly in the government of society,” it nonetheless “should... be considered as the first of their political institutions.”⁴⁰

Indeed, Tocqueville suggested that the United States was “the most religious of Christian nations.” Seymour Martin Lipsett, and others, have pointed to the intermingling between religion and nationalism as well as “contemporary... data” measuring church attendance and belief in the Bible, in arguing that this observation remained accurate well over one-hundred and fifty years later. In comparing religious systems in Europe and the United States, Tocqueville singled out the “uniquely American” idea of religious denominations as “voluntary associations,” independent of state support, including financial. As such, the continued existence and growth of each group is reliant upon “a constant struggle to retain or expand” their membership. Unlike other Christian churches such as the Anglican, Lutheran, and Catholic, which are state-supported, in the United States congregants belong to sects, of which there are hundreds, most prominently the Methodists and Baptists.⁴¹ As founding father James Madison wrote in a letter to the Reverend Jasper Adams in 1832 concerning the relationship between church and state, “The

³⁹ Richard John Neuhaus, preface to *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), vii.

⁴⁰ George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 85; John F. Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 11; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. and ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Debra Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, c1835), 280; also see Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square*, 141.

⁴¹ Seymour Martin Lipsett, *American Exceptionalism* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), 19, 53-76, 61-62; Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 163; for Tocqueville’s views on American politics and religion, see Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.

prevailing opinion in Europe ... has been that Religion could not be preserved without the support of Gov.⁴² nor Gov.⁴ supported with.⁴ an established religion. ... It remained for North America to bring the great & interesting subject to a fair, and finally to a decisive test.”⁴²

While every historical examination must choose a date or an event from which to commence, as the sociologist William Martin has noted, “it is no simple matter to decide just where a history of the Religious Right should begin.” Some studies, including many of the earliest, find the their origins in the culture wars of the 1960s and early 1970s, while others trace the movement’s roots to the post World War II era and the anti-Communism of the Cold War, and still others back to early twentieth century evangelicalism and the emergence of fundamentalism. Regardless of where one begins, to appreciate the Religious Right in the broader context requires, at least, a basic history of Protestantism stretching back through the evangelical and fundamentalist movements to seventeenth-century colonial America and the influence of the Puritans. While Martin, for his part, “focuses primarily on the period from 1960 forward,” he proposes that “the New Christian Right ... is the lineal descendant of an older Christian Right whose roots run back to the early years of the twentieth century.”⁴³ Sara Diamond has pointed out that “it is a political movement rooted in a rich evangelical subculture.”⁴⁴ And Fritz Detwiler has suggested that the “movement has close historical ties to earlier forms of the Christian Right.”⁴⁵ A proper appreciation of the Religious Right necessitates “some sense of what is inherited from its predecessors, and any discussion of foundational religious influences inevitably leads Americans all the way back to the Puritans.”⁴⁶

⁴² Letter from James Madison to Reverend Jasper Adams, 1832, in *The Writings of James Madison, vol. IX (1819-1836)*, ed. Gaillard Hunt (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1910), 485.

⁴³ William Martin, *With God on Our Side* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 1.

⁴⁴ Sara Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone: The Enduring Influence of the Christian Right* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 1.

⁴⁵ Fritz Detwiler, *Standing on the Premises of God: The Christian Right’s Fight to Redefine America’s Public Schools* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 14.

⁴⁶ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 1. For an exploration of the Puritans, see, for example, Alden T. Vaughan, ed., *The Puritan tradition in America, 1620-1730* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1972; and David D. Hall, ed., *Puritans in the New World: A Critical Anthology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

The Puritans left a dramatic and enduring impact on American politics, society and culture. Martin argues that “political institutions and movements” - including the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution - have been shaped by a blend of Puritan principles. Indeed, this influence persisted into the twentieth century with Roosevelt’s New Deal and Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society, as well as Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority and Pat Robertson’s Christian Coalition. Perhaps most importantly, in terms of influence on the twentieth century Religious Right, was the Puritans’ view of government, which was rooted in Old Testament theology, specifically the idea of the covenant.⁴⁷ The Puritans, suggests political scientist Kenneth Wald, understood this to be “a voluntary agreement,” rooted in biblical Scripture (for example, God’s covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:3) and “sanctified by God, in which individuals freely surrendered autonomy in exchange for something of greater value.” Implicit in any covenant was the presence of God, whether in direct partnership, or “as the sanctifier and guarantor” in cases where His name was used to bind individuals.⁴⁸

Unlike the Old World, where covenants were formed between the people and the monarchy or the church hierarchy, Puritan covenants would be made between one another and, of course, with God. It was understood that in return for faithful compliance, they would receive the Lord’s blessing and just government. The people appreciated the consequences (punishment) if they failed to uphold their responsibilities, and they expected the reciprocating party (in this case, government) to be bound by comparable terms. Both the government’s legitimacy, as well its very existence, was predicated on its ability to honor its part of the agreement, for the Puritans believed that “obedience was conditional.” In fact, Christians could be seen as duty-bound to resist, in cases of extreme transgressions. More immediately, the Puritans’ understanding of covenantal government influenced the decision to revolt

⁴⁷ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 1, 2. Note: Martin provides a succinct overview of religion in colonial and post-revolutionary America, highlighting key events, ideologies, and issues, which provides the loose framework adopted here in the early part of the chapter.

⁴⁸ Kenneth Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 38; For a review of the covenant’s influential role in the history of the United States, see Michael W. Hughey, “The Political Covenant: Protestant Foundations of the American State” *State, Culture, and Society* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1984): 113-156; also see Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture*, 23-44.

against Britain and provided the foundations of government in the United States.⁴⁹ More than three-hundred years later, the Christian conservative political activists of the late-twentieth-century embodied much of that covenantal spirit, perhaps expressed best by the fundamentalist theologian Francis Schaeffer. While he argued that “We must use every legal means at the present time, to return the nation to its Judeo-Christian heritage,” Schaeffer made clear that, “if persuasion fails,” Christians must be prepared to “break objectionable laws in civil disobedience.” In the end, he judged, “When a government negates the law of God, it abrogates its authority.”⁵⁰

The Puritans settling America saw themselves “as a latter-day people of Israel,” seeking to create a godly state, a model for other nations to follow. While Puritan communities were not strictly theocratic, many were inclined in that direction. Several colonies insisted on some type of religious-based test for those holding public office. That religion was usually Protestant Christianity, even in those colonies where a variety of faiths were recognized. And while “ministers could not hold civil office and magistrates had no jurisdiction over” church doctrine or membership, many colonies appeared to provide legitimacy to, if not outright endorsement of, particular religious groups, by establishing “an official faith” as well as refusing to afford minority groups their “religious freedom.” In most cases, if not all, there was substantial “overlap” between religion and government “since only church members could vote and all agreed that a pure church was essential to a godly society.”⁵¹ “That Puritanism exerted an influence over the development of the American political order,” noted Michael Hughey, “should in no way be considered surprising. Early American history was thoroughly dominated by the Puritans.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 38-48; Hall, *Puritans in the New World*, 161, 162, 178-179; Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture*, 29-32.

⁵⁰ Francis Schaeffer quoted in Marjorie Hyer, “Evangelist Attacks the Moral and Political Climate in America,” *The Washington Post*, Feb 13, 1982, B6.

⁵¹ Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 39, 108; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 1-2; Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture*, 29-31; also see Peter N. Carroll, *Puritanism and the Wilderness: The Intellectual Significance of the New England Frontier, 1629-1700* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 8-9.

⁵² Hughey, “The Political Covenant: Protestant Foundations of the American State,” 113.

More broadly speaking, as a significant number of colonists identified as Protestant, the doctrines associated with the Protestant Reformation generally provided the basis for religion in the American colonies. Many had fled Europe in the face of religious persecution, and others, “who did not see themselves as persecuted saints were nevertheless from Protestant cultures.” Roman Catholics, for example, comprised less than five percent of the population as late as the early-mid-nineteenth century. Still, as political scientist Steve Bruce notes, this “did not ... produce an homogeneous religious culture because the diverse ethnic origins of the settlers were reproduced on the soil.” The desire to accommodate this varied population contributed to the founding fathers vision of a decentralized system of government, which would allow the socio-cultural preservation of religio-ethnic groups throughout the nation, provided they had the strength and numbers, “with little regard for what others did elsewhere.”⁵³

As for Puritanism, already within a generation of their arrival preachers in New England, where the religious group had been most dominant, feared for its survival. There was “a decline in religiosity” amongst the second generation of colonists, evident in a drop in church membership and an increase in dissent. Coupled with this was a rise in religious diversity and unrest among those outside the dominant religious group. This “decline in religiosity” was mirrored throughout the Puritan colonies.⁵⁴

But Puritanism had planted deep roots, and they would serve to help pave the way for renewal. As the eighteenth century got under way, English Protestantism experienced an outbreak of religious awakenings. Originating in the Protestant areas of Britain and Ireland, the phenomenon eventually made its way to the American colonies in the 1730s. Appearing first in New Jersey, a series of religious revivals gripped colonial America, particularly New England, through the 1730s and 1740s. The individual perhaps most responsible for weaving together what were initially disparate events into what became known as the Great Awakening was George Whitefield, an itinerant English preacher. He was joined by

⁵³ Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America, 1978-1988* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 25; Peter N. Carroll and David W. Noble, *The Free and the Unfree: A Progressive History of the United States* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 62-63, 179.

⁵⁴ Carroll and Noble, *The Free and the Unfree*, 64-66.

other charismatic individuals, such as the Oxford educated John Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards, an academic prodigy, theologian, and prolific writer, who took their message to the masses, particularly, as in the case of Whitefield, the “downtrodden and despised of society.” At the heart of the movement was its membership, and it was the “experiences of countless ordinary men and women” that “sustained the life of the evangelical awakening.”⁵⁵ Those individuals would become known as evangelicals (or “new lights”), from the Greek for “gospel” or “good news.”⁵⁶

The evangelical movement emphasized evangelizing, or “preaching of repentance and free grace,” and the individual experiences associated with a religious awakening. Ethnic and theological differences aside, all manifestations of the Great Awakening emphasized the necessity of some kind of conversion, “the quest for an effective piety ... warmhearted [sic] and experiential,” rather than “the coldly rationalistic religion” associated with the religious and social establishment. In general, evangelicals, drawn from the working-class and more populist in nature, looked upon the pretensions of the church and the accumulation of wealth with suspicion. With the future in mind, evangelicals took steps toward developing an institutional structure that would serve to sustain their movement.⁵⁷

The Great Awakening left a legacy of revival in its wake, helping to facilitate a shift from Puritanism toward evangelicalism by infusing American churches with “an evangelical element,” and in the process challenging traditional “European patterns of church establishment.” While the Puritans had maintained a respect for the “formal confessions” and theological expertise of the clergy, evangelicals afforded these less importance, instead embracing “the power of religious emotion,” or enthusiasm. In doing so, they

⁵⁵ Noll, et al., eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University press, 1994), Intro., 3; Mark A. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 10; Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 91-97, 105; also see Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991).

⁵⁶ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 2.

⁵⁷ Noll, et al., eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism*, Intro., 5; Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 2; Randall Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism, Rev. and expanded ed.* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2004), 244-245; Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 12.

sought out leaders who were able to reach them in such a fashion through appeals to the heart and the soul. No longer was authority automatically conferred on a minister. Rather, as Martin notes, it was achieved “in direct democratic fashion from the people who had heard them preach and freely chose to accept or reject what they heard.” Combined with the Puritan’s concept of covenant, the “democratic, independent sensibility” of the evangelical movement, did much to contribute to the revolutionary spirit of 1776. And much as the Puritans had envisioned a New Israel, a re-invigorated interest in millennial doctrine (from the millennium in the book of Revelation 20:1-7, which refers to a thousand-year period in which the righteous will rule) served to convince many that revolting against an unjust government and founding a new republic was all part of a divine plan.⁵⁸

Perhaps somewhat ironically, the religious spirit seemed to dissipate in the wake of the Revolutionary War. The ethos of the men who fashioned the Constitution appeared to lean more toward “the progressive rationalism and optimism of the Enlightenment,” and in the years following independence many Christians feared they had become, or were becoming, “a godless nation.” The revivalist spirit, though, remained – awaiting to be awakened. As the United States approached the nineteenth century it was overcome by the Second Great Awakening (from roughly 1790-1830). As they had in the early decades of the eighteenth century, mass revivals emphasizing “millennial expectations,” spread throughout much of the country.⁵⁹

The Second Great Awakening had a profound impact on the United States, nowhere more so than in the South, where evangelical sensibilities became infused with Southern culture, making it perhaps the most Christian place in the world. Southerners focused on their faith in the Bible and Scripture, revivals, and attaining a pure and pious state. Evangelicals, particularly those in the South, had enthusiastically

⁵⁸ Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 40; Noll, *A History of Christianity*, 115, 104-105; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 3; Nathan O. Hatch, “The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People,” *The Journal of American History* 67, no. 3 (December 1980): 545-567; Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 5.

⁵⁹ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 4, 3; Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 132-136, 166-167; Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 109-110.

embraced what was referred to as perfectionism, or more specifically, a theological emphasis on the sanctification doctrine, closely associated with the Holiness movement. While evangelicals held that only God is truly holy, they nonetheless believed that Christians should strive to be holy by living “sinless lives.” And only by surrendering the self and appropriating Christ through faith, allowing Him “to live through them,” could Christians “be free of any known sin.” This allowed devout evangelicals to liberate themselves from responsibilities, whether they be social, economic, or political in nature. In the South, this included the issue of slavery, which R. L. Dabney, a Southern evangelical, declared “was divinely ordained.” While this often manifest itself in what can only be described as hypocrisy, perfectionism, as an ideal, played a significant role in bringing about social order on the frontier by stressing sobriety and clean living.⁶⁰

Simultaneously, the Second Great Awakening helped unleash “a reforming impulse” in the North. These efforts later manifest in what was called the Social Gospel, perhaps most closely identified with Walter Rauschenbusch, an early-twentieth century pastor of New York City’s Second German Baptist Church, who made it his mission to help the poor and working class. In any case, throughout much of the first half of the 1800s, these reform-minded evangelicals held to the belief that they could bring about the millennium through their good works. With this mindset, they actively laboured to address issues ranging from war, slavery, dueling, gambling, and alcohol, to poverty, women’s rights, and prostitution, among “other impediments to a perfect society.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 13, 156-157; Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right...*, 28-29 (Bruce also suggests that “It is testimony to the flexible quality of religious ideology that the most actively evangelical sections of Protestantism in both the North and South took up the most extreme and opposing views on slavery. In the North, evangelicals were at the forefront of the abolition campaign; in the South they were the strongest defenders of the institution of slavery.” See 29); Timothy Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel’s Best Friend* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), 50-51; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 4; Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*, 612; also see Randall Balmer and Lauren F. Winner, *Protestantism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 72-73 (on the Holiness movement), and 60-61 (on perfectionism).

⁶¹ Samuel Hill, “Northern and Southern Varieties of American Evangelicalism in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Evangelicalism: comparative studies of popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and beyond, 1700-1990*, eds. Mark A. Noll, et al. (New York : Oxford University Press, 1994), 276; Jeffrey K., Hadden, and Anson D. Shupe, *Televangelism: Power and Politics on God’s Frontier* (New York: Henry Holdt, 1988), 106-107;

The Great Revival and the religious movements it inspired, argues religious scholar Nathan Hatch, “did more to Christianize American society than anything before or since.” African Americans formed their own church, unique and widely appealing. Older denominations, such as the Congregationalists and Episcopalians, saw their dominance challenged by growing membership among the Baptists and Methodists. The latter grew from 250,000 in 1820 to 500,000 in 1830, while the former exploded by a factor of ten in the first few decades following the War of Independence. Over the next twenty years or so, these two groups “splintered,” forming a number of new denominations, both “white and black.”⁶²

Over the half-century or so following the Revolution, Christianity in the United States “became a mass enterprise,” dramatically changing the “religious landscape” at the same time as the nation’s population exploded. By 1845 it outnumbered England’s by five million, having grown by a factor of more than ten, from about 2.5 million to twenty-seven million. The number of Christian ministers sat at roughly forty thousand, over twenty times that of 1775, and the number of denominations had doubled making the competition for membership more difficult. Indeed, many of these upstarts enjoyed some great success, including The Christians (and the Disciples of Christ). Founded in the early decades of the nineteenth century, by 1845 they had as many clergy, roughly four thousand, as their denominational ancestor, the Presbyterian Church.⁶³ Despite this democratization, Protestantism still dominated, though it was now more evangelical in nature. Indeed, by 1860 evangelical’s accounted for roughly eighty-five percent of church congregations in the United States.⁶⁴

During the years encompassing the Great Revival and those that followed, “evangelicals pioneered the development of voluntary associations whose focused attention to single issues made them highly efficient instruments of reform.” By the late nineteenth century, they acquired the skills necessary to

Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 4; Marsden, “The Religious Right: A Historical Overview,” in *No Longer Exiles*, ed. Cromartie, 4; Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 13, 156-157.

⁶² Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* 3; Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right...*, 28; Hill, “Northern and Southern Varieties of American Evangelicalism in the Nineteenth Century,” 276.

⁶³ Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, 3-4.

⁶⁴ Daniel K. Williams, *God’s Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 12; Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 9-13.

spread their message effectively to a larger audience through promotion, advertisements, and the publication of related literature. They founded Bible conferences and prophecy conferences, as well as Bible Institutes, including the Bible Institute for Home and Foreign Missions of the Chicago Evangelization Society in 1889, the early iteration of what would become the influential Moody Bible Institute in 1900 (named for the evangelist Dwight L. Moody). They saw the importance of targeting “the children of the unchurched” for biblical education through the use of Sunday schools, and “entertain(ing) people who eschewed most popular amusements.” In order to maintain such a large enterprise, evangelicals became accomplished fundraisers. These efforts and the skills developed in the process would foreshadow later ones by fundamentalists (beginning in the late 1920s-early 1930s) and those of the Religious Right toward the end of the twentieth century. And evangelical efforts were needed, as Christianity’s cultural influence began to fade, beginning in the late nineteenth century, in the wake of deep divides between Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians over slavery, the Civil War and the Reconstruction that followed.⁶⁵

Along with dissention within, the evangelical community faced the emergence of significant social and cultural changes in the United States in the late-nineteenth-early-twentieth century that challenged the traditional order. The country underwent a demographic shift as it experienced a large influx of immigrants, largely Catholic, but also a significant number of Jews and Orthodox Christians as well, while simultaneously transitioning from a largely rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrial based one. Immigrants tended to settle in the cities, and urbanization, largely a result of industrialization, exposed more and more people to different cultures, as well as secularist ideas, particularly through an expanding higher education. These shifts contributed to, and helped exacerbate growing ethnic, economic, and religious divides, threatening the traditional social structure and diminishing Protestant religious

⁶⁵ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 5; Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 65; Nancy T. Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, ed. Martin E. Marty and Scott R. Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 17-22.

influence in urban centres. Within the evangelical community, an increased emphasis on the Social Gospel “undercut evangelicalism’s traditional emphasis on personal salvation.”⁶⁶

Coupled with the socio-cultural shifts noted above, this tumultuous period saw the emergence of several intellectual ideas that served to challenge religion’s place in American society. Many evangelicals and fundamentalists, including one of the most prominent leaders of the Religious Right, televangelist and Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson, identified this period as a pivotal point for America and its subsequent loss of way.⁶⁷ Though it took some time for its implications to manifest, the first of these secular threats came with the publication of Charles Darwin’s *The Origins of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1859. Despite his own strong religious convictions, Darwin’s theory of evolution represented a “direct challenge not only to the biblical account of creation, but also traditional Christian understanding of human nature and destiny, and even to theism itself.”⁶⁸ Over the next half-century Darwin was joined by the likes of philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who suggested that “God is dead” and viewed religion as a self-imposed shackle on the body and the mind; and Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, who placed little credibility in the Bible and argued for reason and science over religion. These revolutions in science and philosophy, built on the foundations of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, spawned what was termed “modernism.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 11, 2; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 5-6; Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 15-16; Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 13-14.

⁶⁷ Kenneth Briggs, “Evangelicals Turning to Politics Fear Moral Slide Imperils Nation: ...,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1980, D17; Pat Robertson, *America’s Dates with Destiny* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), 175-176; Note: While Robertson is an acknowledged member of the Southern Baptist Convention, his style of preaching is rooted in the Charismatic tradition, including the phenomenon of “speaking in tongues” - one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Charismatic movement is closely associated with Pentecostalism. See Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America*, 77-79.

⁶⁸ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 6; also see Charles Darwin, *The origin of species by means of natural selection, or, The preservation of favored races in the struggle for life* (New York: Modern Library, 1993, c1859).

⁶⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra: a book for everyone and no one*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale, (Hammondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books 1971, c 1883-1891); Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 32; Joachim Scharfenberg, *Sigmund Freud and his critique of religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew: Freud, atheism, and the making of psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Hadden, and Shupe, *Televangelism*, 104-105.

Even the foundations of a religious-based education came under attack. In 1915 educator John Dewey, who had, prior to the early twentieth century, “related his philosophizing to Christian faith,” published *The School and Society*. By this point, Dewey’s views had shifted dramatically, and he now hailed “the triumph of ‘science’ over religious prejudice.” Dewey would go on to help found the American Humanist Association (in 1941), advocating secular values, and have a profound influence on the American education system. Many leaders of the Religious Right would later consider Dewey the father of “secular humanism,” a term popularized by the influential fundamentalist theologian Francis Schaeffer and Tim LaHaye, founder of the American Coalition for Traditional Values and author of the widely popular *Left Behind* series. Indeed, LaHaye blamed Dewey for “stripping from American education its final vestiges of Christian message and purpose.”⁷⁰ Coupled with these intellectual endeavors came the most dangerous threat (along with evolution), “historical criticism of the Bible,” which “challenged the inspiration and credibility” of biblical Scripture, “the bedrock foundation of evangelical Christianity.” Originating in German universities, this school of thought, an outgrowth of modernism, made its way into the “seminaries and pulpits” in the United States in the mid-late nineteenth century.⁷¹

Christians responded in one of two ways to this secular, or what was termed “modernist” assault. A large number of more liberal-leaning evangelicals looked to reconcile these new ideas with biblical meaning by attempting to explain the Bible in the context of these naturalistic theories. Some suggested that evolution, for example, was compatible with Scripture. Many abandoned the notion of biblical literalism entirely, and instead looked to Scripture for “useful moral instruction that could be applied to the ... social problems of the day,” which some sought to address through the embrace of the Social Gospel. Conversely, conservative Protestants saw this accommodation with modernism as “nothing less

⁷⁰ Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 134, Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 146; Austin Warren, “The ‘New Humanism’ Twenty Years After,” *Modern Age* 3, no. 1 (Winter 1958-1959), 82; John Dewey, *The School and Society* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1967, c1915); Tim LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1979), 45; also see Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare*, 85 (for a succinct overview of “secular humanism,” see 84-85).

⁷¹ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 6.

than heresy.” If the Bible could not be trusted then the basic structure of the Protestant religion, their entire belief system, was discredited. For conservatives, the idea that Scripture contained historical errors, and/or was not literal but rather metaphorical in nature, was inconceivable. They condemned accommodation, and those who adopted it. Evangelists, such as A.C. Dixon, Josiah Strong, Dwight L. Moody, Phillips Brooks, and Billy Sunday, took to the tried-and-true revivals to spread their message and their anti-modernist views to the people throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.⁷²

Past evangelists, such as Charles Finney during the Great Awakening, had viewed society (and its progress) in a positive light and preached a version of millennialism rooted in optimism, in which Christ would return *after* the millennium. These postmillennialist evangelicals understood their responsibility in helping to bring about the millennial, hence the social reform efforts associated with the Social Gospel. The eschatological views of evangelists such as Dwight L. Moody, W.C. Dixon, Reuben Torrey, Billy Sunday, and other anti-modernists were inclined toward a more recent scheme of biblical interpretation, and one that would help shape evangelical theology, dispensational premillennialism (or simply dispensationalism). It originated in England with Nelson Darby in the 1830s and spread to the United States in the latter part of the century. In contrast to postmillennialists, premillennialists believe that society was beyond redemption and thus largely eschewed any efforts toward social reform as pointless in the face of God’s plan. This pessimistic theology envisions Jesus’ return *prior* to the thousand years of peace and righteousness. Accordingly, premillennialists point to particular events and “signs of the times,” such as natural disasters, religious apostasy, moral decline, and political chaos, while they await Christ’s return, which could occur at any time. Given this perspective, premillennialism tends to thrive

⁷²Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 14; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 6; Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 17-22, 32-39, 155-156; also see George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 215-222; Gerald L Priest, “A.C. Dixon, Chicago Liberals, and the Fundamentals,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 (Spring 1996): 113–134; Bruce J. Evensen, *God’s Man for the Gilded Age: D.L. Moody and the Rise of Modern Mass Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

during periods of tension or crisis (emblematic of this was World War I and the Cold War), as it both reinforces their pessimistic view of society while providing hope to its adherents in troubling times.⁷³

The dispensation part of dispensation premillennialism was an interpretation of the Bible in which Darby suggested that “all of human history ... could be divided into seven periods or dispensations” and posited that “God had dealt differently with humanity in each of these dispensations.” Moreover, its adherents were certain that the final dispensation, the millennial age, was upon them - thus Christ’s return was imminent. The event initiating this final dispensation is called the Rapture (where true believers will be saved), followed by the Tribulation (in which the Antichrist will seek to control the world), Armageddon (when non-believers will perish), and finally the millennium - a thousand years of spiritual prosperity.⁷⁴ Arguably the individual most responsible for popularizing dispensationalism was the evangelist C.I. Scofield, who produced an edited Bible (the Scofield Reference Bible, or Scofield Study Bible) in 1909 containing detailed notes “explaining the true intent of each passage.”⁷⁵

One year after the release of the Scofield Reference Bible, the first of a twelve-volume series, *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, consisting of 90 essays was published. Between 1910 and 1915 brothers Lyman and Milton Stewart (wealthy Presbyterians) financed these works, at considerable expense, with the intention of providing “intellectually sound, popularly accessible defenses of the Christian faith.” The essays, written by prominent conservative evangelicals such as J. Gresham Machen and W.C. Dixon, emphasized some of the central features of what would become fundamentalism,

⁷³ Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 32-34; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 32-33, 37-38, 66; Priest, “A.C. Dixon, Chicago Liberals, and the Fundamentals,” 114; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millennialism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 3-4, 43-44; Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America*, 84-86; also see Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*, 457-458 for a succinct explanation of millennialism and millennium.

⁷⁴ Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 32-33; Weber, 13; for a thorough and accessible explanation of dispensation premillennialism, see Paul S. Boyer, *When Time Shall be no More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); for a more succinct review of dispensationalism, see Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*, 211-212.

⁷⁵ Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 6-7; Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 36; for a review of C.I. Scofield, see Larry V. Crutchfield, “C.I. Scofield,” in *Twentieth-Century Shapers of American Popular Religion*, ed. Charles L. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 371-381; also see C.I. Scofield, *The Scofield Study Bible*, ed. Doris W. Ridders (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

including inerrancy (adherence to a strict belief in a literal interpretation of the Bible, including miracles), creation according to the account in Genesis, the Virgin birth, Christ's resurrection, and the Second Coming (of Christ). Those who adhered to these principles would eventually take the name fundamentalists. And despite the fact that the "prophetic interpretations" of dispensationalism were a clear and dramatic departure "from a literal reading of Scripture," fundamentalists, who also claimed a commitment to biblical inerrancy, would adopt premillennialism as a core tenet.⁷⁶ Conservative evangelicals spread dispensational premillennialism throughout the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries by way of evangelical campaigns, Bible institutes, prophecy conferences, and the publication and distribution of the *Scofield Bible* and *The Fundamentals*.⁷⁷

There was, in fact, little to really differentiate conservative evangelicals from those that would take the name fundamentalists, at least initially. Eventually, what would most differentiate fundamentalism from evangelicalism and "a number of closely related traditions, such as ... revivalism, pietism, the holiness movements," and Baptist traditionalism, among other "denominational orthodoxies," was an aggressive stance toward modernism.⁷⁸ Indeed, George Marsden, perhaps the most distinguished historian of fundamentalism, has cheekily suggested that "a fundamentalist is an evangelical, who is angry about something," or more seriously, "an evangelical who is militant in opposition to liberal theology in the churches or to change in cultural values or mores, such as those associated with 'secular humanism.'"⁷⁹

Marsden described fundamentalism as "a 'movement' in the sense of a tendency or development in Christian thought that gradually took on its own identity as a patchwork coalition of representatives of other movements." Initially, fundamentalists could be found in most, if not all denominations, but in time

⁷⁶ Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, 188-207; Hadden, and Shupe, *Televangelism*, 107-108; Marsden *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 118-123; Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," 22, 7; Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, preface, xi; also see Two Christian Laymen, *The Fundamentals: a Testimony to the Truth*, volumes 1-4 (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Co., 1910-1915); for a succinct explanation of fundamentalism, see Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America*, 73-76.

⁷⁷ Marsden *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 57.

⁷⁸ Marsden *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 4.

⁷⁹ Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 1.

they broke ties to found their own groups after “it became clear that the majority of Protestants would not be diverted from their apostate ways.” Still, “although it developed a distinct life, identity, and eventually a subculture of its own,” Marsden notes that “it never existed wholly independently of the older movements from which it grew.” Instead, “fundamentalism was a loose, diverse, and changing federation of co-belligerents united by their fierce opposition to modernist attempts to bring Christianity into line with modern thought.”⁸⁰

Marsden argues that “from its origins fundamentalism was primarily a religious movement, ... among American ‘evangelical’ Christians, people professing a complete confidence in the Bible and preoccupied with the message of God’s salvation of sinners through the death of Jesus Christ.”⁸¹ But it was also, as Daniel K. Williams’ points out, a response to a perceived attack on their position in society, once dominant, now thoroughly diminished. Fundamentalism, then, was also a reactionary movement to a shifting socio-cultural urban landscape (particularly in the North) due to immigration, philosophical and scientific theories antithetical to evangelical traditions, liberal Protestant’s accommodation with modernism, and the emergence of the first women’s empowerment movement (or first-wave feminism), a manifestation of a rise in female consciousness. All these things served to chip-away at “conservative Protestant influence.”⁸² As Marsden notes, they “underwent a remarkable transformation in their relationship to the culture. Respectable ‘evangelicals’ in the 1870s, by the 1920s they had become a laughingstock, ideological strangers in their own land.”⁸³

Fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals made clear that modernism and evolutionary theory were at the root of what they saw as society’s decline “by undermining the Biblical foundations of American civilization.” Indeed, theological scholar J. Gresham Machen saw “modern liberalism in the Church” as an “attack upon the fundamentals of the Christian faith.” Echoing Machen, James Gray, the

⁸⁰ Marsden *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 4; also see Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 24-25, 28, 2-3; and Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right...*, 30.

⁸¹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 3.

⁸² Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 12-13.

⁸³ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, preface, viii, 3-4.

President of Moody Bible Institute, suggested that, “Modernism is a revolt against the God of Christianity” and a “foe of good government.” As for Darwin’s theory, the anti-evolutionist movement’s de-facto leader, former secretary of state William Jennings Bryan, was certain that “The evolutionary hypothesis is the only thing that has seriously menaced religion since the birth of Christ; and it menaces ... civilization as well as religion.”⁸⁴ When fundamentalists struck back during the 1920s in an attempt to reassert their influence, Bryan would be their most prominent and visible advocate.

Though the contest between fundamentalists and modernists, the former being viewed as anti-intellectual, was popularly framed as one of religion vs. science, fundamentalists, to be fair, held great respect for the scientific method as they understood it - the “gathering of ‘facts’ drawn from the Bible and scientific data to be harmonized with these biblical facts.” These principles, a product of the seventeenth century and the ideas of Francis Bacon, were coupled with what was referred to as Scottish Common-Sense Realism. This philosophy posited that the individual possessed an innate ability to appreciate and understand the world around them and interpret the facts (of the natural world or the Bible) through a biblical lens. Together, these ideas formed the basis of fundamentalist scientific thought. It was this view of science, a “systematic, rational approach to finding and organizing the facts,” almost universally accepted in the United States well into the 19th century, that modernism and evolutionary theory threatened. As the historian Nancy Ammerman points out, “that view of science was in fact part of what they sought to preserve, namely, a way of looking at the world undistorted by human theory and open to God’s design.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (London: Victory press, 1923), 17; George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 4.

⁸⁵ Sydney E. Ahlstrom, “The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology,” *Church History*, 24, no. 3 (September, 1955): 257-272; Mark A. Noll, “Common Sense Traditions and American Evangelical Thought,” *American Quarterly*, 37, no. 2 (Summer, 1985): 216-238; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 7-8; Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 9; for an excellent overview of evangelical views on science, see Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 153-170; on creation science, see Marsden *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 153-181.

As many conservative evangelicals began to coalesce around the ideas put forth in *The Fundamentals* in the second decade of the twentieth century, the First World War served to accelerate fundamentalists' convictions. This was especially true with regards to their eschatological views on prophecy as seen through the lens of premillennialism. If fundamentalists were convinced that the world was dissolving into chaos prior to 1914, the horrors of the war only reinforced those beliefs. Added to the death and destruction, the Bolshevik revolution brought the threat of communism (and a world without God), and the creation of the League of Nations symbolized events leading to end times. Particularly disconcerting was United States' president Woodrow Wilson's role in the creation of the international body, which they viewed as the beginning of one-world government (see *Tribulations*). It was in the wake of these catastrophic events that "fundamentalism emerged as a distinct phenomenon."⁸⁶

Moreover, the socio-cultural shifts of the mid-late nineteenth century continued into the twentieth. Of particular concern were shifting gender norms, which were seen as "an assault on the family," the rise of dance clubs and movie going, in particular, which were perceived to be products of a liberalization of sexual mores, and the increased secularization of higher education. All contributed to a continued decline in religiosity. In this atmosphere of despair, conservative Christians took action, determined to reclaim their lost influence. Their first step was founding the World's Christian Fundamentals Association in 1919, an umbrella organization that was never very effective. While they campaigned to eradicate alcohol and forms of entertainment such as movies, fundamentalists reserved their greatest efforts, from 1920 to roughly 1925, for the fight against modernism/liberalism within the churches and the teaching of evolutionary theory in the classrooms of the nation's schools. In the words of J. Gresham Machen, "in the

⁸⁶ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 6; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 12, Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," 23.

intellectual battle between true Christianity and the philosophical materialism of modern life, there can be no ‘peace without victory’; one side or the other man must win.”⁸⁷

Tensions that had been building for decades within Protestant denominations between liberal and conservative elements finally came to a head in the post-World War I era. While some denominations, particularly those in the South were firmly in the grip of conservatives, and others, such as the Congregationalists and Methodists, were liberal bastions, a small number of groups were more vulnerable to a conservative take-over from within, particularly the Northern Baptists and northern Presbyterians. Though liberals held sway in these two churches, they also contained strong, well organized conservative constituencies. Indeed, the majority of those premillennialists who had most closely associated with prophecy and had taken part in the Bible conferences of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries had come from these two denominations.⁸⁸

Over the course of the first half of the 1920s, these conservative elements attempted to take control of their respective churches. The Northern Baptist Convention was subjected to a sustained attack, including charges of heretical teachings, in an effort to implement a strict creed. But, because “it was a convention based on voluntary cooperation among local congregations,” there was no recourse to deal with appeals of this nature and their efforts bore little fruit. Conversely, Presbyterians had a church structure in which “the adoption and enforcement of creeds is possible.” Still, despite winning some battles, fundamentalists here, too, were unable to change the direction of their church. As the second half of the decade unfolded, it appeared that modernists had survived the fundamentalist insurgency. To add to their successes in stifling attacks on the northern Presbyterians and Northern Baptists, moderates and liberals also snuffed

⁸⁷ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 13, 14; Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 23-24; Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 6; for a succinct examination of J. Gresham Machen, see Marsden, *Understanding Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism*, 182-201.

⁸⁸ Marsden, *Understanding Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism*, 57; Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 24; James DeForest Murch, *Cooperation without compromise: a history of the National Association of Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1956), 32-36.

out fundamentalist assaults on the Methodist, Episcopal, and Disciples of Christ denominations.⁸⁹ Disaffected conservatives left the larger denominations to found numerous independent and separatist fundamentalist churches.

Simultaneously, fundamentalists had gone on the offensive against modern science. In 1920, William Jennings Bryan took it upon himself to lead a campaign against evolution. Bryan was a larger-than-life figure, an attorney, editor, congressman, former Secretary of State, and three-time Democratic presidential candidate. Always the consummate populist, he had earned the moniker the “great commoner.” Bryan was also a devout Presbyterian and, in his later years, a tireless progressive activist for such causes as world peace, women’s rights, and prohibition. He had not, however, reconciled himself to the theory of evolution, declaring “that when religion and science come into conflict, the issue should be decided by the will of the common people, not by ‘those who measure men by diplomas and college degrees.’”⁹⁰

For the next five years Bryan rallied conservative Christians, “northerners and southerners, farmers and city-dwellers,” to fundamentalist sponsored events across the country. In a strange twist, premillennialists saw themselves clamoring for “social change,” after having dismissed political activism as pointless “in the face of an imminent Rapture.” Throughout the country, but predominantly in the South, states considered legislation banning the teaching of evolution in the public schools. While these bills never made much headway in the North, they caused quite a stir in a couple of the border states (Texas and Kentucky), though they eventually failed in both cases. A number of southern states, however, saw legislation pass with relative ease (Oklahoma, Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, and

⁸⁹ Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 24-25.

⁹⁰ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 13-14; Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 26; also see Lawrence W. Levine, *Defender of the Faith: William Jennings Bryan, the Last Decade, 1915-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968, c1965); and William Jennings Bryan and Mary Baird Bryan, *The Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan* (Philadelphia: C. Winston, 1925).

Arkansas), only to be repealed within a few years. Still, as Nancy Ammerman notes, “for many in those regions, teaching evolution was simply inconceivable. Outlawing it was not difficult to do.”⁹¹

Bryan’s anti-evolution campaign would come to an ignominious end five years later in the town of Dayton, Tennessee following what became known as the Scopes “Monkey Trial,” after the defendant John T. Scopes, a public-school teacher who challenged the law against the teaching of evolutionary theory. Scopes was supported by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and represented by a skilled defense team, including the famed attorney Clarence Darrow. Bryan, who was happy to represent the prosecution, saw “the contest between evolution and Christianity” as “a duel to the death.” For the nearly three months leading up to the Scopes trial, and during the trial itself (July 10-21, 1925), the eyes of the nation (and elsewhere) were drawn to the small town of Dayton and what became a battle “between old and new,” “science and religion,” and “city and country.” No one was surprised when the jury delivered a guilty verdict - few expected otherwise from conservative, religious, rural Southerners. Indeed, the Scopes trial is not remembered for the legal victory, which turned out to be a pyrrhic one, but for what took place during the trial. After Darrow goaded Bryan into taking the witness stand, the latter was thoroughly embarrassed when challenged on his knowledge of various sciences, the foundations of other religions, and even his ability to address basic questions “regarding the literal interpretation of Scripture.” Darrow was merciless in his questioning, as was the press in their reporting.⁹²

Bryan emerged from the trial victorious, but a broken man. He died only days later while resting at a friend’s home. Not only had Bryan been humiliated, so had fundamentalism and its adherents which journalists had portrayed as “morons,” and “hillbillies.” The British press had mocked Bryan’s belief in a literal interpretation of the Bible, calling him “child-like.” Regardless of whether this was an accurate

⁹¹ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 13-14; Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 26.

⁹² Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 26; George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 6, 184-187; “Arrest Evolution Teacher: Tennessee Authorities Start Test Case Under New Law,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1925, 40; “Scopes is Indicted in Tennessee for Teaching Evolution,” Special to the *New York Times*, May 26, 1925, 1; “Darrow and Malone to Defend Scopes,” *New York Times*, May 18, 1925, 15; “Bryan Will Defend Anti-evolution Law,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1925, 15; “Ignorance Charge Denied by Bryan,” *New York Times*, Jul 25, 1925, 10; “Mencken Epithets Rouse Dayton’s Ire,” Special to the *New York Times*, Jul 17, 1925, 3.

depiction, fundamentalism's credibility was destroyed. Fundamentalists, having lost the battles to stamp out modernism in their denominational churches and to ban evolution from the nation's classrooms, receded, for the most part, from the public sphere.⁹³ Protestant religion's place in society at that time might best be expressed in a comment by the journalist H.L. Mencken in 1924: "Christendom may be defined briefly as that part of the world in which, if any man stands up in public and solemnly swears that he is a Christian, all his auditors will laugh."⁹⁴

Though battered and bruised, this loss was not the end of the movement, as some predicted and others hoped. Fundamentalists (and evangelicals) spent the next fifty-odd years reorganizing and transforming the movement, in large part by creating their own separatist subculture, and in the process help shaped the development of evangelicalism in the twentieth century.⁹⁵ A *Christianity Today* article suggested that "between 1930 and 1950, evangelicals laid the foundations for the renovation of the gospel witness that caught national attention in the 1970s." Over these following decades, their associated denominations grew in membership, some of them dramatically, such as the Southern Baptist Convention and the Assemblies of God. As time went on, more and more of these new recruits came from newly assimilated immigrants. Institutes of higher learning were founded or expanded, such as the Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College, Bob Jones University, and Dallas Theological Seminary. Here "an increasingly diverse mix of fundamentalists, members of holiness denominations, Pentecostals, conservative mainline Protestants, ... and others" received an education rooted in biblical principles.⁹⁶

⁹³ "Bryan is Eulogized, Even by Opponents," *New York Times*, July 27, 1925, 1; Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," 26; David Harrington Watt, *A Transforming Faith: Explorations of Twentieth-Century American Evangelicalism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 33-34; "Mencken Epithets Rouse Dayton's Ire," Special to the *New York Times*, July 17, 1925, 3; "English Ridicule Bryan," by Wireless to the *New York Times*, July 22, 1925, 2; Hadden, and Shupe, *Televangelism*, 110-111.

⁹⁴ J. H. L. Mencken, *Prejudices: fourth series* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), 78-79.

⁹⁵ For an exploration of this process, see Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) .

⁹⁶ Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 16-17,18-19; Bruce Shelley, "The Pioneers at Fifty," *Christianity Today* (November 8, 1985), 42; Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," 32-33; Hadden, and Shupe, *Televangelism*, 111-114; Marsden *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 193-195.

Much as their predecessors in the early evangelical movement, fundamentalists adopted established techniques to promote their doctrines, primarily the publication of their own magazines and literature. They also took advantage of the newest technology, radio. While more mainstream Protestant denominations settled for free airtime when they could get it, fundamentalists paid for spots during “primetime listening hours.” A number of early fundamentalist and evangelical preachers, particularly Aimee Semple McPherson, founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel and the first woman to give a sermon on the air, and later Charles Fuller (and his *Old-Fashioned Revival Hour*), reached regional and even national audiences, often larger than the “most popular radio hosts of the day.” By the 1930s, dozens of fundamentalist and evangelical preachers could be heard across the country.⁹⁷

As far as politics was concerned, evangelicals and fundamentalists could be found in both the Republican and Democratic parties. The flamboyant Billy Sunday was a “conservative, pro-business Republican,” while Bryan was an economically liberal Democrat, as were most Southerners. And despite Bryan’s close party affiliation, fundamentalists in the 1920s, when they were most active, “never identified their causes with a particular political party.” Politically speaking, the primary concerns for most, especially by the 1930s, were economic in nature, significantly “the appropriate role for the government in the economy.” Mark Noll, co-founder (along with Nathan O. Hatch) of the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, suggests that religious values played a less significant role than fundamentalists’ “dominant regional subculture and their lower socio-economic status” in influencing their views in these matters. Though there were exceptions, generally speaking, “religion seemed largely irrelevant to political life.” Daniel K. Williams argues that the political division within the movement,

⁹⁷ R.L. Moore, *Selling God: American religion in the marketplace of culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Sara Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990), 2-4; Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 33-34; Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* 217; Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 16-17; for more on the role of Aimee Semple McPherson, a female pioneer in the evangelical movement of the early twentieth century, see Matthew Avery Sutton, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); and Sutton, “Between the Refrigerator and the Wildfire”: Aimee Semple McPherson, Pentecostalism, and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy,” *Church History* 72, no. 1 (March, 2003): 159-188; for a succinct review of Charles Fuller, see L. David Lewis, “Charles E. Fuller,” in *Twentieth-Century Shapers of American Popular Religion*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 148-155.

largely due to the differing economic views, meant that they were unable to effectively lobby the federal government, and thus wielded little influence in Washington. As the 1920s came to a close, neither the Democrats nor Republicans appeared interested in embracing the fundamentalist agenda.⁹⁸

Fundamentalists' had little to show for their activism in the 1920s. Their efforts had helped bring about and maintain Prohibition, but by the early 1930s, the Volstead Act had been repealed by the Democratic administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Similarly, while they succeeded in helping to bring about the Catholic Democratic presidential candidate Al Smith's election loss in 1928, they had failed to prevent his nomination in the first place. Fundamentalist divisions and lack of political influence continued through the 1930s. Those in the North saw Roosevelt's New Deal agenda "as a dangerous" over-extension of the federal government at the expense of the states. Conversely, Southern Baptists largely supported the government programs, which helped many of their members.⁹⁹ Unquestionably, the New Deal policies, a consequence of the Great Depression, with their "emphasis on planning," and "the welfare state," brought the federal government into play "as a major regulatory actor" and introduced "a 'social democratic tinge,'" never before seen in the United States.¹⁰⁰ Pat Robertson, among a number of other conservatives within and outside the Religious Right, would later lament that Roosevelt's interventionist "policies moved the nation toward a radical departure from the vision of our founding fathers, setting the foundations for a welfare state and an almost imperial presidency."¹⁰¹

The 1930s offered fundamentalists little hope. In light of the nation's apparent direction, end times rhetoric thrived. In addition to the perceived socio-cultural decline, symbolized by the ascension of modernism, the nation's (and the world's) economy was hemorrhaging, Catholics were gaining prominence in Washington, and authoritarian dictatorships were on the rise in Europe. The orthodox account forwarded by scholars suggests that fundamentalists and evangelicals largely abandoned politics

⁹⁸ Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 17-18; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 14.

⁹⁹ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 14-15; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 13.

¹⁰⁰ Lipsett, *American Exceptionalism*, 37; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 308.

¹⁰¹ Robertson, *America's Dates with Destiny*, 211-212.

at this time, when they immersed themselves in their developing subculture, only to reappear again sometime in the 1970s in response to the simmering culture war. Daniel K. Williams challenges that view, arguing that evangelicals continued to remain active throughout the twentieth century. “Their commitment to political activism and conservatism,” Williams’ writes, “was much deeper and more long-standing than most” scholars understood.¹⁰² While it is true that evangelicals and fundamentalists had not abandoned this realm entirely, as Williams’ work so ably demonstrates, it would be nearly a half-century before they emerged in any kind of force and cohesive presence in the public-political discourse.

In the meantime, as the ‘30s gave way to the ‘40s, a schism appeared in the fundamentalist movement as they took the first steps toward organized political engagement. A group of militant fundamentalists, lead by the radical anti-communist crusader (and student of J. Gresham Machen) Carl McIntire, founded the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) in 1941 as a counterweight to the more liberal Federal Council of Churches, a mainstream organization with influence in Washington. Adhering to a strict fundamentalist doctrine (particularly their insistence “on uniformity of belief ... and separation from” those who do not share their theological outlook), the ACCC was an exclusive organization, limited to the independent and separatist denominations, and outright hostile towards Catholics, liberal Protestants, and others who did not completely share their theological views. In response, more moderate (but still conservative) fundamentalists, including Presbyterian minister Harold J. Ockenga, split and established the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Conceived in 1942 and officially founded in 1943, it sought “a positive spirituality” and embraced intellectual rigor, rare among those associated with the ACCC. They accepted inerrancy in principle i.e. as “true,” but generally rejected a literal interpretation of the Bible. Re-emphasizing the importance of social programs, the NAE began to shift

¹⁰² Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 2.

away from dispensationalist theology. To disassociate themselves from the militant fundamentalists, they became known as neo-evangelicals.¹⁰³

Unlike the separatist ACCC, the NAE was intended to be a broad-based ecumenically diverse organization, including Baptists, Pentecostals, Presbyterians, and Methodists, willing to work with liberal denominations. They believed the key to sustaining and growing evangelicalism, and achieving cultural influence, was to adopt an attitude of “cooperation without compromise.” The membership and leadership were principally comprised of northerners, where large Catholic minorities existed along with “a proliferation of bars and dance halls.” The organization was founded with the intent of “raising up a witness against the apostasy of groups claiming to represent a Protestant Christianity without such loyalty to the historic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.” During the 1940s, the NAE made concerted efforts to restrict “liquor advertising, Sunday commerce, and sexually provocative literature.” Opposing government intervention, they also lobbied against federal assistance for education in 1945, and later in the decade campaigned to have Jesus identified as the Lord through Constitutional amendment. Most significantly, the NAE founded the National Religious Broadcasters Association and eventually obtained “federal protection for evangelical radio preachers’ broadcasting rights.” In time they supplanted “mainline Protestant radio and television broadcasts” and provided the foundations for the future media empires of preachers such as Oral Roberts and Rex Humbard, who paved the way for Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Jim Bakker, and others.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Clyde Wilcox, *The Christian Right in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 8; Justin Watson, *The Christian Coalition: Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition* (New York: Martin’s Press, 1997), 18; Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 8; Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 17; Murch, *Cooperation without compromise*, 53, 185, 60; Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 18-19; Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 71-72; for an examination of the fundamentalist schism and subsequent split leading to the foundation of the ACCC and the NAE, see Jon R. Stone, *On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 73-116.

¹⁰⁴ Murch, *Cooperation without compromise*, 54-60, 65-68, 72-81; Watson, 14-15; Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 15, 17-18, 23; Sara Diamond, *Not by Politics Alone*, 23-24; Jeffrey K. Hadden, “The Rise and Fall of American Televangelism,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 527, *Religion in the Nineties* (May, 1993): 116; Jeffrey Hadden and Charles Swann, *Prime Time Preachers* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1981), 80; Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” 34.

As conservative fundamentalists and evangelicals went about building an infrastructure and, in the case of the latter, developing a lobbying arm (through the NAE) with which to influence Washington, the United States found itself drawn into the Second World War. An ally during the war, the Soviet Union would emerge from the conflict as the United States chief rival and their ideology a most dangerous threat. Not only was communism antithetical to capitalism and democracy, it represented a world without God. Conservative Christians, particularly fundamentalists, had been warning against the evils of communism since the Russian Revolution in 1917. After years of what appeared to be an adversarial relationship with Washington, in anti-communism evangelicals, and to a lesser degree fundamentalists, found common cause with the federal government and the clear majority of the population.¹⁰⁵

The ensuing Cold War against the Soviets and atheistic communism was a turning point for conservative Christians. It elevated the national role of religion, manifest in the prominence of a “civil religious rhetoric” that associated anti-communism with the Lord’s work. No one represented this more than Billy Graham.¹⁰⁶ And no religious figure loomed larger in the United States during the first few decades of the Cold War than the Wheaton grad and former Youth for Christ (YFC) figurehead. Graham had been recognized, in 1949, for his charismatic anti-communist preaching by the newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst and Henry Luce, head of Time, Inc., who took it upon themselves to promote the neo-evangelist through their media networks. Embracing “cultural and political engagement” and preaching that “either Communism must die, or Christianity must die,” Graham was able to infuse “America’s anticommunist struggle with the underpinnings of evangelical theology.” And by associating the battle against communism with God’s work, Graham was able to conflate religion (the “Christian way of life”) and nationalism (the “American way of life”). Through this lens, “a threat to one was a threat to

¹⁰⁵ Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 18-21.

¹⁰⁶ On Billy Graham, see William G. McLoughlin, *Billy Graham, Revivalist in a Secular Age* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1960); also see Marshall Frady, *Billy Graham: A Parable of American Righteousness* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979); and Billy Graham, *Just as I am: The autobiography of Billy Graham* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1977); for an excellent examination of Graham’s influence in shaping the religious, cultural, and political landscape of the American South in the second half of the twentieth century, see Steven P. Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South: Politics and Culture in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

the other.” With this message, the neo-evangelical preacher quickly rose to fame, appearing on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1954.¹⁰⁷

Communism was also the issue that drew a wedge between evangelicals and the administration of Harry S. Truman, for which a majority had voted. Many, particularly the working-class, including Southern Baptists, favoured the Democrats social, financial, and labour friendly policies, in addition to a strong anti-communist foreign policy. The loss of China to the Communists in 1949, followed by Truman’s perceived weakness during the Korean War, specifically the dismissal of General Douglas MacArthur for his aggressive strategy, convinced a growing number of conservative Christians that the administration was, however, becoming soft on communism. The NAE roundly condemned the President and his administration in a resolution. Indeed, the anti-communist campaigns of the NAE and the GOP had become virtually identical by the early 1950’s, both groups identifying Democratic New Deal policies with socialism and charging Communist infiltration of the government.¹⁰⁸

Graham, who shared a very similar theological outlook as the NAE and its leader, Harold J. Ockenga, had also become disenchanted with Truman’s foreign (and economic) policy. Subsequently, he began distancing himself from establishment Democrats and began cultivating ties with Republican politicians in Washington prior to the 1952 presidential election, in which Graham was an early supporter of Eisenhower. When Eisenhower sought re-election in 1956, the pastor assured the former general that he would “do all in my power during the coming campaign to gain friends and supporters for your cause.”¹⁰⁹ Though Eisenhower was not an evangelical and he viewed “all religions as equally valid,” he felt a belief

¹⁰⁷ Curtis J. Evans, “White Evangelical Protestant Responses to the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 102, no. 2 (April, 2009): 252; Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare*, 10; Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 22-23, quotes on 23; “The New Evangelist,” *Time*, October 25, 1954; Marshall Frady explores the connection between religion and nationalism in *Billy Graham: A Parable of American Righteousness*; Note: YFC was one of the many “parachurch” organizations, and perhaps the most successful, that emerged in the World War II and post-war era. Consisting of “a network of youth groups” unaffiliated with any particular church, they sought to both recruit new converts and “revitalize evangelical Christianity among the already converted.” See Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare*, 10-12.

¹⁰⁸ Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 20-21.

¹⁰⁹ Steven Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*, 65, 69-74, quote on 72.

in God was “the most basic expression of Americanism.” The preacher and the president developed a close relationship during the latter’s eight years in the White House. Evangelicals, through Graham, gained access to the centre of political power along with, something perhaps more valuable, the credibility that accompanied the president’s endorsement. Eisenhower received the benefits of Graham’s growing fame and influence, both within and outside the evangelical community. Graham’s more ecumenical approach appealed to a broad swath of the Protestant population and had made him one of the nation’s most recognized and respected preachers and anti-communist crusaders. In the process, he was able to attract a number of conservative Christians, primarily in the North East and the West, to support Eisenhower and later Richard Nixon. Still, in the ‘50s and ‘60s, evangelicals en masse had not yet coalesced around a single party - those in the North could be found in both parties, and those in the South were still predominantly Democrats.¹¹⁰

And while the neo-evangelicalism best articulated by Billy Graham was the most visible during the post-war period, there were numerous other evangelical groups, most of which went unnoticed, that had only superficial connections or interactions, if any at all, with Graham and his associates. Included here would be, for example, the Pentecostal movement, particularly Oral Roberts, and their “healing revivals,” the Southern Baptists, and African American evangelicals. Of course, mainline (or liberal) evangelicals remained an active force, and fundamentalists, too, continued to expand and develop their subculture. The unity demonstrated during earlier evangelical activism, as discussed previously in the chapter, was not yet to be found during the immediate post-war decades. Indeed, while Graham and those associated with him,

¹¹⁰ Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*, 69-74; Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 21-28; Graham, *Just as I am*, 199-201; “Belief in God Is Vital to Americanism, Eisenhower Asserts in Filmed Talk Here,” *New York Times*, February 21, 1955, 24; “Text of President’s Talk on Faith,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1954, 11; “President is Host: Has Billy Graham as Guest at Luncheon on Farm,” *New York Times*, August 9, 1955, 9; “Eisenhower Hears Graham Preach,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1955, 1; Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 22; for an exploration of Billy Graham’s relationship with presidential politics, see Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy, *The Preacher and the Presidents: Billy Graham in the White House* (New York: Centre Street, 2007).

including the NAE leadership, “may have communicated a sense of cohesion, ... on the ground, evangelicalism remained profoundly pluralistic.”¹¹¹

The neo-evangelical movement that emerged in the wake of the Second World War was the product of three-hundred years of Protestant Christianity in America, from the colonial Puritans through the Great Awakenings and the birth of evangelicalism and its offspring, fundamentalism. Lead by Billy Graham this revitalized group of evangelicals would help shape the Christian conservative movement over the next few decades. During this time, fundamentalists remained largely, but not entirely, in the shadows, entrenched in their sub-culture and separated from what they saw as an increasingly secular culture and society. Still, this group would find themselves back on the frontlines in the battle for conservative values, as the second half of the twentieth century unfolded, and a new political phenomenon emerged in the United States.

As conservative Christians were experiencing newfound credibility and beginning to find a voice, if not yet a unified one, in the public-political discourse, an ideology, uniquely American, was beginning to crystallize. The modern American conservative movement, initially intellectual in nature, would soon reshape the political landscape of the United States.¹¹² Most simply put, it was an attempt to bring together two disparate factions, classical liberals (or libertarians) who focused on natural rights and political freedom, and traditionalists (or social conservatives), who tended to concentrate on order, authority, hierarchy, and a Christian oriented society with a reverence for the past. Initially, an ardent opposition to communism, which personified both secularism and a powerful centralized state, combined with anti-liberalism, provided the basis for an early rapprochement between religious and ideological

¹¹¹ Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 18-22; on Pentecostalism, see Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America*, 77; on Oral Roberts, see David Edwin Harrell, *Oral Roberts an American life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), particularly 268-270; and Jack Gould, “On Faith Healing: Preacher’s Timely TV Miracles Raise Question of Station’s Standards,” *New York Times*, February 19, 1956, X11.

¹¹² For a history of the intellectual element of the conservative movement, see George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America, Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976); for a history of the intellectual movement’s political manifestations, see Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007).

conservatives. Frank Meyer, a leading conservative intellectual, appreciated that the movement had political implications, and in the early 1960s, in an attempt to provide a consistent ideology, he developed “fusion,” a theory which suggested that individual freedom (associated with classical liberalism) and human virtue (associated with traditionalists) were inextricably linked.¹¹³

The strengths and weaknesses of Meyer’s theory can be debated. The point is that fusion provided, at least theoretically, an ideological rationale on which libertarians and social conservatives could agree. Despite the tensions that continued to arise between the two camps, conservative Catholics, along with a growing number of Protestants, as well as a small number of Jews, sustained the religious element of the loose coalition for the better part of three decades. By the late-nineteen-seventies, fundamentalists, their subculture threatened by federal government intervention, would emerge in strength and reshape the movement.

¹¹³ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America, Since 1945*, 174-175, 178-181, 184, 185; Frank S. Meyer, “Freedom, Tradition, and Conservatism,” in *What is Conservatism?*, ed. Frank S. Meyer (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 8-15; also see Frank S. Meyer, *The Conservative Mainstream* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969), 13-90.

Chapter #2

Fusion: Classical Liberals, Traditionalists, and the Making of the Modern American Conservative Movement

The Religious Right has been as much a socio-cultural movement as it has been religiously driven, but it has also, in more than many ways, been a political one. Indeed, its rise to prominence in the United States in the second half of the twentieth century owed much to a more traditional political movement that was itself taking form in the postwar period. As the United States emerged from World War II, the political landscape (and ever more the social and cultural scene) was dominated by a liberal establishment, symbolized by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal - introduced in the 1930s in response to the turmoil of the Great Depression of the 1920s - which helped lay the foundations for the "welfare state." Many Americans welcomed this new liberal order (often referred to as "New Deal" liberalism), which had its deeper roots in the late nineteenth century phenomenon known as "modernism," a progressive renaissance of sorts represented by scientists, philosophers, and writers such as Charles Darwin, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud (discussed previously in chapter three). Others, did not.¹¹⁴ They lamented the country's direction and yearned for a return to what they perceived as the nation's true social, cultural, and political roots.¹¹⁵

In the mid-late 1940s and early 1950s, a small but determined number of scholarly individuals representing two schools of thought, traditional conservatism and classical liberalism (libertarianism), along with former left-wing radicals, established the foundation for what would become the modern

¹¹⁴ Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 7, 8, 12-13; Jerome Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 15-19; Robert Horwitz, *America's Right: Anti-Establishment Conservatism From Goldwater to the Tea Party* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 23-24., 27-29.

¹¹⁵ For an exploration of these roots through a conservative lens, see Clinton Rossiter, "Giants of American Conservatism," *American Heritage* 6 no. 6 (October 1955) <http://www.americanheritage.com/index.php/content/giants-american-conservatism> (accessed September 10, 2017).

American conservative movement. While they were united by their shared anti-liberal and anti-communist sentiments, ideological differences served to strain those bonds. Traditionalists disliked the libertarian emphasis on the free market and individual liberty, and libertarians were suspicious of traditionalist's appeal to authority and had little energy for their social crusades. By the early 1960s, the factions had found a working agreement in Frank Meyer's theory of "fusionism," which suggested that individual freedom (associated with libertarians) and human virtue (associated with traditionalists) were inextricably linked.¹¹⁶ Around the same time, this uniquely American phenomenon, initially intellectual in nature, manifest in political action which would effect a profound and, to date, enduring impact on the American zeitgeist, eventually helping to propel the Religious Right and its agenda into the centre of the public-political discourse.

The histories of the Religious Right and the modern American conservative movement in the decades following World War II are intertwined and, at times, inseparable. Indeed, the rise of American political conservatism during that time was accompanied by the ascendance of right-wing Christianity. Conservative Christians, like the neo-evangelical Billy Graham, had begun cultivating ties with conservative politicians in the early 1950s.¹¹⁷ Roughly twenty-five years later, in the late 1970s, the emergence of a unified, organized, and activist movement, what came to be known as the Religious Right, was, largely, the result of efforts on the part of conservative political activists/operatives, significantly Paul Weyrich (who helped popularize the term "moral majority"), Howard Phillips, Richard Viguerie, Ed McAteer, and Robert Billings. Indeed, sociologists Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles E. Swann have

¹¹⁶ Frank Meyer, "Freedom, Tradition, and Conservatism," in *What is Conservatism?*, ed. Frank Meyer (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, c1964), 8-9; also see Meyer, In *Defense of Freedom: A Conservative Credo*. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1962), particularly 1-7 for one of the first articulations of "fusionism."

¹¹⁷ Daniel K. Williams has persuasively argued that the Religious Right (or Christian Right as he prefers to call it), beginning in the mid-1950s and by way of the conservative wing of the GOP, successfully worked to take control of the political party. See Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); on Billy Graham's role in nurturing relations between conservative Christians and the GOP, see Williams, *God's Own Party*, 21-31; also see Steven P. Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South: Politics and Culture in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Note: A handful of others, particularly fundamentalists Carl McIntire and Billy James Hargis, operating more outside the traditional party structures, were also making forays into the political sphere.

suggested that the Religious Right “owes its genesis to the” conservative movement’s “master plan.” Thus, gaining a clear understanding of the Religious Right, and its immediate postwar antecedents, necessitates an appreciation of the history of modern conservatism, for the two groups helped to shape one another and, ultimately, their objectives became virtually indistinguishable, often being referred to collectively as the New Right.¹¹⁸

To translate their agenda into policy, the movement required a political vehicle. While prewar and postwar Republicans tended to be right-of-centre and Democrats left-of-centre in terms of economic policy, particularly concerning the government’s role in the economy, there was little else of real significance to distinguish the two platforms from one another. Liberals and conservatives could be found in both parties, significantly right-wing Southern Democrats, or “Dixiecrats” (who were historically anti-Republican going back to President Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War), and more progressive-minded East Coast Republicans. Still, while the GOP establishment was dominated by the liberal-moderate wing, the strongest conservative resistance, spearheaded by Senator Robert Taft and other remnants from the pre-Roosevelt era, was located in the party of Lincoln. In the late-1940s and 1950s they amounted to little more than lone voices, but beginning in earnest in 1960, the right-wing, in an effort to take control, initiated what amounted to a twenty-year civil war within the Republican Party. Marked by victories, significantly Barry Goldwater’s 1964 presidential nomination, Ronald Reagan’s 1966 gubernatorial victory in California, and Richard Nixon’s electoral wins in 1968 and 1972, the right wing eventually solidified control of the GOP during the Reagan administrations (1981-1989).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Jerome L. Himmelstein, “The New Right,” in *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation*, ed. Robert C. Liebman, Robert Wuthnow, and James L. Guth, (Hawthorne, N.Y.: Aldine Publishing Co., 1983), 26; Robert McG. Thomas Jr., “Robert J. Billings is Dead at 68: Helped Form the Moral Majority,” *New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/01/us/robert-j-billings-is-dead-at-68-helped-form-the-moral-majority.html>; Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles E. Swann, *Prime Time Preachers: The Rising Power of Televangelism* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1981), 142.

¹¹⁹ Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 7-9; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 37-38; Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time For Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 4; Note: Schoenwald’s take on this timeline differs slightly. While he sees Richard Nixon’s 1972

If the modern American conservative movement can be considered to have “arrived” during the Reagan years, most scholars suggest that its more immediate origins can be found in the Second World War and its aftermath, significantly the rise of the Soviet Union. Broadly speaking, George Nash, who authored the first comprehensive history of the conservative intellectual movement in the United States, contended that “the roots of postwar American conservatism” can be found in Europe and the reaction to “the revulsion” of “dictatorship and war.”¹²⁰ More specifically, the historian Jonathan Schoenwald, among others, has argued that “anticommunism sparked the birth of the postwar conservative movement.”¹²¹ Seeking deeper antecedents, professor David Farber traced the roots of the movement back to the outspoken Senator Robert Taft, and others of like mind, who had been committed to maintaining longstanding “institutions and traditions” as well as “individual economic liberty” since the mid-1930s and the emergence of Roosevelt’s New Deal liberalism. Farber persuasively argued that when the majority of Republicans opted for accommodation, “accepting the New Deal as a political necessity,” the undeterred Taft remained resolute in his opposition. In the face of what appeared to be an entrenched “massive government edifice of modern liberalism,” Taft and his allies, both inside and outside the political realm, refused to concede.¹²²

Yet, despite their valiant efforts, these individuals were disparate and unorganized, both ideologically and geographically. In the political sphere, those such as Taft and others of like mind represented “remnants of the older Republican and Jeffersonian Democratic tradition.” “Traditionalist humanists and individualist philosophers” along with “free enterprise and market system” economists could be found, if

presidential victory as the culmination of the internecine war within the GOP, this study, among others, suggests that the take-over of the party did not occur until the Reagan Era.

¹²⁰ George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books Inc., Publishers, 1976), 174-175, 178-181, also see 5-13.

¹²¹ Schoenwald, *A Time For Choosing*, 33, also see 35-61.

¹²² David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 12-13, 38; For more on Taft's role, see Farber, 9-38. Note: It is important to mention, here, that “most self-identified conservatives” of the time favoured capitalism but viewed economics in unilateral terms; opposing free trade in favour of a protectionist policy including high tariffs on imports. See Farber, 26-27; Note: Those Republicans who accepted Democratic policies, particularly “New-Deal style reforms and an internationalist policy” were labeled the “Eastern Establishment” (go-along to-get-along Republicans) by the conservative wing of the party. See Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 143-144n2.

only in small numbers, in the nation's universities and colleges. Of course, loosely organized, committed anti-communists were scattered across the United States. Those who resisted the "Roosevelt revolution" were, as Frank Meyer observed, a "diverse, often uni-dimensional" group lacking any unifying ideology to bind them together and, as such, "could at most put up a series of rearguard actions."¹²³ The conservative intellectual movement that arose in the post-war era sought to provide that cohesive ideology, though this proved no easy task.

When speaking of contemporary conservatism in the United States, it is important to appreciate that the term has taken on new meaning not attributed to its original intent. Of course, the same can be said of liberalism, which, from the early-mid twentieth century forward, has embraced a social reform element (akin to European democratic socialism), largely due to Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal, not found in nineteenth century classical liberalism.¹²⁴ Philosophically speaking, conservatism has its roots in the late eighteenth century and the writings of the British intellectual Edmund Burke. While he identified with aspects of classical liberalism, Burke "manifested certain ideas," significantly the central importance of tradition and prescription "as the predominant criterion in judging the propriety of social arrangements." Society, understood as organic in nature, took precedent over the individual and personal freedom. An opponent of the separation of church and state, Burke was quite clear that "religion is so far, in my opinion, from being out of the province of the duty of a Christian magistrate, that it is, and it ought to be, not only his care, but the principal thing in his care." Though his support for "the economics of a capitalist society" put him at odds with those who would shape the ideology, Burke provided the

¹²³ Frank Meyer, "Richard M. Weaver: An Appreciation," *Modern Age*, 14, no. 3-4 (Summer-Fall, 1970): 243.

¹²⁴ In using the term liberal, Roosevelt had "adapted an older language to new circumstances" "to explain his policies and his principles to the American people." Whereas nineteenth-century liberalism had served to challenge "the brutal inequalities and terrifying insecurities produced ... by concentrated political power," twentieth-century liberalism would serve to protect the people from the vagaries of "concentrated wealth." See Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 18-19; also see Franklin D. Roosevelt, acceptance speech, Democratic National Convention, Philadelphia, June 27, 1936, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/june-27-1936-democratic-national-convention> (accessed December 30, 2017). The 1936 Democratic Party platform states: "We shall continue to use the powers of government to end the activities of the malefactors of great wealth who defraud and exploit the people." See 1936 Democratic Party Platform, June 23, 1936, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/1936-democratic-party-platform>.

philosophical underpinnings making him the father of British, and later Continental, conservatism. More properly understood in the contemporary United States as traditionalism (also referred to as social conservatism), it places great importance on order, authority, hierarchy, and a Christian oriented society with a reverence for the past.¹²⁵

But traditionalism amounted to only one of two schools of thought that comprised modern conservatism in the United States. The second element, libertarianism, proved to be a more contemporary iteration of 17th-19th century liberalism, associated with John Locke, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill respectively, more commonly known as “classical” liberalism, so as to differentiate it from the more social-democratic liberalism of the twentieth century. In contrast to traditionalists, classical liberals, and their ideological offspring - libertarians - most highly value individual rights and political and economic freedom.¹²⁶ Whereas traditionalists place Christianity at the centre of their philosophy, the renowned economist Ludwig von Mises explained that classical “liberalism ... is no religion because it demands neither faith nor devotion, because there is nothing mystical about it, and because it has no dogmas. It is no world-view (sic) because it does not try to explain the cosmos and because it says nothing about the

¹²⁵ Russell Kirk, “Burke and the Philosophy of Prescription,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 14, no. 3 (June 1953): 365; Ronald Hamowy, “Liberalism and Neo-Conservatism: Is a Synthesis Possible?” *Modern Age*, 8, no. 4 (Fall 1964): 355; Russell Kirk, “Prescription, Authority, and Ordered Freedom,” in *What is Conservatism?*, ed. Frank Meyer (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, c1964), 27-28; also see Edmund Burke, *The Works of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke*, vol. vi, *On the Petition of the Unitarians* (London: Bohn, 1856), 115; Note: Russell Kirk suggests that “prescription, socially and politically speaking, means those ways and institutions and rights prescribed by long - sometimes immemorial - usage.” And “tradition (a word until the end of the eighteenth century applied almost exclusively to Christian beliefs not set down in Scripture) means received opinions, convictions religious and moral and political and aesthetic passed down from generation to generation, so that they are accepted by most men as a matter of course.” See Kirk, “Prescription, Authority, and Ordered Freedom,” 27; For a more thorough examination of “the nature of tradition and prescription,” see Kirk, *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice: essays of a social critic* (Chicago, H. Regnery Co., 1956); Note: Neither Burke nor any of his contemporaries ever considered themselves “conservative.” In fact, the term did not come into use, in a political sense, until the early 19th century, and then only to describe the aims of “political defenders of established institutions.” See James A. Reichley “The Conservative Roots of the Nixon, Ford, and Reagan Administrations,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 96, no. 4 (Winter, 1981-1982): 537, also see 538, 548-550 for the history of conservatism in the United States.

¹²⁶ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, 184; Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 46-47. Note: While the term libertarian is commonly referred to in this chapter, it should be noted that this word was not in use in the 1940s and 1950s. Those who would later identify as such considered themselves “classical liberals.” As Jonathan Schoenwald emphasizes: “There was no budding libertarian movement, no separate political entity, and people did not identify themselves as libertarians.” See Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism*, 271n48.

meaning and purpose of human existence. It is no party of special interests because it does not provide or seek to provide any special advantage whatsoever to any individual or group.”¹²⁷

Notwithstanding Burke’s view on economics, which was an aberration, it is difficult to reconcile his ideological outlook, particularly his position on church and state, with that of Mises and classical liberalism. Multi-disciplinary scholar and student of Friedrich Hayek, Ronald Hamowy, a libertarian, points out that, “the profound enmity between liberalism [read classical liberalism or libertarianism] and conservatism [read traditionalism] which permeated nineteenth century thought and politics resulted from basic philosophical differences, which ... have not disappeared with the passage of time.”¹²⁸ Nevertheless, it was these two seemingly contradictory political philosophies that intellectuals sought to bring together in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the absence of any common ideological bond, the two schools of thought initially found unity in their shared opposition to contemporary liberalism and, more urgently, communism.¹²⁹

Indeed, a number of scholars, including George Nash, have identified anti-communism (with a heavy evangelical bent) as a third strand of conservative ideology.¹³⁰ It is true that conservatives in the postwar period were strongly opposed to communism, but then so were most liberals (two notables being the “moderate social democrats” Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset).¹³¹ Donald T. Critchlow has recognized that “postwar conservatives turned the Communist issue against the liberals and the Democratic party (sic), *even as Democrats pursued and supported Cold War policies*.¹³² The real difference was in how they chose to respond to the threat. Liberals believed that the Soviet Union, and communism generally, would succumb to “the internal contradictions” inherent within its system. As

¹²⁷ Ludwig von Mises, *The Free and Prosperous Commonwealth*, (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962), 192, quoted in Hamowy, “Liberalism and Neo-Conservatism”: 357-358.

¹²⁸ Hamowy, “Liberalism and Neo-Conservatism”: 357.

¹²⁹ Nash, “The Conservative Mind in America,” *Intercollegiate Review* 30, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 28.

¹³⁰ See, for example, Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, xiii, 85-130.

¹³¹ Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 22; Paul Gottfried, preface to the first edition in *The Conservative Movement* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993, Revised Edition), xvi, 60.

¹³² Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 7 (emphasis added); also see Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 51-52.

such, they advocated a foreign policy based on preventing the spread of communism abroad, or, more simply, “containment.” Domestically, they condoned “rooting out communist spies,” but they condemned any infringement upon an individual’s civil liberties, particularly the “ferreting out” of those “who expressed sympathy with Marxist ideas or even the Soviet Union.” Those on the right, significantly Christian conservatives, did not share liberals’ confidence “in Americans’ ability to withstand the blandishments of communist propaganda.” In turn, they insisted upon “a more vigorous offensive, especially on the cultural front...”¹³³

It is also true that several former communists or left-wing sympathizers, including Whittaker Chambers, Frank Meyer, and James Burnham, contributed ardent, and influential, anti-communist views to the intellectual movement, helping to shape it in the process. And there is no denying the important role played by the committed, sometimes extreme, anti-communist grassroots’ movement, which expanded around the country, in providing some of the first sympathetic foot soldiers. Anti-communism, it is clear, had a profound effect on conservatism in the postwar decades. Still, a shared enmity toward communism was less a unique ideological school than a powerful, and convenient, bond uniting libertarians and traditionalists.¹³⁴ Religious conservatives, including Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, as well as ex-leftists like Chambers, Meyer, and Burnham, along with right-wing anti-communist activists, could all identify with the basic tenets of either traditionalism or classical liberalism, or both.¹³⁵ In short, they found common cause against an enemy that personified both secularism and a powerful centralized state, thus enabling conservatives, for the most part, to overlook the real differences that divided them.

Not only did the rise of the Soviet Union and international communism serve to unite the two groups, the threat it represented was largely responsible for stimulating a revival in both classical liberalism and

¹³³ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 52-53, 80; also see Schoenwald, 23-24.

¹³⁴ In any case, being opposed to something, in this instance communism, is hardly a sound intellectual, or political, ideology.

¹³⁵ Frank Meyer, for example, was a committed anti-communist but also identified with classical liberalism (or more specifically Old English Whiggism), even while he sought to unify libertarians and traditionalists through his theory of “fusion.”

traditionalism. Of the two schools of conservative thought, it was the former which first experienced the stirrings of a revival, lead by a handful of scholars and like-minded intellectuals (most of whom would later take the name libertarian). Arguably, the most influential of these was Friedrich Hayek, an Austrian emigre and professor of economics, who spent several years living in England and the United States. His writings, especially his influential 1944 book *The Road to Serfdom*, were pivotal to a resurgence in classical liberal thought and helped lay the foundation for the libertarian movement that arose in the decades following the end of the Second World War.¹³⁶ Indeed, his pioneering work was a product of that conflict; more specifically, Hayek's fervent opposition to the National Socialist ideology of Nazi Germany.¹³⁷ Written for a scholarly audience, *The Road to Serfdom* was intended to serve as a warning to Britain and the United States about the dangers of socialism, which the author viewed as "a necessary" predecessor to fascism and Nazism.¹³⁸

Addressing contemporary trends towards democratic socialism (which Hayek viewed as an "unachievable" "utopia"), particularly in terms of economics, *The Road to Serfdom* warned that central "planning leads to dictatorship because dictatorship is the most effective instrument of coercion and the enforcement of ideals, and, as such, essential if central planning on a large scale is to be possible."¹³⁹ As Hayek explained: "Economic control is not merely control of a sector of human life which can be separated from the rest; it is the control of the means for all our ends."¹⁴⁰ Still, the economist understood

¹³⁶ Brian Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism: A Freewheeling History of the Modern American Libertarian Movement* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 10, 98, 99, 108 (Despite his reputation as an economist, Hayek's two Doctorates were in law and political science. See 101). While Doherty acknowledges Hayek as "the most significant libertarian intellectual of modern times," he traces the origins of the movement back one year before the release of *The Road to Serfdom*, to the publication of Rose Wilder Lane's *The Discovery of Freedom*, Isabel Paterson's *The God of the Machine*, and Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*, all released in 1943. See 113, 113-147.

¹³⁷ See Friedrich A. Hayek, introduction to *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, c1944), 1-9.

¹³⁸ Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 3-4, 30-31.

¹³⁹ Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism*, 77; Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 70, 31.

¹⁴⁰ Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 92

that government had a role to play, though he suggested that “in all its actions” it should be “bound by rules fixed and announced beforehand.”¹⁴¹

Hayek even suggested that “certain kinds of government action” may be essential, particularly in “guiding” the economy, where and when needed, so as to help safeguard civil liberties and “create the conditions necessary to make competition effective.” Indeed, he lamented that “probably nothing has done so much harm to the liberal cause as the wooden insistence of some liberals on certain rough rules of thumb, above all the principle of laissez faire.” Moreover, contrary to most classical liberals and those who would later take the name libertarian, Hayek did not see “any reason why the state should not assist...individuals in providing for those common hazards of life against which, because of their uncertainty, few individuals can make adequate provisions.” In this light, Hayek supported the idea of “a comprehensive system of social insurance,” as well as regulations in such areas as the workplace (specifically in terms of working hours and a minimum wage) as well as public health.¹⁴² Even though many failed to appreciate his position vis a vis laissez faire capitalism and the role of government, *The Road to Serfdom* would become something of a handbook for many libertarians.

If Hayek was the most influential classical liberal writer, his mentor, Ludwig von Mises, may be considered “the fountainhead of modern libertarianism.”¹⁴³ Hayek and Mises shared much in common. Both believed that true socialism was a pipe dream. Mises argued, in his book *Socialism* (1922), that the ideology was “impossible” to achieve “in a dynamic industrial economy,” because it did not possess “the ability to rationally calculate.”¹⁴⁴ Both believed that the rise of totalitarianism in the twentieth century, and the upheaval that accompanied it, was due to the perversion of classical liberalism manifest

¹⁴¹ Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 36-39,72. Note: While Hayek was not above governmental intervention, where and when required, he saw this role as “utilitarian rather than moral.” See Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 49; Note: It was largely because of his position vis a vis governmental intervention that some more radical libertarian's did not identify with Hayek, so much as they did with Ayn Rand, who, ironically, “disdained” the term libertarian and those who took the name. See Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism*, 10, 11.

¹⁴² Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 36-37, 17, 120-121.

¹⁴³ Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism*, 9.

¹⁴⁴ Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism*, 76.

in socialist ideology. Mises argued: “Antiliberalism captured the popular mind disguised as true genuine liberalism. Today those styling themselves liberals are supporting programs entirely opposed to the tenets and doctrines of the old liberalism.”¹⁴⁵ The economist placed the blame at the feet of what he referred to as etatism (or statism), which can manifest in either “socialism” or “intervention,” both of which sought to “subordinate the individual unconditionally to the state, the social apparatus of compulsion and coercion.”¹⁴⁶ Nationalism, particularly in its economic form, was an inevitable outgrowth of etatism, and conflict an inevitable result of such nationalism.¹⁴⁷ As such, Mises was a harsh critic of the state, particularly the bureaucracy that rose up around it. Indeed, he devoted an entire book to the subject, in which he opened the preface with this statement: “The main issue is whether or not man should give away freedom, private initiative, and individual responsibility and surrender to the guardianship of a gigantic apparatus of compulsion and coercion, the socialist state.”¹⁴⁸

Like Hayek, Mises placed great value on “private ownership,” or “private property.” He argued that not only was it the heart of capitalism, “if history could teach us anything, it would be that private property is inextricably linked with civilization.”¹⁴⁹ Mises believed that “the attitude behind all varieties of socialism is ‘destructionism’ - a spirit of resentment and envy that tears down the productive social relations of free market capitalism”¹⁵⁰ While the economist shared his views in a number of books and articles, in 1949 he published *Human Action*, what amounted to a “thoroughgoing treatise on every aspect of economic science.”¹⁵¹ If Hayek was critical of laissez-faire economics and saw a role for the state, *Human Action* was a clear condemnation of government intervention, which Mises argued was self-perpetuating and led to absolute control by the state, and an unreserved defense of unregulated capitalism. Writer Henry Hazlitt suggested that the book “should become the leading text of everyone who believes

¹⁴⁵ Ludwig von Mises, introduction to *Omnipotent Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945 c1944), 4.

¹⁴⁶ Mises, *Omnipotent Government*, 44.

¹⁴⁷ Mises, *Omnipotent Government*, 82, also see 104-111.

¹⁴⁸ Ludwig von Mises, preface to *Bureaucracy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969, c1944), iii.

¹⁴⁹ Mises, *Omnipotent Government*, 48-49, 58, 284.

¹⁵⁰ Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism*, 76.

¹⁵¹ Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism*, 94.

in ... a free market economy.”¹⁵² There were others, to be sure, including Ayn Rand, but Ludwig von Mises and, even more so, his disciple Friedrich Hayek were pivotal in bringing about a revival in classical liberal thought. Schoenwald suggested that the post-war years saw many in the United States “searching for ways to halt what they perceived as increasingly dangerous trends: an overly strong central government, restricted individual rights, and a weakened presence abroad.”¹⁵³ Hayek and Mises provided succor for those Americans in their time of despair.

While the early foundations of a libertarian movement were beginning to crystallize, traditionalists were also rediscovering their roots and seeking to delineate their ideology. Here they were assisted by, or perhaps were a part of, what George Nash referred to as a “pervasive ... renewal of interest and belief in Christian orthodoxy.” This religious revival was evident on a “popular level,” and while some may have found its authenticity or intensity suspect, few, if any, “could doubt that religiosity, at least, had come back into favor.” Church membership, which had been on a general decline in the 1930s, began to rise, increasing from less than half the nation’s population in 1940 to sixty percent by the mid-fifties. One of the most visible signs of religion’s resurgence was the rapid rise to national prominence of Billy Graham. On the political front, President Eisenhower openly, and vocally, embraced and promoted the religious spirit, albeit an ecumenical one, endorsing efforts to inject religion into American society. Among other things, he began his inaugural address with a prayer, became a member and frequent attendee of the National Presbyterian Church, gave a nationally televised speech addressing “the need for religious faith,” and endorsed “the addition of ‘under God’ to the ‘Pledge of Allegiance’ and the printing of ‘In God We Trust’ on certain postage stamps.” Culturally, religious television programs and books were as popular as

¹⁵² On Human Action, see Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism*, 94-97, 98; Henry Hazlitt, “The Case for Capitalism,” *Newsweek*, September 19, 1949, 70, quoted in Doherty, *Radicals for Capitalism*, 94.

¹⁵³ Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing* 17.

their mainstream counterparts, and in the intellectual sphere, theologians such as Kierkegaard and Reinhold Niebuhr, and the writings of C.S. Lewis were all the rage.¹⁵⁴

To be sure, some conservatives embraced Christianity's resurgence "because it was useful"; however, the large majority were genuinely "convinced that it was *true*."¹⁵⁵ Traditional Christianity's "intellectual impact" was noticeably evident by the early 1950s, even outside of conservative circles. Mainstream magazines such as *Time* covered the "new phenomenon," as did leftist publications such as *Partisan Review*. In February 1950, their editors wrote that "one of the most significant tendencies of our times, especially in this decade, has been the new turn toward religion among intellectuals and the growing disfavor with which secular attitudes and perspectives are now regarded in not a few circles that lay claim to the leadership of culture." Harvard professor H. Stuart Hughes echoed this assessment when he asserted that "ten or fifteen years ago, no self-respecting 'enlightened' intellectual would have been caught dead with a religious interpretation of anything. Only the Catholics thought in these terms - plus a scattering of Protestants who we dismissed as harmless eccentrics."¹⁵⁶

An aversion to liberalism, combined with strident anti-communist sentiments and an emerging religious revival inspired a small and disparate group of traditional-minded intellectual conservatives in the postwar period, or what Albert Jay Nock had referred to as "the Remnants."¹⁵⁷ At the forefront of this

¹⁵⁴ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, 58-59; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 21-28; Billy Graham, *Just as I am: The autobiography of Billy Graham* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1977), 199-201; "Nation Needs 'Positive Acts' Of Faith, Eisenhower Says," *New York Times*, February 8, 1954, 1; "Text of President's Talk on Faith," *New York Times*, February 8, 1954, 11; "Belief in God Is Vital to Americanism, Eisenhower Asserts in Filmed Talk Here," *New York Times*, February 21, 1955, 24; "Eisenhower Hears Graham Preach," *New York Times*, March 7, 1955, 1; "President is Host: Has Billy Graham as Guest at Luncheon on Farm," *New York Times*, August 9, 1955, 9; also see dissertation, chapter #3.

¹⁵⁵ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, 59, original emphasis.

¹⁵⁶ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, 60-61; "Religion and the Intellectuals: Editorial Statement," *Partisan Review* 17 (February 1950): 103, and H. Stuart Hughes, "Our Social Salvation," *Saturday Review* 34 (March 3, 1951): 14, quoted in Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, 60.

¹⁵⁷ See Albert Jay Nock, "Isaiah's Job," in *Keeping the Tablets: Modern American Conservative Thought*, eds. William F. Buckley Jr. and Charles Kesler (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988, c1970), 431-441 (Albert Jay Nock (once a Jeffersonian, later a libertarian, bordering on anarchist), in reference to the biblical story of Isaiah, explained the Remnants as those select few "who have the force of intellect to apprehend the principles issuing in

early resurgence in traditionalist thought were individuals such as Russell Kirk, Robert Nesbit, Leo Strauss, Peter Viereck, William F. Buckley Jr., and Richard Weaver, a University of Chicago English professor, whose 1948 seminal book, *Ideas Have Consequences*, is widely considered “the *fons et origo* of the contemporary American conservative movement.” Indeed, Frank Meyer later suggested that Weaver had presciently anticipated “the attitudes and principles that characterize that movement” well over a decade before it had come together.¹⁵⁸

Ideas Have Consequences, in part a response to the “immense destructiveness” of World War II, “was intended as a challenge to forces that threaten the foundations of civilization.”¹⁵⁹ Weaver argued that the West was deteriorating, and he traced the origins of this decline to the late fourteenth century and the abandonment of “belief in the existence of [religious or philosophical] transcendentals” and “the defeat of logical realism,” from which “flowed those acts which issue now in modern decadence.” More specifically, he singled out William of Occam, a Franciscan friar, theologian, and philosopher who “propounded the fateful doctrine of nominalism which denies that universals have a real existence.” At the root, this was a challenge to the belief that “there is a source of truth higher than, and independent of, man.” The resultant loss of a confirmed faith in “what is real” shifted “the whole orientation of culture,” setting it on a path toward “modern empiricism.”¹⁶⁰

Nature, which had been understood “as imitating a transcendent model and as constituting an imperfect reality,” was now seen “as containing the principles of its own constitution and behavior.” By extension, the notion of “unintelligibility in the world,” as recognized by Aristotle, gave way to rational explanation, which in turn led to the abandonment of the doctrine of original sin, to be replaced by the idea of the “natural goodness of man.” The implications were a decline in religiosity in favour of

what we know as the humane life,” and “the force of character to adhere to those principles steadily and strictly as laws of conduct.” See 433).

¹⁵⁸ Frank Meyer, “Richard M. Weaver: An Appreciation,” *Modern Age*, 14, no. 3-4 (Summer-Fall, 1970): 243.

¹⁵⁹ Richard Weaver, foreword to *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965, c. 1948), v, vi; Note: Here Weaver refers to not just physical destruction, but also “the strain ... placed upon ethical principles, and to the tensions it left in place of the peace and order that were professedly sought.”

¹⁶⁰ Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, 2-3.

rationalism and materialism in the sciences.¹⁶¹ Not only did Weaver identify the source of society's perceived ills; as importantly, he recommended steps towards a solution "in the belief that man should not follow a scientific analysis with a plea of moral impotence."¹⁶²

In doing so, the professor suggested that "respect for the tradition of metaphysical truth does not contradict a politics based on individual liberty." For Weaver, these views were compatible. In no way did he see this as any conflation "of disparate European traditions," though some devout traditionalists and libertarians argued as much (and continue to do so). Instead, he insisted that it was "born out of the most fundamental American experience," which he heavily identified with Southern Agrarianism.¹⁶³ While Frank Meyer admitted that Weaver's theory drew "from both sides," he still argued that it circumvented "the nineteenth century conservative-liberal bifurcation," identifying a uniquely American political philosophy that combined both "tradition and liberty," and in doing so provided "the informing principle of the contemporary American conservative movement."¹⁶⁴

If Richard Weaver explained the breakdown of traditionalist thought and provided the foundational theory behind modern American conservatism, Peter Viereck, and his book *Conservatism Revisited* (1949), was one of the first attempts to define the traditionalist position within the conservative ideological spectrum, and in the process provided the movement with its name. Echoing, and often referencing, Edmund Burke, Viereck stressed "a humanist reverence for the dignity of the individual soul" and "the political secularization of the doctrine of original sin."¹⁶⁵ Christianity, he argued, was the necessary base element of conservatism which served to fuse "the four ancestries of western man: the stern moral commandments and social justice of Judaism; the love for beauty and for untrammelled

¹⁶¹ Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, 4-7.

¹⁶² Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences*, 1.

¹⁶³ Meyer, "Richard M. Weaver: An Appreciation," 243.

¹⁶⁴ Meyer, "Richard M. Weaver: An Appreciation," 243-244; also see Meyer, "Freedom, Tradition, and Conservatism," 18.

¹⁶⁵ Peter Viereck *Conservatism Revisited: The Revolt Against Revolt* (New York: Scribner, 1949), 6, 30.

intellectual speculation of the free Hellenic mind; the Roman Empire's universalism and its exaltation of law; and the Aristotelianism, Thomism, and anti-nominalism included in the Middle Ages."¹⁶⁶

Weaver and Viereck helped spur on others, and by the early 1950s further books on the subject made their way into the public. In 1953 Leo Strauss published *Natural Right and History* in which he sought to explain the ways in which the modernists had twisted the meaning of natural right so that it little resembled the philosophy set down by the ancient Greeks (Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato). The ancients understood the universe, and in turn natural right, through a teleological lens - "all natural things have a natural end, a natural destiny..." Strauss argued that the modernists, beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, adopted a mechanical (non-teleological), or modern scientific, approach best represented by Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacque Rousseau, respectively, and in the nineteenth century by the moral relativism of Max Weber, all but extinguishing the original intent of the ancients and then the idea of natural right altogether.¹⁶⁷ Offering a critical assessment of the "historical relativism and 'value-free' social science" of the modernists, Strauss endorsed "a return to the study of classical political thought." While there was nothing original in his philosophy, his ideas "provided a common intellectual framework for many conservatives."¹⁶⁸

Coinciding with these publications were other important books relevant to conservatism, including Whittaker Chambers' anti-communist polemic *Witness*, which warned Americans of "the epic struggle between the free world and communism," and Robert Nisbet's traditionalist-centred *The Quest for Community*.¹⁶⁹ The most significant, however, was Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, which George

¹⁶⁶ Viereck, *Conservatism Revisited*, 26-29, quote on 28.

¹⁶⁷ Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959, c1953), 120, 7-8, 34, 166-202, particularly 182 (on Hobbes), 252-295 (on Rousseau), 36-78, particularly, 42 (on Weber); William F. Buckley, Jr., *Keeping the Tablets: Modern American Conservative Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988, c.1970), 160-161.

¹⁶⁸ Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 18.

¹⁶⁹ See Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952); Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953); quote in Richard Viguerie, *The New Right: We're Ready to Lead* (Falls Church, VA.: The Viguerie Company, 1981), 47.

Nash argued was so influential “the conservative intellectual community would not exist” without it.¹⁷⁰ Kirk was something of a public intellectual, and the individual most responsible for bridging “the gap between prewar and postwar conservatism,” and “lay(ing) the foundation for the next generation of conservative intellectuals - and politicians.”¹⁷¹ A committed traditionalist, Kirk argued that while “conservatism is not a fixed and immutable body of dogma, and conservatives inherit from Burke a talent for re-expressing their convictions to fit the time,” he suggested “that the essence of social conservatism is preservation of the ancient moral traditions of humanity.”¹⁷²

More specifically, he identified “six canons of conservative thought,” the first being “that divine intent rules society as well as conscience” and that “political problems” are ultimately “religious and moral problems.” Indeed, “politics is the art of apprehending and applying the justice which is above nature.” The second principle identified an “affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of traditional life, as distinguished from the narrowing uniformity and equalitarianism, and utilitarian aims of most radical systems.” Third, was a “conviction that civilized society requires orders and classes. The only true equality is moral equality.” Fourth, was the idea “that property and freedom” are inextricably linked, “and that economic levelling (sic) is not economic progress.” Fifth, Kirk argued that man was inherently prone to “anarchic impulse” that could only be kept in check through faith in tradition and the exercise of “sound prejudice.” Finally, he cautioned “that change and reform are not identical,” and suggested that “Providence is the proper instrument for change, and the test of a statesman is his cognizance of the real tendency of Providential social forces.”¹⁷³

The Conservative Mind would go on to have a profound and enduring impact on modern American conservatism. It laid out an ideology “rooted in the ‘moral imagination’ of Edmund Burke and his defense of tradition, order, and ‘permanent things.’” In doing so Kirk “revealed ideological and political tensions

¹⁷⁰ Nash, “The Conservative Mind in America,” *Intercollegiate Review* 30, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 27.

¹⁷¹ Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 20.

¹⁷² Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Santayana*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 7.

¹⁷³ Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 7-8.

in the postwar intellectual Right.”¹⁷⁴ While this helped to “show conservatives that one could remain an intellectual while still acting and thinking constructively about politics,” it also laid bare, what was becoming all too evident by the early-mid 1950s, the basic philosophical differences that existed between traditionalists and libertarians.¹⁷⁵ There was little common ground in the ideas put forth in the writings of classical liberals like Hayek and Mises and traditional conservatives such as Strauss and Kirk, who disparagingly referred to “the individual” as “foolish.”¹⁷⁶ Indeed, of the six tenets that Kirk suggested comprised conservative thought, only the idea that property and freedom were inextricably linked spoke to those who identified with classical liberalism. There is no doubt that *The Conservative Mind* “sparked a wave of interest among intellectuals,” while its provocative nature heightened the ideological debate.¹⁷⁷

In the early 1950s, though, conservatives had few publications in which to disseminate their views.¹⁷⁸ There was the second iteration of the *Freeman*, originally founded by Albert Jay Nock in the 1920s, and the *American Mercury* (also founded in the 1920s, by “the radical libertarian” H.L. Mencken). But these publications were experiencing internal problems, primarily financial, and both on the decline in the mid-fifties. Also, of significance was *Human Events*, a Washington weekly, which began publication in 1944. However, these were not what one would call “conservative,” but rather primarily libertarian leaning journals. Looking to help fill the void, ex-Marxist turned anti-communist William S. Schlamm, after a failed attempt on his own, recruited a young William F. Buckley Jr., the well-heeled son of practicing Catholics and committed conservatives, to start up a new right-wing publication.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 19, 21.

¹⁷⁵ Quote in Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 20; for an exploration of these differences, see Hamowy, “Liberalism and Neo-Conservatism”: 357, 350-358.

¹⁷⁶ Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 448.

¹⁷⁷ Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 20-21.

¹⁷⁸ Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 23.

¹⁷⁹ Linda Bridges and John R. Coyne Jr., *Strictly Right: William F. Buckley Jr. and the American Conservative Movement* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007), 28-29; Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 60, 61; Viguerie, *The New Right*, 47; also see William F. Buckley, Jr., *Flying High: Remembering Barry Goldwater* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 27-29.

Founded in 1955, *National Review* was meant to be fresh and innovative, to communicate “a world view, rather than merely a political philosophy or the theoretical underpinnings of an economic system.”¹⁸⁰ As for Buckley, he was a committed Catholic who declared “the duel between Christianity and atheism” to be “the most important in the world.” Still, he identified more with libertarianism than with the traditionalism of Edmund Burke, also affirming his conviction “that the struggle between individualism and collectivism is the same struggle reproduced on another level.”¹⁸¹ Reflecting these beliefs, and his pragmatism, Buckley appreciated the need for conservatives across the spectrum to unite in opposition to liberalism and communism. As editor-in-chief and principal stockholder, Buckley envisioned a magazine in which conservatives of all stripes, and others of like-mind, with the exception of “racists, anti-Semites, and ‘kooks,’” were free, indeed encouraged, to share their views and “debate the issues.”¹⁸² In this spirit, *National Review* sought out traditionalists (significantly Richard Weaver and Russell Kirk), classical liberal leaning thinkers (notably John Chamberlain and the former left-winger, Frank Meyer), and anti-communists (including Frank Burnham) to serve on the Board and/or contribute articles.¹⁸³ William F. Buckley Jr. would go on to become one of the founding fathers of the modern American conservative movement, and *National Review* the most respected and influential conservative journal/magazine.

Buckley’s first significant foray into the conservative debate had come four years prior to the founding of his magazine, when he published *God and Man at Yale*, in 1951. It was, broadly speaking, an assault against liberalism and Keynesian economics. More directly, it was a scathing attack against members of the faculty and administration at his Ivy League Alma Mater, who he accused of attempting

¹⁸⁰ William Rusher to Rev. Richard Ginder, 28 May 1958, “Ginder, Rev. Richard (1958),” box 5, General Correspondence, Buckley papers, YUL, quoted in Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 12; Note: Lemuel Boulware, who would later go on to play a key role in Ronald Reagan’s conversion to conservatism while he was an executive with General Electric, was one of National Reviews “founding backers.” See Thomas E. Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of his Conversion to Conservatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 104-106.

¹⁸¹ William F. Buckley Jr., foreword to *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of “Academic Freedom”* (Chicago: Regnery, 1951), xvi-xvii.

¹⁸² Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 11, 12; Bridges and Coyne Jr., *Strictly Right*, 26-27, 33, 41.

¹⁸³ Bridges and Coyne Jr., *Strictly Right*, 42; also see Buckley Jr., *Flying High*, 30-32.

“to subvert religion and individualism” by promoting “atheism, and ... collectivism.”¹⁸⁴ Quickly making a name for himself within conservative circles, Buckley and his future brother-in-law, L. Brent Bozell, wrote *McCarthy and His Enemies: The Record and its Meaning*, in 1954, a defense of the anti-communist crusader Senator Joseph McCarthy, and a condemnation of those who opposed him and his methods.¹⁸⁵ McCarthy’s campaign to root out communists and left-wing sympathizers had, by the close of 1954, turned into a witch-hunt which was rapidly losing credibility. His actions, labeled McCarthyism, “had alienated the majority of his colleagues in the Senate,” so much so that every Democratic senator and half of those from the GOP voted to censure him. McCarthy’s “colleagues,” Buckley lamented, “might as well have voted to vaporize him.”¹⁸⁶ Buckley, Bozell and other new conservatives never wavered in their support of McCarthy. They, like the senator, saw communism as a danger to Western civilization and all that it stood for - “freedom, liberty, and Christianity.”¹⁸⁷ With this view, Buckley strongly supported aggressive government action in efforts to combat the Soviet threat both abroad and at home.

The editor of *National Review* broadly embraced the lesson imparted by Russell Kirk; that the intellectual and political spheres need not be exclusive. As he later wrote: “Conservatives must concern themselves not only with ideals, but with matters of public policy, and I mean by that something more than the commonplace that one must maneuver within the limits of conceivable action.”¹⁸⁸ The young intellectual understood the movement’s political implications, and so was not satisfied with confining *National Review* to a purely intellectual discourse. But before they could build a movement and create, what David Farber described as, “a conservative counterpublic,” “by linking intellectually oriented,

¹⁸⁴ William F. Buckley, Jr., foreword to *God and Man at Yale: The Superstitions of “Academic Freedom”* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951), xiii, xvii; Note: Indeed, two of *God and Man at Yale’s* four chapters are titled “Religion at Yale” and “Individualism at Yale.”

¹⁸⁵ See William F. Buckley Jr. and L. Brent Bozell, *McCarthy and His Enemies: The Record and its Meaning* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1954).

¹⁸⁶ Buckley, Jr., *Flying High*, 10, 22-23. Note: The sentiment that emerged in opposition to McCarthy's anti-communist campaign was labeled “anti-McCarthyism.”

¹⁸⁷ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 82, 56-59; Buckley, Jr., *Flying High*, 23.

¹⁸⁸ William F. Buckley, Jr., “Notes Towards and Empirical Definition of Conservatism,” in *What is Conservatism?*, ed. Meyer, 216-217.

devout religious Americans to the conservative political cause,” they needed to determine just what conservatism was.¹⁸⁹ They would spend the next decade doing so.

The thinkers and writers who devoted their efforts to shaping the conservative movement in the post-World War II era were of no single mind. Nor were all of them certain that a new conservatism could even be constructed, let alone defined. Buckley, the most recognizable conservative intellectual, confessed to having difficulty providing any kind of succinct definition of the ideology, suggesting that “I feel I know, if not what conservatism is, at least who a conservative is.”¹⁹⁰ Often championed as a libertarian, Friedrich Hayek is considered seminal in shaping the conservative movement in the United States. Yet, the economist did not feel satisfied with the term “libertarian.” Nor was he particularly comfortable identifying as a classical liberal, as he took issue with the ideology’s blind faith in unfettered laissez-faire economics. Moreover, he never considered himself a conservative, even penning an essay entitled “Why I am Not a Conservative.” In fact, Hayek, who saw himself as something of an Old (English) Whig, suggested that “I doubt whether there can be such a thing as a conservative philosophy. Conservatism may often be a useful practical maxim, but it does not give us any guiding principles which can influence long-range developments.”¹⁹¹

In an attempt to define modern conservatism and unite libertarians and traditionalists on a long-term basis, Frank Meyer introduced a theory in 1960, disdainfully dubbed “fusionism” by Brent Bozell. The name stuck, even though Meyer disliked it intensely.¹⁹² Fusionism was the result of a long collaboration

¹⁸⁹ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 5.

¹⁹⁰ Buckley, Jr., “Notes Towards an Empirical Definition of Conservatism,” 211-212; Note: Carl T. Bogus has suggested that “Buckley was more clever than thoughtful.” Indeed, an attempt to articulate “the basic principles of his philosophy,” revealed to Buckley “that many of the ideas he expressed ... were inconsistent.” See Bogus, *Buckley: William F. Buckley and the Rise of Conservatism* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), 4-5.

¹⁹¹ Hayek, “Why I am Not a Conservative,” in *What Is Conservatism?*, ed. Frank Meyer (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 88-103, particularly 99-100, quote on 103; Friedrich A. Hayek, *On The Road to Serfdom*, 1-9, 30-31; also see Allan Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism,” *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 2 (April 1994): 416; Note: The journalist David Brookes has succinctly summed up the Whig philosophy as such: “Whigs seek to use limited but energetic government to enhance social mobility.” See David Brooks, “The Whig Renaissance is Underway,” *New York Times International Weekly*, May 19, 2018, 15.

¹⁹² Frank Meyer, “Freedom, Tradition, Conservatism” *Modern Age* 4, no. 4 (Fall 1960): 355-363; *What is Conservatism?* ed. Meyer, 7-20; On Meyer’s “objection” to the term “fusion,” see Meyer “Why Freedom,” 223.

with William F. Buckley Jr. during the 1950s, while Meyer was a writer at *National Review*. His theory, inspired by Richard Weaver, suggested that individual freedom (prized by libertarians) and human virtue (the core tenet of traditionalism) were inextricably linked:

I ask the indulgence of my readers in accepting the word ‘conservative’ as an overall term to include the two streams of thought that in practice unite to oppose the reigning ideology of collectivist liberalism. I believe that those two streams of thought, although they are sometimes presented as mutually incompatible, can in reality be united within a single broad conservative political theory, since they have their roots in common tradition and are arrayed against a common enemy. Their opposition, which takes many forms, is essentially a division between those who abstract from the corpus of western belief its stress upon freedom and upon the innate importance of the individual person (what we may call the ‘libertarian’ position) and those who, drawing upon the same source, stress value and virtue and order (what we may call the ‘traditionalist’ position).¹⁹³

Meyer further articulated his theory in his book *In Defense of Freedom: A Conservative Credo* (1962).¹⁹⁴ In point of fact, while Meyer extolled the links between freedom and virtue, he was, ultimately, highly critical of traditionalists, suggesting that “by their insistence on the use of political power for the inculcation of virtue, by their refusal to take a principled position in defense of a state limited to establishing the conditions of freedom, they disqualify themselves as effective opponents of liberal collectivism.”¹⁹⁵ Traditional conservatives responded with charges of their own. Russell Kirk, for example, attacked Meyer for being “ignorant of the diverse meanings of the terms ‘state’ and

¹⁹³ Meyer, “Freedom, Tradition, and Conservatism,” in *What is Conservatism?*, ed. Meyer, 8.

¹⁹⁴ See Meyer, *In Defense of Freedom: A Conservative Credo* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1962); Note: The basic principles of fusionism were expressed around the same time by conservative writer Brent Bozell, William F. Buckley's close friend and later brother-in-law, in *The Conscience of a Conservative* (1960), a book he ghostwrote for Barry Goldwater. See below.

¹⁹⁵ Meyer, *In Defense of Freedom: A Conservative Credo*, 137, for further criticisms of traditionalism, see, for example, 40-48 (on principle and tradition), 129-132 (on community), 132-137 (on the state).

‘government’ - particularly as they vary, in popular ‘society,’” and with being “filled with detestation of all champions of authority.”¹⁹⁶

Libertarians, too, took issue with Meyer’s theory. The Canadian scholar, Ronald Hamowy, echoing his mentor, Friedrich Hayek, argued that traditionalist thought held a “distrust of reason” and the capitalist economic system. They were hostile towards freedom, evident in their willingness to employ “the State apparatus” in seeking to impose on society “a particular set of religious mores.” Indeed, Hamowy concluded, libertarianism and traditionalism “are irreconcilably at odds, and that, far from being closely related political philosophies, they could more reasonably be classified as polar opposites.”¹⁹⁷ In truth, Meyer did not really address the fundamental differences between the two schools, so clearly laid out in Hamowy’s essay, but most conservatives could at least agree with his theory in principle. Despite some initial opposition, fusionism became widely accepted and the basis for the modern American conservative political movement.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, some critics never really embraced it, and still others remained outright hostile to fusionism. The antipathy between Meyer and Kirk, both board members at *National Review*, dissipated, but never disappeared.¹⁹⁹ If irreconcilable differences remained, they were, for most, largely suppressed by their shared anti-communism, which continued to be the strongest unifying bond between the two groups.

Fusionism provided a working theory, but large obstacles remained before right-wingers were able to challenge moderate Republicans for control of the party. Not only were conservatives widely viewed as

¹⁹⁶ Russell Kirk, “An Ideologue of Liberty,” review of *In Defense of Freedom: A Conservative Credo*, by Frank Meyer, *Sewanee Review* 72 (Spring 1964): 349. For more on the criticism leveled by traditionalists at Meyer’s theory, see George W. Carey, “Conservatives and Libertarians View Fusionism: Its Origins, Possibilities and Problems,” *Modern Age* 26, no. 1 (Winter 1982): 8-18

¹⁹⁷ Hamowy, “Liberalism and Neo-Conservatism, 354, 353, 352, 350; for more on the criticism leveled by classical liberals at Meyer’s theory, see George W. Carey, “Conservatives and Libertarians View Fusionism,” 8-18.

¹⁹⁸ Nearly forty years later, Reagan, while addressing the Knights of Columbus, echoed Meyer’s theory when he stated that “there can be no freedom without order, and there is no order without virtue.” See Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Centennial Meeting of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus in Hartford, Connecticut (August 3, 1982),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1982*, volume 2, July 3 to December 31 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 1010.

¹⁹⁹ For a brief discussion of the internecine war that unfolded at *National Review*, primarily between Kirk and Meyer, see Bogus, *Buckley*, 14-17.s

extremists and wild-eyed fanatics, they had trouble articulating a positive program of reform, had few grassroots organizations, still argued among themselves, and lacked the funding to make the movement a serious political force. Just the same, conservatives had reached a turning point. Around the same time that traditionalist and libertarian intellectuals were transforming into “modern conservatives,” the movement they helped build was manifesting in political action.

The 1950s had seen much progress on the intellectual front, but little elsewhere. Politically speaking, it is true that the Republican Party had regained the White House with the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952, after twenty years of Democratic control. Conservatives, including the Arizona Republican candidate for the United States Senate, Barry Goldwater, had, generally, backed Robert Taft in the 1952 GOP primaries, but most, including Goldwater, threw their support behind the popular former general after his victory and during his first term in office.²⁰⁰ Eisenhower, who often referred to himself as a conservative, proved to be a moderate, as most suspected, and not only did little to retard New Deal policies, his administration created new departments of health and education, and expanded some social-welfare programs, particularly Social Security and housing. Eisenhower’s foreign policy, particularly vis a vis the Soviet Union, was no better in the eyes of his critics. Those on the right saw the accommodation of “expanded trade,” “cultural exchanges,” the presence of Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev in the United States, in 1959, at the invitation of the president, and a voluntary prohibition on “atmospheric nuclear testing,” as clear indications of a willingness, or resignation, on the part of the Eisenhower administration to accept a “peaceful coexistence” with their Cold War enemy. By the time of his run for re-election in 1956, most steadfast conservatives had confirmed that Ike was another “go-along to-get-along” Republican. Before his second term was through, their opposition became more frequent and more vocal.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 66. Note: Goldwater, the beneficiary of a Republican, or more specifically an Eisenhower, wave, won his first term to the Senate in 1952.

²⁰¹ Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 39-40; Buckley Jr., *Flying High*, 9, 11-13, 47-52; also see Brennan, *Turning Right*, 21-23.

A harsh critic of labour union leaders (if not unions themselves) and a staunch advocate of state ‘right to work’ laws with a “Taftian faith in economic liberty,” Barry Goldwater was one of the most outspoken critics of the Republican establishment by the late 1950s. Yet, as a junior senator from Arizona, he had garnered little national attention. Still, Clarence Manion, a conservative political operative, saw, in Goldwater, a politician from the West whose message could reach conservatives across the country, particularly in the Democrat-dominated South. If only he could get that message out.²⁰² Manion quickly devised a plan, which manifested in Barry Goldwater’s *The Conscience of a Conservative*, published in April 1960, just in time for the upcoming election. It was, in fact, ghostwritten by Brent Bozell, and reflected the fusion theory recently unveiled by Meyer, but it encapsulated the senator’s views on the principles of conservatism - “the ancient and tested truths that guided our Republic through its early days.”²⁰³

Goldwater - via Bozell - admittedly, offered nothing new in terms of philosophy, but he presented modern conservative ideology in plain and simple terms. He also prescribed steps toward policy reform, perhaps best summed up here: “I have little interest in streamlining the government or making it more efficient for I mean to reduce its size. I do not undertake to promote welfare for I propose to extend freedom. My main aim is not to pass laws, but to repeal them. It is not to inaugurate new programs, but to cancel old ones that do violence to the Constitution, or that have failed in their purpose, or that impose on the people an unwarranted financial burden.”²⁰⁴ *The Conscience of a Conservative* advanced the Right’s cause in several ways. The manifesto made clear the conservative position on economic liberty and limited government, including regulation, taxes and spending, labour and unions, the welfare state,

²⁰² Horwitz, *America's Right*, 46-47; Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 66; Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 78, 86-89; Buckley Jr., *Flying High*, 59-63; also see Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 48-49.

²⁰³ Buckley, Jr., *Flying High*, 23-24; quote in Barry Goldwater, preface to *The Conscience of a Conservative* (Shepherdsville, Kentucky: Victor Publishing Inc., 1960), 1.

²⁰⁴ Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, 23; Given that the civil rights issue was at the centre of the contemporary political discourse, Southern conservatives took Goldwater’s comment, “My main aim is not to pass laws, but to repeal them,” as an indication of his opposition to civil rights reforms. This position was later confirmed when the Arizona senator voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

education, civil rights, and the threat of Soviet communism.²⁰⁵ Suggesting that New Deal liberalism marked the first step on the road to totalitarianism, Goldwater argued that government should be removed from most areas of American life.²⁰⁶

Yet, while Goldwater was much more a libertarian than traditional conservative, the book also made an appeal to those on the right who longed to recapture lost certitudes.²⁰⁷ “Conservatism,” notes *The Conscience of a Conservative*, “is not an economic theory.” Rather, it “puts material things in their proper place” and sees man as “a spiritual creature with spiritual needs and spiritual desires.”²⁰⁸ Arguing that the state had a duty to maintain order and promote virtue, the book stressed a reverence for tradition, including a respect for Southern segregation, and an insistence on “public order,” with direct references to “the disruptive protests of the civil rights movement.”²⁰⁹ *The Conscience of a Conservative* was an unqualified success, both in terms of sales and influence. It offered respectability to political conservatism and united disparate conservative factions by focusing their attention on the dangers of liberalism and Soviet communism. As importantly, the book helped “bridge the gap between theory and practice” by providing a blueprint for transforming the intellectual movement into political action.²¹⁰

Barry Goldwater, dubbed “the cowboy conservative,” was transformed from a little-known Arizona senator to the modern conservative movement’s standard-bearer. More importantly for the future of modern conservatism, *The Conscience of a Conservative* sparked a conservative grassroots movement,

²⁰⁵ See Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, for example, 16-17 (on limited government), 30 (on states' rights), 36-37 (on civil rights), 49 (on labour and unions), 59, 60-61, 63-67 (on taxes and spending), 70-73 (on the welfare state), 77-78 (on education), 89-91 (on communist threat).

²⁰⁶ Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, 15-16, 22-23.

²⁰⁷ David Farber noted that “Goldwater had linked his uncompromising, Taftian championing of economic liberty with spirited calls on the need for self-discipline and religious faith” early on in his political career. See Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 85.

²⁰⁸ Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, 10-11.

²⁰⁹ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 92; Note: Goldwater suggested that he supported integration in theory but believed that it must come about as a result of natural social forces, not government-mandated policy. See Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, 31-37. Still, it seems clear that Goldwater’s comments were another appeal to Southern white conservatives and further indication of his opposition to civil rights legislation.

²¹⁰ Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 62-63; quote in Goldwater, preface to *The Conscience of a Conservative*, 3.

fueled by political operatives, in support of a Goldwater run for the presidency.²¹¹ The Establishment Republicans, represented by Nelson D. Rockefeller, misunderstood the new conservatism and were overconfident in their abilities to contain this element within the party. They were unaware and ill-prepared when the GOP, beginning in the 1960s, faced a take-over. *The Conscience of a Conservative* was distributed widely, and political activists were mobilized, a first for conservatives, chiefly by targeting state party conventions. The hope was to build a groundswell that would carry the right-wing Goldwater to the presidential nomination in 1964. The moderates controlled the GOP, so the senator had to build his support from the bottom-up.²¹²

Existing organizations, such as the radical right John Birch Society (JBS), founded by Robert Welch and a handful of other conservative businessmen in 1958, were joined by new ones such as the campus-based Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), with whom Buckley was closely related and from which a number of key conservative figures, including Paul Weyrich, Richard Viguerie and Howard Phillips, would come.²¹³ Founded by college-age students, YAF was intended to combat the centrist “modern Republicanism” that Dwight Eisenhower, Nelson Rockefeller, and even Richard Nixon had imposed on the GOP, which they found insipid and uninspiring. More specifically, its aim was “to place conservatives in control of the Republican Party, and to inject conservative politics into the mainstream of American political life.”²¹⁴ These and other groups fielded thousands of volunteers, predominantly in the West and

²¹¹ Note: Urged on by the various Goldwater for President Committees that sprang up, and supported by a growing grassroots movement, Barry Goldwater accepted the 1960 nomination, but then withdrew, putting his support behind Richard Nixon. See Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 32-33, 36-37.

²¹² Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 38, 20; Note: Nelson Rockefeller, a liberal-moderate Republican, was a dominant figure in American politics during the mid-late twentieth century. He served in the Democratic administrations of Roosevelt and Truman as well as the Republican Eisenhower before going on to serve over a decade as the Governor of New York and then as vice-president under Gerald Ford.

²¹³ On the John Birch Society, see D. J. Mulloy, *The World of the John Birch Society: Conspiracy, Conservatism and the Cold War* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014); on Young Americans for Freedom, see John A. Andrew III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997). Note: W.F. Buckley Jr. played a key role in the formation of YAF. It was at a September 1960 gathering at his estate in Sharon, Connecticut that the organization was formed by young Goldwater supporters, aided by Buckley and a handful of older more established conservatives. See Buckley, Jr., *Flying High*, 20-26.

²¹⁴ John A. Andrew III, *The Other Side of the Sixties*, 7-8, 6.

throughout the South (in a region referred to as the Sun belt).²¹⁵ Conservatives started new think tanks, consulting firms, and foundations, including Americans for Constitutional Action (ACA), the American Enterprise Institute, and the Hoover Institution. Lobbyists worked the halls of power, from Washington to the nation's state capitals. On the academic front, the number of conservative scholars grew in American universities and colleges. Such interests had traditionally been dominated by liberals, but as the 1960s progressed, a conservative infrastructure necessary for a viable political movement emerged and instantly found traction.²¹⁶

The 1960 election saw a continued strengthening of right-wing Christian support for the federal Republican Party, though some, perhaps much, of this was, at least initially, due to issues surrounding the candidates' religion. Much as evangelicals and fundamentalists had rallied against Catholic Democratic presidential candidate Al Smith in 1928, those same groups threw their support behind (then Vice-President) Richard Nixon in his campaign against John F. Kennedy. Reverend Billy Graham assured the vice-president of his support, working tirelessly behind the scenes so as to avoid accusations of political partisanship, and then abandoning that facade with a public endorsement in the final week of the campaign. Steven Miller has pointed out that "Graham spent the better part of two decades assisting Nixon's political ambitions primarily because he supported Nixon's values and style of leadership." With the intention of promoting Nixon's affiliation with the Protestant religion in contrast to Kennedy's Catholicism, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) founded Citizens for Religious Freedom and recruited evangelical leaders who opposed Kennedy. Those preachers in turn reached out to other church leaders, particularly in the South. Despite winning the Protestant vote by 66 percent nationally, and 53 percent in the "traditionally Democratic 'solid South,'" Nixon lost the election by the slimmest of margins. Protestants, after apportioning blame, steeled themselves for a decline in their only recently

²¹⁵ For a succinct exploration of the social and political makeup of the "sunbelt," a term coined by the conservative activist/strategist Kevin Phillips, see Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969), particularly 436-438; and Kevin Phillips, *Post-Conservative America*, New York, Random House, 1982, Ch. 7.

²¹⁶ Horwitz, *America's Right*, 51-52.

gained influence within the federal government and began to work on a long-term political strategy to regain it.²¹⁷

In many ways the 1960 election also played a crucial role in turning fundamentalists and right-wing evangelicals into “conservatives,” partly as a result of their anti-communism.²¹⁸ As early as the 1940s, with the founding of the fundamentalist American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) by the radical anti-communist crusader Carl McIntire in 1941 (see chapter #3), right-wing Christians had begun to organize in opposition to liberalism and the rise of communism. In the 1950s, the ACCC was joined by organizations such as Reverend Billy James Hargis’ Christian Crusade (originally founded in 1947 and called Christian Echoes Ministry) and Dr. Fred Schwartz’s Christian Anti-Communism Crusade. Hargis and McIntire, who was convinced that there were communists in key positions within the federal government and the more mainline World Council and National Council of Churches, opposed Kennedy and his “liberal” agenda and worked tirelessly to prevent his election.²¹⁹

While Buckley and the new conservatives feared for civilization at the hands of the Red menace, right-wing fundamentalists, such as Billy James Hargis and Robert Welch, took their warnings to the extreme, preaching a premillennial doctrine and making the connection between the rise of the Soviet Union (and communism) and apocalyptic end times.²²⁰ Those who held this biblically-based view of anticommunism generally referred to it as “Christian Americanism,” being uncomfortable identifying themselves in terms that were politically partisan. Daniel K. Williams suggests that this changed in the early 1960s in the wake of a campaign, led by Hargis, to influence congressional elections. Hargis did not support Republicans or Democrats, but rather conservative candidates, suggesting that this usually meant

²¹⁷ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 53-56; on Billy Graham’s relationship with Richard Nixon and the Nixon administrations, see Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South*, 74-84, 124-154, quote on 125.

²¹⁸ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 59.

²¹⁹ Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 66; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 33-34; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 38-39, 40-42, 60-61, 65, 74, 83; William Martin, *With God On Our Side*, 35-39, 76; Note: In truth, Kennedy’s “liberalism” was more of an impression held by those on the right than a reality. Despite his rhetoric, most of Kennedy’s policies were relatively moderate, even conservative, causing friction with the liberal wing of the party. In part to appease liberals, he “move(ed) cautiously to the left.” See Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 44-48.

²²⁰ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 82; also see dissertation, chapter #3.

supporting the former party in the North and the latter in the South. Vocally identifying his own agenda as “conservative,” Hargis maintained, and helped convince others, that the political ideology was consistent with biblical scripture. As “fundamentalists became ‘conservatives’ in opposition to the Kennedy administration,” Williams argues, “they took a step toward ending their political isolation and becoming part of a rising national movement.”²²¹

The early 1960s would also see two Supreme Court decisions that foreshadowed the emergence of the culture wars later in the decade, and which provided common cause for political and religious conservatives. In 1951, the New York Board of Regents recommended a state-composed non-denominational prayer with which to begin the school day. The prayer read as follows: “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our country.” A little over a decade later, in 1962, a group of five parents challenged the practice, arguing that it amounted to government action in opposition to the First Amendment and the “‘establishment of religion’ or interference with its ‘free exercise.’”²²² After the state’s Court of Appeals voted to uphold the practice, the case made its way to the Supreme Court, where it became known as *Engel v. Vitale*. In June 1962, by a vote of 6 to 1, the Justices decided in favour of the plaintiffs, ruling that the recitation of a state-composed prayer in public schools was unconstitutional.²²³

Reaction from both politicians and religious figures was strong and immediate, especially from Southerners “where some form of religious observance in the schools is customary.”²²⁴ Democrats and Republicans in the Senate and the House lay regular business aside to stand and denounce the decision and “the motives of the justices,” which some described as “pro-Communist, atheistic, conspiratorial.”²²⁵

²²¹ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 58-59.

²²² Anthony Lewis, “Prayer in School Put to the High Court: Suit by Five L.I. Parents to ...,” *New York Times*, Apr 4, 1962, 45, 86.

²²³ “Text of Opinion in Supreme Court Case Holding School Prayer,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1962, 16; Roy R. Silver, “5 L.I. Parents Who Started Suit Hail Decision,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1962, 17; Anthony E. Lewis, “Supreme Court Outlaws Official School Prayers in Regents Case...,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1962, 1, 16.

²²⁴ “Church and State: The Court Rules,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1962, 105.

²²⁵ Anthony Lewis, “Court Again Under Fire,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1962, 114.

Calling into question “the justices’ honesty and patriotism,” Mississippi Congressman John Bell, a Democrat, suggested there existed ““a deliberate and carefully planned conspiracy to substitute materialism for spiritual values.””²²⁶ Minnesota Senator Eugene J. McCarthy, also a Democrat, said the decision revealed “a trend of decisions looking to ‘not just a secularized Government but a secularized society.’”²²⁷ George Andrews, Democrat Congressman from Alabama, crassly remarked that ““they put the Negroes in the schools and now they’ve driven God out.””²²⁸ Barry Goldwater, for his part, argued that the Supreme Court’s decision went “against God”²²⁹

Within days of the *Engel* decision, both Houses of Congress introduced bills to amend the Constitution to protect prayer in school, as well as Bible reading, which was itself being challenged in the courts at that time.²³⁰ Both of these practices were generally widespread throughout the country, though they were more prevalent in the South and East. The general counsel for the American Jewish Congress, Leo Pfeffer, pointed out “that across the country about 30 percent of all schools practiced a ‘morning devotional,’ usually in the form of the Lord’s Prayer,” and “between 40 and 50 per cent of all schools practiced Bible reading.”²³¹ In terms of the nation’s churches, Catholics demonstrated the greatest opposition to the ruling. Boston’s Cardinal Cushing suggested that ““the communists will use”” the ruling ““as propaganda means,”” while Cardinal Spellman of New York lamented that ““the decision strikes at the very heart of the Godly tradition in which America’s children have so long been raised.””²³² Conversely, the Jewish community, largely, supported the decision, with the New York Board of Rabbis releasing a statement echoing the Justices, calling “the recitation of prayers in the public schools ...

²²⁶ Anthony Lewis, “Both Houses Get Bills to Lift Ban on School Prayer,” *New York Times*, June 27, 1962, 1, 20.

²²⁷ President Urges Court Be Backed on Prayer Issue,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1962, 1.

²²⁸ “Church and State: The Court Rules,” 105.

²²⁹ “Goldwater Hits Court Decision,” *The Washington Post*, July 1, 1962, A4.

²³⁰ Anthony Lewis, “Both Houses Get Bills to Lift Ban on School Prayer,” 1, 20.

²³¹ Fred Hechinger, “Challenges Are Predicted - 30% of All Schools Use Some Rite,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1962, 17.

²³² Anthony Lewis, “Both Houses Get Bills to Lift Ban on School Prayer,” 1, 20; “Opinion of the Week: Prayers in School,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1962, 113.

tantamount to the teaching of prayer,” and “not in conformity with the spirit of the American concept of the separation of church and state.”²³³

Protestant Christians were a little more mixed in their reactions. Most mainline churches came out in favour of the ruling as a clear confirmation of the separation of church and state.²³⁴ Leaders of the National Council of the Churches (NCC) released a joint statement stressing that “the Supreme Court bears the responsibility for interpreting the laws of our country.” Nevertheless, they cautioned that “this does not relieve the churches, the schools and individual citizens from the imperative need for finding, within the letter and spirit of the laws of the land, ways to recognize the importance of religion to a healthful culture and to emphasize the strong religious convictions which have been the foundation of our nation.”²³⁵

Evangelicals and fundamentalists had mixed feelings about the *Engel* decision. Recited prayer, particularly one written and prescribed “by state-appointed ecumenical coalitions of Jews, Catholics, and liberal Protestants,” did not appeal in the least to evangelicals and fundamentalists who valued unscripted, unprompted prayer. The decision, however, had broader consequences which did affect Protestant conservatives; one of which caused many evangelicals to support the ruling. In the interests of containing what they feared to be rising Catholic influence, in the wake of the election of John F. Kennedy, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), along with the Southern Baptists, were, at the time, engaged in efforts to prevent the Catholic Church from obtaining federal funding for parochial schools. The *Engel* decision “gave them a legal precedent for opposing government aid for religious education.”²³⁶ Indeed, this approach was not new. During the mid-late 1800s, as Catholic immigration increased, Protestants had

²³³ “Opinion of the Week: Prayers in School,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1962, 113.

²³⁴ George Dugan, “Protestant Preachers in City Assay Court Decision Barring Prayer in Public Schools,” *New York Times*, July 2, 1962, 13.

²³⁵ Anthony Lewis, “Both Houses Get Bills to Lift Ban on School Prayer,” 1, 20.

²³⁶ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 63.

been strong supporters of the separation of church and state for similar reason - to prevent the public funding of Catholic schools.²³⁷

On the other hand, while evangelicals and fundamentalists interpreted the Engel decision as addressing state-prescribed prayer specifically, they also understood the potential for broader implications. Billy Graham argued that ““this is another step toward the secularization of the United States””²³⁸ The NAE initially came out in favour of the ruling, but within a month or so “warned that ‘the decision opened a Pandora’s box of secularist influences which would be turned loose on every reference to God and religion in public life.’”²³⁹ Reverend Billy James Hargis, a fundamentalist, lamented that the nation “had turned its back on God.”²⁴⁰ Baptists were split on the issue, reflected in two opposing editorials in the *Baptist Bible Tribune*. The Baptist’s position reflected that of evangelicals and fundamentalists generally - neither group could decide “whether Catholicism or secularism posed a greater threat to Protestant influence in public life.”²⁴¹

Remarking that “he found nothing unconstitutional in prayer reading per se,” Reverend Dr. John M. Krumm, Columbia University’s chaplain, clearly and succinctly articulated the concerns of many Protestant Christians when he suggested that the “more relevant” issue was whether the Engel ruling would “lead to the elimination of all Bible reading and religious observances from the public schools.” This possibility, he cautioned, “justifiably causes alarm to churchmen who would regard” such an education as “distorted and inadequate.”²⁴² The following year, in early 1963, evangelicals and fundamentalists worst fears were realized when two cases came before the Supreme Court. The first had to do with a Unitarian family, the *Schempps*, from Abington, Pennsylvania, and the second, a Baltimore,

²³⁷ Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America, 1978-1988* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 38.

²³⁸ “Opinion of the Week: Prayers in School,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1962, 113.

²³⁹ “America Needs God No More?” *United Evangelical Action* (August 1962), 18, quoted in Williams, *God's Own Party*, 64.

²⁴⁰ Quoted in Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 78.

²⁴¹ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 64.

²⁴² George Dugan, “Protestant Preachers in City Assay Court Decision Barring Prayer in Public Schools,” *New York Times*, July 2, 1962, 13.

Maryland family, the Curlett's, who were atheists. Both had objected to state-sanctioned Bible reading and/or the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in their children's schools. Keeping with their 1962 decision against state-prescribed prayer, the Supreme Court Justices' ruled, in a vote of 8 to 1, that both the Lord's Prayer and Bible reading in public schools were violations of the separation of church and state, and thus unconstitutional. The *Abington vs. Schempp* ruling "appeared to be a final legal answer to one of the most divisive issues of church and state."²⁴³

On the political front, the reaction to the *Schempp* decision was much more tempered than it had been following *Engel* in 1962. There existed some opposition to the Court's ruling, and "talk of a Constitutional amendment that would permit Bible reading and prayers," but the outrage that had been seen the year before, did not surface. There were comments such as those of South Carolina Democratic Senator Strom Thurmond, a Baptist, who referred to it as "another major triumph for the forces of secularism and atheism," but the discourse remained free of "such phrases as 'unmitigated blasphemy,' 'outrageous edict,' 'shocking,' and 'most tragic.'"²⁴⁴

The religious community's reaction was somewhat varied, but on the whole generally favourable. The leaders of the mainline Protestant churches welcomed the decision. The National Council of Churches, representing a large majority of the nation's major denominations, responded that the Justices' confirmed that "teaching for religious commitment is the responsibility of the home and the community of faith (such as church or synagogue) rather than the public schools." United Presbyterian Church leaders also welcomed the ruling as an affirmation of "our firm belief that religious instruction is the sacred responsibility of the family and the churches."²⁴⁵ For the most part, the Jewish community, too,

²⁴³ Anthony E. Lewis, "School Prayers Facing New Tests," *New York Times*, February 25, 1963, 5; Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right*, 39-40; Anthony Lewis, "2 Cases Decided," *New York Times*, June 18, 1963, 1, 27; also see David E. Engel, "Abington v. Schempp; Murray v. Curlett," in *Religion in Public Education: Problems and Prospects*, ed. David E. Engel (New York: Paulus Press, 1974), 12-19.

²⁴⁴ "Congress Reacts Mildly to Ban; Some Ask Amendment to Kill It: Amendment Planned," *New York Times*, June 18, 1963, 27.

²⁴⁵ George Dugan, "Churches Divided with Most in Favor," *New York Times*, June 18, 1963, 1, 29.

applauded the ruling. “A decision not against, but for religion,” was the response from the New York Board of Rabbis.²⁴⁶

Conversely, alarmed by the decision, a majority of Roman Catholics, lead by three of the five Roman Catholic Cardinals from the United States, came out strongly opposed to the *Schempp* decision. Richard Cardinal Cushing of Boston, James Francis Cardinal McIntyre of Los Angeles, and Cardinal Spellman of New York chastised the Justices’ for banning the religious practices. Cardinal Spellman made clear that “no one who believes in God, and I say believes in God, can approve such a decision,” and Cardinal McIntyre suggested that “our American heritage of philosophy, of religion and of freedom are being abandoned in imitation of Soviet philosophy, of Soviet materialism and of Soviet-regimented liberty.”²⁴⁷

Evangelicals and fundamentalists increasingly viewed the federal government and the courts as secularizing forces, and, as such, many within both groups who had accepted, or even supported, the *Engel* decision, responded much differently to the *Schempp* ruling. Unlike the prayer issue, Bible reading was a core element of the “Protestant-designed public school system.” In the early 1800s, Protestants had introduced, in the face of opposition from “Catholics and other religious minorities,” devotional reading from the King James Bible, and its abolishment was seen as a direct attack against “evangelical beliefs and the nation’s Protestant identity.”²⁴⁸

In this tradition, Billy Graham remarked that “Prayers and Bible reading have been a part of American public-school life since the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. Now a Supreme Court in 1963 says our fathers were wrong all these years...” In a world of “moral decadence,” growing racial unrest,

²⁴⁶ “Rabbis Back High Court,” *New York Times*, June 20, 1963, 20.

²⁴⁷ “3 U.S. Cardinals Decry High Court Prayer Ruling,” *The New York Times*, June 19, 1963, 18.

²⁴⁸ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 64, 65; George Dugan, “Churches Divided With Most In Favor: Churches Split; Most Favorable,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1963, 1, 29. On the history of religion in public schools in the United States, see Joan Delfattore, *The Fourth R: Conflicts Over Religion in America's Public Schools* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2004), particularly 12-66; and Richard C. McMillan, *Religion in the Public Schools: An Introduction* (Mercer University Press, 1984); for a brief review of the early history, see John Herbert Laubach, *School Prayers: Congress, the Courts, and the Public* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1969), 24-30.

rising communism, and nuclear weapons, he argued that “we need more religion, not less,”²⁴⁹ The NAE suggested that the decision “augment{ed} the trend toward complete secularization” and “veer{ed} away from our national heritage of reverence.”²⁵⁰ One member noted that “the ruling ... opens the door for the full establishment of secularism as a negative form of religion.”²⁵¹ Not long after the *Schempp* ruling came down, the NAE looked to enshrine the right to prayer and Bible reading in public schools by calling on Congress to amend the Constitution.²⁵² The ensuing years would see numerous legal cases, centred around the *Engel* and *Schempp* decisions, come before the courts.²⁵³

Back on the political front, the nascent conservative movement experienced its first political success, in one of the unlikeliest of places, Texas; a state that had been controlled by the Democratic Party since the late nineteenth century. During the Roosevelt era and beyond, this reflected more an anti-Republican sentiment, rather than an ideological affiliation with the New Deal liberalism that dominated the party. In fact, while it would be too simple to argue that Texas was a “conservative” state, it would be fair to suggest that a majority, labeled “Southern Democrats,” identified as such, as did much of the South generally. By 1960 there were efforts within both state parties to unify ideologically and create “a legitimate two-party system.” Liberal Democrats, influential but in the minority, sought to purge conservatives, and conservative Republicans looked to eliminate the liberal influence in their organization. In the 1961 special election to replace Lyndon Johnson’s seat in the United States Senate, the Texas GOP took its first step in that direction and an eventual take-over of the party. A combination of apathy on the part of the influential liberal wing of the Democratic Party, who did little to support their

²⁴⁹ “Billy Graham Voices Shock Over Decision, *New York Times*, June 18, 1963, 27.

²⁵⁰ Quoted in Williams, *God's Own Party*, 64.

²⁵¹ “3 U.S. Cardinals Decry High Court Prayer Ruling, 18.

²⁵² Williams, *God's Own Party*, 64.

²⁵³ For an examination of these early cases, see Laubach, *School Prayers*, 98-140.

own conservative candidate, and concerted efforts by right-wing Republicans, resulted in John Tower, a conservative, becoming the Lone Star state's first Republican Senator since the Reconstruction period.²⁵⁴

At the federal and state levels, the Republican Party was still dominated by the moderate GOP Establishment, but John Tower's success demonstrated "that the South," once a Democratic stronghold, "was ever less a one-party region." A handful of influential conservatives, including William Rusher, publisher of *National Review*, and the Republican political operative F. Clifton White, hoped to replicate that success across the South in the next federal election. Later that same year, in October 1961, they took the first steps toward positioning Barry Goldwater as the 1964 GOP presidential nominee.²⁵⁵ No easy task in the age of Eisenhower Republicanism, where Goldwater was still seen as a "far right" extremist. But conservatives were making inroads. Between 1960 and 1964, "a mutually constitutive relationship" was developing between a revitalized intellectual movement, conservative politicians, well-funded political operatives, a growing number of fundamentalists and evangelicals who identified as conservatives, and a developing grassroots right-wing populism.²⁵⁶

Among this growing movement was a Midwestern conservative activist, Phyllis Schlafly. The devoutly Catholic, ardently anti-communist Schlafly had been involved with the Illinois Republican Party since the 1940s, and represented a growing, vocal pro-family/family values movement.²⁵⁷ Goldwater had made waves with the release of his book in the months leading up to the 1960 presidential election. Schlafly, too, would gain national prominence with the publication of the first of many books in May 1964. Much as *The Conscience of a Conservative*, the timing of *A Choice Not an Echo* was not a

²⁵⁴ Sean P. Cunningham, *Cowboy Conservatism: Texas and the Rise of the Modern Right* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 2010), 2, 34-38, 236, 240 (Lyndon Johnson had defeated John Tower in the 1960 United States Senate elections in which the Republican had received "an unprecedented 41 percent of the vote.").

²⁵⁵ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 95-96.

²⁵⁶ Horwitz, *America's Right*, 47; also see Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 18.

²⁵⁷ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 108-109 (Schlafly made a failed bid for a seat in the United States Congress in 1952. Her campaign is probably best remembered for the slogan "A Woman's Place is in the House."); Phyllis Schlafly *A Choice Not an Echo* (Alton, Illinois: Pere Marquette Press, August 1964, third edition, 117; For the most comprehensive exploration of Phyllis Schlafly, see Donald Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), particularly 38-116 for her early activism and association with the Republican Party.

coincidence. Schlafly was a committed Goldwater supporter, and her self-published book was intended to shake up the GOP establishment. A rebuke of moderate Republicans for being no different than Democrats, whose policy she condemned, *A Choice Not an Echo* was a clarion call to conservatives. Through an examination of the party's national conventions, she argued that since 1936 the GOP's presidential nominee had been "selected by a small group of secret kingmakers ... based out of New York." The Eastern Establishment had assured the nomination of their moderate candidate, through persuasion, insistence, and "psychological warfare techniques."²⁵⁸ With the exception of Eisenhower, who nonetheless had been duped by those around him, this strategy had resulted in failure. Schlafly implored Republicans to nominate for president, Barry Goldwater, a genuine conservative.²⁵⁹

Phyllis Schlafly represented a grassroots movement that was crystallizing in pockets around the country, particularly the South and West. In Orange County, California, what historian Lisa McGirr referred to as "suburban warriors" were at the forefront of this activism. Ordinary men and women who joined together in opposition to liberalism and communism to form a bastion of right-wing ideology in the midst of Southern California.²⁶⁰ Thoroughly modern, they embraced the material and commercial aspects of change, yet worried about the perceived weakening of the community and the breakdown of the traditional family structure. Affluence allowed them a modern lifestyle even while they discarded the secularism and relativism associated with modernity. Their homogeneity (white, middle-class, highly educated, "self-made," largely Christian and Republican) served to foster similar economic, social, cultural, and subsequently political philosophies. As such they were drawn to causes and organizations which linked societal problems to an overbearing federal government and liberal attempts to extend equality.²⁶¹ Orange County, in many ways, reflected a segment of the population that could be found

²⁵⁸ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 116-117, 119-123; Schlafly *A Choice Not an Echo*, 8-22 (on Democrat policy), 30-31, 5-7, quotes on 6, 25.

²⁵⁹ Schlafly *A Choice Not an Echo*, 120-121.

²⁶⁰ Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4-5; for a brief history of Orange County (and its conservatism), see Robert Scheer, "A Frontier Dream Has Come of Age," *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1989, 1, 26-28.

²⁶¹ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 43-44, 20-52, 149-184.

across the country. As the conservative historian and journalist William Henry Chamberlin observed: “There is widespread concern among Americans who think of themselves as conservatives over the loss of valuable and important moral standards, the heritage of the past. And there is also considerable resentment against the tendency of centralized government to interfere in many aspects of what was once considered private life”²⁶²

Across the country, the efforts of suburban warriors, like those in Orange County, helped win the 1964 GOP nomination for Barry Goldwater and shift the Republican Party platform to the right.²⁶³ Unfortunately for these activists, in the worst electoral landslide in presidential history, the “cowboy conservative” suffered a devastating loss to Lyndon Johnson, winning only his home state and five more in the Deep South. While conservatism was making dramatic inroads among Southern whites, the same could not be said of the rest of the country quite yet.²⁶⁴ Two major issues of the 1964 election, communism (or more specifically, the use of nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union or its proxies) and civil rights, help bear this out. In terms of the Soviet threat, the Kennedy/Johnson administrations’ policies had been aggressive, despite any accusations suggesting the contrary. Of course, nobody could accuse Goldwater of being soft on communism. Indeed, for many, Goldwater appeared fanatical, and that was the contention of debate. His cavalier comments about the use of nuclear weapons caused genuine concern among many Americans. The Johnson campaign, capitalizing on this fear, used the “Daisy Girl” television advertisement depicting a young girl picking flowers as a nuclear explosion goes off in the background to particular effect.²⁶⁵ Goldwater’s association with overzealous anti-communist extremists on the far-right, such as Billy James Hargis (and Christian Crusade) and the John Birch Society (JBS)

²⁶² William Henry Chamberlin, “Rallying Call for American Conservatives,” *Modern Age* (Fall 1964): 346.

²⁶³ John D. Morris, “The Strategy: ‘White Backlash,’ Conservatism Could Put Goldwater into Genuine Contention,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1964, E 3; “Disaster at San Francisco,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1964, E8; Anthony Lewis, “Goldwater Forces Block Rules Change on Rights and Reaffirm New G.O.P. Trend,” *New York Times*, July 14, 1964, 21.

²⁶⁴ Tom Wicker, “Johnson’s Plurality Sets Record; Many Democrats Gain by Sweep,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1964, 1; Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 116; Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 125.

²⁶⁵ Francine Kiefer, “Barry Goldwater Remembered from Both Sides,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jun 1, 1998, 3.

were also troubling. In the months leading up to the election, nearly half of those polled said they would not vote for a candidate supported by the JBS.²⁶⁶

Many, if not most, of those extremists, and many Southerners generally, including white conservative evangelicals, opposed the Civil Right Act signed into law by President Johnson in June 1964. Southern Democrats in Congress had led the resistance to the legislation, while Northern Democrats pushed the bill, which was passed with the support of Northern Republicans. Goldwater voted against its passage, citing constitutional reasons, namely the infringement on states' rights, which resonated with white conservative Southerners. But most Americans in the North and West supported the struggle for racial equality "as a fight against the ugliest forms of legalized southern segregation."²⁶⁷ In the South, the civil rights movement and the subsequent legislation bearing its name was seen as an attack against their very way of life. The Democrats' embrace of the provocative issue lay the groundwork for the disaffection of white Southerners, who would soon find a home in what was fast becoming a more ideologically conservative GOP. This shift would have far-reaching consequences. Having once been dispersed between the two parties, this political realignment brought northern and southern (and western) conservatives, perhaps most importantly conservative evangelicals, together in one party, allowing for a more organized approach to their activism and helping to lay the foundations for the emergence of the Religious Right. While Johnson won the election, he prophetically acknowledged the broader consequences of his administration's position on civil rights when he remarked to his aid, Bill Moyers: "I think we just delivered the South to the Republican Party for a long time to come."²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 82-83; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 196; Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 136-137; Fendall W. Yerxa, "Goldwater Says Generals Have a Nuclear Authority," *New York Times*, September 23, 1964, 1; Donald Janson, "Hargis Group to Back Goldwater Despite Some Members' Attacks," *New York Times*, August 9, 1964, 55; Earl Mazo, "Rightist Support is Found Harmful," *New York Times*, July 31, 1964, 10.

²⁶⁷ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 116; Chamberlin, "Rallying Call for American Conservatives," 347; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 72-73.

²⁶⁸ Quoted in Michael S. Winters, *God's Right Hand: How Jerry Falwell Made God a Republican and Baptized the American Right* (New York: Harper One, 2012), 106.

To be sure, President Johnson's lopsided landslide victory in November owed partly to the lingering trauma and "martyrdom" created by President John F. Kennedy's assassination the previous year. Still, the truth was that most Americans were not yet ready to abandon the New Deal liberalism which had appeared to sustain a "general peace and prosperity" in the decades following the, still memorable, Great Depression.²⁶⁹ For many, particularly liberal, observers, including political pundits, journalists, and some dispirited activists on the right, Goldwater's staggering defeat seemed to demonstrate that the movement had lost its momentum, and that mainstream America had rejected its ideology as too toxic.²⁷⁰ As Donald Critchlow has noted, "even many of those who had supported Goldwater in 1964 were persuaded that ideological conservatism needed to be replaced by realistic pragmatism."²⁷¹ But the grassroots movement that sprang up around the Arizona senator would prove to be bigger than the candidate. Indeed, it fundamentally "altered the American political landscape." The "cowboy conservative" had failed in his bid for the presidency, but in the attempt he "helped teach millions, including anticommunist militants, committed anti-secularists, pro-states' rightists, and dedicated segregationists, that they were, overarching, political conservatives - Republican Party conservatives." As importantly, he had helped advance the take-over of the Republican Party and placed modern conservatism on the American political map.²⁷² It would be left to another Westerner, a transplant from the Midwest, to ensure that conservatism remained there.

If the 1964 presidential campaign marked the apogee of Barry Goldwater's political career, it also witnessed the emergence of his successor as the leader of the conservative movement. Ronald Reagan, a (classical) liberal actor turned conservative spokesman and political activist, gave a speech in support of Goldwater, just one week before the election, in which he provided a scathing critique of liberalism (which he equated with socialism), and presented conservatives with a challenge. Properly titled, "A Time

²⁶⁹ Tom Wicker, "Johnson's Plurality Sets Record," *New York Times*, November 5, 1964, 1; Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 116.

²⁷⁰ James Reston, "What Goldwater Lost," *New York Times*, November 4, 1964, 23.

²⁷¹ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, 142.

²⁷² Buckley, Jr., *Flying High*, 81; Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 80-81; Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 79.

for Choosing,” it closed with these dramatic words: “You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We can preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we can sentence them to take the first step into a thousand years of darkness. If we fail, at least let our children and our children’s children say of us we justified our brief moment here. We did all that could be done.”²⁷³ “The Speech,” as it came to be known, electrified conservatives and convinced tens of thousands, including a small group of prominent California businessmen (significantly Holmes Tuttle, Henry Salvatori, and A.C. Rubel), that Reagan should run in the 1966 California gubernatorial election.²⁷⁴

Reagan’s team not only benefited from a developed grassroots movement (based in Orange County), they also appreciated the lessons learned during the Goldwater campaign. Perhaps most importantly, Reagan sought to avoid factionalism. He called for party unity and adopted the recently conceived “Eleventh Commandment”: “Thou shall not speak ill of any fellow Republican.” At the same time, the campaign attempted to distance itself from the radical right, some of its most committed supporters, without alienating them. Reagan put a new face on modern conservatism. The former actor, was nothing like the gruff, curt Goldwater, but rather affable, charismatic, and humorous - “a conservative ... whom” liberals “couldn’t depict as a demon who was going to destroy humanity.” This was in line with the evolution of Orange County conservatives, whom, McGirr argues, “expounded a new brand of conservatism,” one that was far more moderate and, thus, far more acceptable to mainstream Americans.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ Ronald Reagan, “A Time for Choosing,” in *A Time for Choosing*, ed. Ronald Reagan (Chicago, Illinois: Regnery Gateway, Inc, 1985), 57; Note: Reagan had developed what became known simply as the “The Speech” while touring the country during his time as a spokesman for General Electric. For an excellent exploration of this period, see Thomas E. Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of his Conversion to Conservatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

²⁷⁴ Lou Cannon, *Reagan* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 102-104; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 190-191; Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 201-202; Robert Dallek, *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 33.

²⁷⁵ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 193-197, 202 (The “Eleventh Commandment” was the brainchild of the chair of the Republican State Central Committee “to keep conservatives and moderate Republicans from attacking each other in the primary.”; Dallek, *Ronald Reagan*, 32-33; Charles W. Dunn, “The Irony of Ronald Reagan,” in *The Enduring Reagan*, ed. Charles W. Dunn (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 8.

Reagan won the Republican nomination without much difficulty and prepared to face two-term Governor Edmund “Pat” Brown, a veteran progressive politician. Brown had handily defeated Richard Nixon in 1962 but failed to appreciate just how dramatically the circumstances had changed since that time. By the mid-sixties, an internecine war had broken out within the state Democratic Party, primarily between liberals and conservatives, leaving Brown with a fractured political base and less than steady internal support. But instability was not limited to politics. Change had taken hold on many fronts. The governor was from San Francisco, once “the center of the state’s political life” and home to “a style and political culture at odds with the rest of the state,” and was out of touch with the social and political shifts to the right happening further south. These changes were driven by a combination of factors, many of which served to exacerbate tensions along class, racial, and generational lines. In terms of economics, many citizens, significantly residents of the newly developed suburbs of Southern California, were beginning to feel that “the costs of state and local government” were “exceeding the benefits.” They sought a reduction in their taxes, not an expansion of government.²⁷⁶

These individuals also perceived a deterioration in the social and cultural norms. In the wake of the civil rights movement, racial tensions continued to flare up. In August 1965, riots broke out in Watts, California, and then again in September in San Francisco. Helping to fuel the civil unrest was the battle over fair housing laws, which were supported by the courts, but opposed by a large segment of the population, including Reagan. An emerging counterculture revealed generational divides that had been less evident during the fifties and early sixties. In the Sunshine state, these were best represented by the happenings at the University of California’s Berkeley campus, where student unrest and protests over free speech were seen by many older citizens as evidence of social and academic decay.²⁷⁷ In the wake of student unrest and “growing racial tensions,” Reagan’s traditional rhetoric about low taxes and less

²⁷⁶ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 195, 197-200; Cannon, *Reagan*, 108, 109, 110.

²⁷⁷ Gerard J. De Groot, “Ronald Reagan and Student Unrest in California, 1966-1970,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 65, no. 1 (Feb. 1996): 107-129.

government was, largely, displaced by a law-and-order platform rooted in the notion of a breakdown in the social and moral order, which appealed to traditional conservatives.²⁷⁸

Historian Gerard J. De Groot has suggested that “the problem of student unrest on the Berkeley campus ... brilliantly highlighted the populist themes of Reagan’s campaign: morality, law and order, strong leadership, traditional values, and anti-intellectualism.” It proved a winning message. The former Hollywood actor won the election by nearly one million votes, performing exceptionally well in working class communities who traditionally voted for the Democrats.²⁷⁹ In the wake of his victory, Reagan revealed one of his guiding philosophies when he expressed these thoughts: “I’m not quite able to explain how my election happened or why I’m here, apart from believing it is part of God’s plan for me.”²⁸⁰

Ronald Reagan’s gubernatorial victory in 1966 represented conservatives’ “deepening hold on the Republican Party,” and a “maturation and transformation of the conservative movement” which had discovered the importance of grassroots politics and learned to work together despite their differences. The gradual development of effective and energetic party organization fund raising activities and direct mail operations were as essential to the growth of conservatism in the GOP after the 1964 elections as were the rhetoric, leadership skills, and presidential aspirations of Nixon and Reagan. Ultimately, historian Mary Brennan argues that conservatives’ “greatest achievement of the 1960s” was “the transformation of conservatism into a legitimate, mainstream political alternative,” significantly through exorcising “the extremist demon ... without surrendering their principles.”²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 173-174.

²⁷⁹ De Groot, “Ronald Reagan and Student Unrest in California, 1966-1970,” 107; Cannon, *Reagan*, 110, 111, 117.

²⁸⁰ Quoted in Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 115.

²⁸¹ Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 118, 139-140, 119; also see Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 216-217; George Nash agreed that the intellectual Right’s “increasingly firm disassociation” from leading right-wing extremist organizations after 1964 was an indication of its growing political sophistication. See Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, 292.

Chapter #3

Will and Destiny: The Roots of Ronald Reagan's Political and Religious Philosophies

“My dad believed passionately in *the rights of the individual* and the working man... Among the things he passed on to me were the belief that all men and women, regardless of their color or religion, are created equal and that *individuals determine their own destiny*; that is, *it's largely their own ambition and hard work that determine their fate in life.*”

Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*

“*I was raised to believe that God has a plan for everyone and that seemingly random twists of fate are all a part of His plan.* My mother — a small woman with auburn hair and a sense of optimism that ran as deep as the cosmos — told me *everything in life happened for a purpose.* She said all things were part of God's Plan, even the most disheartening setbacks, and in the end, everything worked out for the best.”

Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*

No politician better characterized both the conservative movement's newfound image and political credibility than Ronald Reagan. And while his views and actions could reveal inconsistencies in his political ideology, earning him, at times, condemnation from one or the other factions within the conservative movement, Reagan, much more than Barry Goldwater, approached a synthesis between traditionalism and classical liberalism as articulated in Frank Meyer's theory of fusion.²⁸² Goldwater was willing to make concessions regarding the importance of tradition, virtue, and authority, as expressed in *The Conscience of a Conservative*, but he was, perhaps, the most outspoken member of the libertarian

²⁸² Reagan privately recorded some of this criticism in his diaries – see chapter 7. Publicly, he responded by saying: “There are some people who would have you so stand on principle that if you don't get all that you've asked for from the legislature, why you jump off the cliff with the flag flying. A half a loaf is better than none,” he reasoned. Adding, “I am very stubborn, I come back and ask for more the next time around.” See Francis X. Clines, *New York Times*, February 10, 1983.

wing of the Republican Party. He supported certain religious-related issues, such as voluntary school prayer, but was, largely, detached from the social conservative philosophies associated with modern American conservatism, and was later strongly opposed to the Religious Right's political activism and growing influence within the GOP.²⁸³ Reagan's political outlook was also inclined toward the concepts of individual rights and freedoms, hallmarks of classical liberalism, and much of his message mirrored that of Goldwater's, but he infused his libertarian views with a religious dimension and he strongly endorsed Christian conservatives' moral agenda while welcoming them into the Republican Party.

Reagan's classical liberalism has rarely been questioned, but many writers during his time, and some scholars since, have challenged his commitment to conservatism (read traditional conservatism). It is true that his political views were rooted in the classical liberal thought of John Locke, Founding Father Thomas Jefferson, and Friedrich Hayek, not the traditionalism of Edmund Burke, Founding Father John Adams, and Russell Kirk, whose views on liberty, progress, and the role of government shared little with Reagan's. And because the two ideologies are, by their nature (despite Meyer's attempt to show otherwise), antithetical, and so impossible to reconcile, it is fair to say that Reagan was not, in the orthodox sense, "conservative." Still, his commitment to many of the fundamental social and cultural values of traditional conservatism he incorporated into his overarching political beliefs were quite genuine, even if he failed to appreciate the ideology's underlying philosophies. If the theory of fusion is ideologically unattainable, then it may be that Reagan came about as close to achieving it as is probably possible.

Reagan was a bright individual with a photographic memory. He was both well-read and a "prolific writer." He was also a man of ideas.²⁸⁴ But he was not one to get caught up in complex political or

²⁸³ Indeed, Goldwater declared: "I'm frankly sick and tired of the political preachers across this country telling me as a citizen that if I want to be a moral person, I must believe in 'A,' 'B,' 'C,' and 'D.' Just who do they think they are? And from where do they presume to claim the right to dictate their moral beliefs to me?" Barry Goldwater, quoted in Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, preface, ix.

²⁸⁴ For a discussion of Reagan's intelligence, see the introduction to David T. Byrne, *Reagan: An Intellectual Biography* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Potomac Books, 2018), quote on "prolific writer" in introduction, xii; Introduction

theological dogma. Veteran White House official David Gergen believed that the president exhibited what was called an “inter-personal intelligence,” as opposed to the “logical-mathematical intelligence” possessed by academics.²⁸⁵ Reagan’s youngest son noted that his father “possesses ... a keen instinctive intelligence,” but admitted “He lacks the patience for extended intellectual rigor.”²⁸⁶ As for conservatism, on one occasion Reagan encapsulated the essence of fusion when he simply stated: “My political philosophy has been called conservative. I don’t know if that is the proper word or not. I believe our system was created to give the *ultimate in individual freedom consistent with an orderly society*. Government exists to protect us from each other – not ourselves.”²⁸⁷ Extrapolating on this thought, he declared that “the American new conservative majority we represent is not based on abstract theorizing of the kind that turns off the American people, but on common sense, intelligence, reason, hard work, faith in God, and the guts to say, yes, there are things we do strongly believe in, that we are willing to live for, and, yes, to die for. This is not ‘ideological purity,’ it is simply what built this country and kept it great.”²⁸⁸ “There can be no freedom without order, and there is no order without virtue,” he declared.²⁸⁹

and commentary by William Safire, “Reagan Writes: The former president’s recently discovered radio ...,” *New York Times*, Dec 31, 2000, SM38. Reagan produced hundreds of essays, speeches, and addresses over his lifetime, along with a similar number of letters. Many of these have been brought together in edited collections. See, for example, *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, ed. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993); *Dear Americans: Letters from the Desk of President Ronald Reagan*, ed. Ralph Edward Weber and Ralph A. Weber (New York: Broadway, 2003); *Reagan, in His Own Hand* ed. Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Graebner Anderson, and Martin Anderson (New York; London: Free Press, 2001); *Reagan: A Life in Letters*, ed. Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Graebner Anderson, and Martin Anderson (New York; London: Free Press, 2003); *Sincerely, Reagan* ed. Helene von Damm (New York: Berkley Books, 1980); *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches*, Ronald Reagan (New York; Toronto: Simon and Schuster, 1989); and *A Time for Choosing: The Speeches of Ronald Reagan, 1961-1982* ed. Alfred A. Balitzer, and Gerald M. Bonetto (Chicago: Regnery Gateway Inc., 1983). Also see Ronald Reagan, *The Creative Society: Some Comments on Problems Facing America*, (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1968); and Ronald Reagan, *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation*, (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1984).

²⁸⁵ David Gergen quoted in William E. Pemberton, *Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan* (Armonk, N.Y.: ME Sharpe, Inc., 1997), 11.

²⁸⁶ Ron Reagan, *My Father at 100* (New York: Viking, 2001), 189.

²⁸⁷ Quoted in Ronald Reagan, *Sincerely, Reagan*, ed. Helene von Damm, (New York: Berkley Books, 1980), 213 (emphasis added)..

²⁸⁸ Ronald Reagan, “Reshaping the American Political Landscape (A Majority of Americans Agree with Conservative Principles), Speaking at the American Conservative Union Banquet, Washington, D. C., February 6, 1977, in *A Time for Choosing*, 188, 187).

Many of those sceptical of Reagan's conservatism question his religiosity, suggesting it was little more than superficial rhetoric exploited for partisan purposes. It is true that Reagan's interpretation of Christianity and the Bible were not, necessarily, always compatible with that of traditional conservative thought or the fundamentalist preachers such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, who, for example, believed in biblical inerrancy and held a much stricter view of sin and human nature. But far from being detached from religion, Reagan's public statements and private correspondence reveal a "consistent religious orientation and commitment."²⁹⁰ When being sworn in as Governor of California in 1967, he included a promise "to bring to public office the teachings and the precepts of the prince of peace."²⁹¹ Indeed, Reagan saw religion as inextricably linked to government. "Politics and morality are inseparable," he declared. "And as morality's foundation is religion," he continued, "religion and politics are necessarily related."²⁹²

While Reagan's spiritual faith matured over time, his political affiliations, more so than his ideology, experienced a more dramatic evolution. Raised by progressive parents, he was an unabashed admirer and supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt and a registered Democrat until the early 1960s.²⁹³ His identification with the Republican Party and the conservative movement were the result of an evolutionary shift over many years - shaped by his growing wealth, his Hollywood encounters with communism, and his time as a General Electric spokesman. This gradual shift in political affiliation coincided, not uncoincidentally,

²⁸⁹ Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Centennial Meeting of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Columbus in Hartford, Connecticut (August 3, 1982)," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1982*, volume 2, July 3 to December 31 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 1010.

²⁹⁰ Quote on "religious orientation" in Paul Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 116; also see Justin D. Garrison, *An Empire of Ideals: The Chimeric Imagination of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 154. Reagan, who believed in miracles and prophecy, often quoted Scripture and his writings are replete with references to God and the Bible.

²⁹¹ Ronald Reagan, "Oath Taking Ceremony at State Capitol Rotunda," January 2, 1967. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/01021967b>

²⁹² Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at an Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast in Dallas, Texas, August 23, 1984," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1984*, vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 1167.

²⁹³ For many, progressivism during the late 19th-early 20th centuries had taken on an association with the "crusading spirit of individual moral reform." See David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University press), 2010, 18.

with the emergence of modern American conservatism, shaped by intellectuals such as Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Frank Meyer, and Whittaker Chambers, to name a few, whose works also contributed to the crystallization of Reagan's political philosophy. But the foundational elements of both Reagan's religious and political beliefs are to be found in his youth – in the influence of his parents, particularly his mother, and his upbringing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).²⁹⁴ It is here where one finds, what Reagan described as, the forces that “shaped my body and mind for all the years to come after.”²⁹⁵

Born on February 6, 1911 in Tampico, Illinois, Ronald “Dutch” Reagan was the second son of an itinerant shoe salesman and lapsed Catholic, Jack, and a devoutly Protestant mother and committed member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Nelle. Their inter-faith marriage and the fact they were outspoken progressive Democrats, intolerant of intolerance, made the Reagan's somewhat of a rarity in that part of the country, where Protestant Republicans were in the majority and religious prejudice and racial segregation were still openly practiced.²⁹⁶ His mother was full of hope and optimism, believing the best in everyone, but his father, perhaps the result of a tragic youth, could be something of a cynic.

²⁹⁴ Originally two separate, but very similar, groups which emerged from the Second Great Awakening in the early nineteenth century, The Christian Church and the Disciples of Christ joined together in 1832. They were known thereafter as The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), or simply the “Christian Church” or the “Disciples.” See Kenneth L. Teegarden, *We Call Ourselves Disciples* (Saint Louis, The Bethany Press, 1975), 9-17 (Note: Teegarden was general minister and president of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). On The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), also see Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System* (New York: Arno Press, 1969 c1866) (Note: Alexander Campbell and his father, Thomas, founded the Disciples of Christ, which took form in the early twentieth century); Winfred Ernest Garrison and Alfred T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ: A History* (St. Louis, Missouri: Bethany Press, 1964 c1948); and Nathan O. Hatch, “The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People,” *The Journal of American History* 67, no. 3 (December 1980): 545-567.

²⁹⁵ Quoted in Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 40. David T. Byrne thoughtfully observed that “People don't become educated and then develop a political or religious ideology; rather they adopt a value system in their teens or early twenties, and then become educated.” See introduction to Byrne, *Reagan: An Intellectual Biography*, xix.

²⁹⁶ Reagan, *An American Life*, 21, 30-31, 52 (Reagan adopted the nickname “Dutch” as a young boy. Its origin was in a comment made by his father upon seeing his newborn son for the first time: “He looks like a fat little Dutchman.”); Lou Cannon, *Reagan*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 26, 27; Ron Reagan, *My Father at 100* (New York: Viking, 2001), 47, 185; Anne Edwards, *Early Reagan* (New York: William Morrow Co., 1987), 53-54; Stephen Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President: Reagan and the Dixon Disciples of Christ,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 1, *The Bully Pulpit and the Reagan Presidency* (Winter, 1995): 113-114; Note: Nelle's father had “disapproved” of her marriage to Jack. See John P. Diggins, *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007), 58-59.

Distrustful of “established authority,” he was inclined to “suspect the worst of people.”²⁹⁷ Dutch’s early years were spent moving from town to town as his father sought out work, before the family finally settled in Dixon, Illinois in 1920.²⁹⁸ He described his life in Dixon, a town of about 10 000, as “sweet and idyllic ... as close as I could imagine for a young boy to the world created by Mark Twain in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.”²⁹⁹

Still, his family’s nomadic lifestyle - he had lived in five towns/cities and over one dozen apartments/homes before he was a teenager - affected him deeply. It “left a mark on me,” Reagan acknowledged in *An American Life*.³⁰⁰ Always on the move, he had difficulty developing close friendships – “I was forever the new kid in school.”³⁰¹ As a result, Dutch, a small boy for his age who struggled with sports (partly due to an undiagnosed vision problem), was shy, something of a loner, and the victim of bullying. As an escape, he spent hours by himself with his bird’s eggs and butterfly collection, playing with toy soldiers, drawing, “studying wildlife, and exploring the local wilderness.”³⁰² He also loved to read, learning to do so at a young age, and later admitted that he was “a sucker for hero worship.” “When I found a fictional hero I liked,” Reagan wrote, “I would consume everything I could about him.”³⁰³ He also developed a “reluctance to get close to people,” which he later admitted, “never left me completely.”³⁰⁴ “I wish I had a dollar for each of the friends and family members who complained to me that Dutch never let them get anywhere near,” wrote Reagan biographer Edmund Morris.³⁰⁵ Most

²⁹⁷ Reagan, *An American Life*, 22; Jack had lost both his parents by the age of 6, see Reagan, *My Father at 100*, 99.

²⁹⁸ Reagan, *Reagan, A Life in Letters*, 1.

²⁹⁹ On Dixon’s population, see Morris, *Dutch*, 33; quote in *An American Life*, 29.

³⁰⁰ Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 5-7; Reagan, *An American Life*, 31.

³⁰¹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 23.

³⁰² Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me*, 11, Cannon, *Reagan*, 28; quotes in Reagan, *An American Life*, 34-35, 24, 31.

³⁰³ Reagan, *An American life*, 31; Jerry Griswold, “Reagan’s Reading: ‘I’m a Sucker for Hero Worship’” *The New York Times Book Review*, August 30, 1981, 11; Thomas E. Evans, E. *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of his Conversion to Conservatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 9.

³⁰⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, 31.

³⁰⁵ Morris, *Dutch*, 11.

people who knew him throughout his life, including his wife and children, confessed that there was always a part of Reagan that was inaccessible.³⁰⁶

The reason Jack was often in search of employment was the root source of much hardship. Reagan described his father as “a man who might have made a brilliant career out of selling but he lived in a time - and with a weakness - that made him a frustrated man.”³⁰⁷ Jack was an ambitious individual with big dreams, “constantly searching for a better life,” but he was afflicted with, what Nelle explained to her sons was, a “sickness ... that was beyond his control” and deserving of their sympathy - alcoholism.³⁰⁸ He was a binge drinker, sometimes going for years without a drink. But when he did imbibe, he would often disappear for days, bringing on “some pretty fiery arguments” with the teetotaling Nelle. Jack could fall off the wagon at any time, and Dutch “came to dread those days when he’d take the first drink.” He wasn’t “abusive, but “he could be pretty surly” and liberal with the profanity.³⁰⁹

While he managed to provide the necessities for his family, Jack’s drinking and the Great Depression conspired against his dreams of owning his own shoe store. As a result, the Reagan’s often lived in relative poverty.³¹⁰ What saved them during the worst of the Depression was Jack’s commitment to the Democratic Party and enthusiastic support for Franklin D. Roosevelt. As a result, he was rewarded with

³⁰⁶ Reagan, *My Father at 100*, 7, 8-9; Nancy Davis, *My Turn*, New York: Random House, 1989, 106; Mayer and McManus, *Landslide*, 29, Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 138.

³⁰⁷ Ronald and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 7.

³⁰⁸ Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 9, 8; Reagan, *An American Life*, 23, 34.

³⁰⁹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 33, 25, 34; Ronald and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 7. Jack does not seem to have been above physical discipline. One childhood friend of Dutch’s, after remarking that the young Reagan was not “afraid of a rough fight,” noted that “His dad would tan his hide if he didn’t win though.” See Edwards, *Early Reagan*, 59.

³¹⁰ Edwards, *Early Reagan*, 51; Cannon, *Reagan*, 31; Reagan, *An American Life*, 28, 54-55 (Reagan later wrote that “I didn’t know that” we were poor “when I was growing up. And I never thought of our family as disadvantaged. Only later,” he continued with some contempt, “did the government decide that it had to tell people they were poor.” He added: “We always rented our home and never had enough money for luxuries. But I don’t remember suffering because of that.” Quote on 28); Note: In a 1975 interview, Reagan seemed to more readily acknowledge his family’s financial situation when he remarked: “I have to laugh when ever I read that someone doesn’t think I understand the problems of the poor. We were damned poor.” See Charles D. Hobbs, *Ronald Reagan's Call to Action* (Nashville: T. Nelson, Inc., 1976), 104 (the book contains the transcripts of a series of interviews between Hobbs and Reagan carried out during the spring and early summer of 1975.).

work running New Deal programs in Dixon.³¹¹ Reagan suggested that he first witnessed the corrosive effects of government bureaucracy during this time. He contended that the “social workers” who ran direct relief (forerunner to modern welfare) discouraged recipients from applying for works programs because they “didn’t want to reduce their caseloads.” Fearful “they wouldn’t be able to justify their jobs ... they would invent all kinds of reasons why those men couldn’t be available for WPA work.”³¹²

If Jack had failings, he could also be a charming, humorous man. Along with Nelle, he loved music and the theatre, and he helped to instill in Dutch and his brother Neil (known as “Moon”) “a love of the stage...” He was also, in the words of his son, “the best raconteur I ever heard.” From his father, Dutch learned how to tell a good story.³¹³ More importantly, Jack “believed passionately in *the rights of the individual*,” imparting the idea “that all men and women, regardless of their color or religion, are created equal and that *individuals determine their own destiny*; that is, *it’s largely their own ambition and hard work that determine their fate in life*.”³¹⁴ Despite his support for New Deal liberalism, Jack’s message of free will reflected a basic tenet of classical liberal thought. The idea of individual rights and the belief in self-determination were central elements of Ronald Reagan’s political/religious philosophy. He saw these concepts as not only inseparable from the very idea of the United States, but also inextricably linked to God. “Freedom and personal liberty” are “grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted,” he declared. Adding, “The American experiment in democracy rests on this insight.”³¹⁵ Indeed, he maintained, “We are a nation

³¹¹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 66, 67, 68-69.

³¹² Reagan quoted in Hobbs, *Ronald Reagan’s Call to Action*, 104.

³¹³ Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me*, 9; Reagan, *An American Life*, 22; quote on “the stage” in Cannon, *Reagan*, 27.

³¹⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, 22 (emphasis added).

³¹⁵ Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983, in Reagan, *Speaking my Mind*, 170-171

under God, and I believe God intended for us to be free.”³¹⁶ In this light, key to Reagan’s understanding of freedom, was the freedom of religion.³¹⁷

Reagan remembers that he “always loved and always managed to maintain my respect for Jack,” largely due to Nelle, but their relationship was strained, sometimes remote, and often filled with anxiety.³¹⁸ Dutch surely admired his father’s ambition and his sense of equality and justice, particularly in terms of religious and racial tolerance. But beyond this, one senses thinly masked feelings of shame and a mild respect borne less out of genuine sentiment than a son’s sense of dutiful deference. His addiction to alcohol must have appeared as a weakness, and, if Jack was right and individuals were largely responsible for the own success, then Reagan must have also seen his father as a failure. Reagan’s youngest son disclosed that, while Dutch “never failed to acknowledge Jack’s good qualities,” he “repeated[ly] express[ed] pity for Jack ... that suggested that my father considered him a sad and troubling disappointment.”³¹⁹

If his father’s contributions to Reagan’s character covered the spectrum, instilling moral and ethical certitudes while fostering disappointment and insecurity, his mother – “a small woman with auburn hair and a sense of optimism that ran as deep as the cosmos” - was a constant source of strength and stability.³²⁰ Nelle was pious, compassionate, and loving, but also tough and determined - on one occasion denying her son protection, while forcing him to confront a bully.³²¹ “Central” to his “upbringing,” she provided the young Dutch guidance in his life and religious education, nurtured his dreams, and taught

³¹⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Inaugural Address, January 20, 1981,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1981* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), 3.

³¹⁷ Reagan, *Reagan, in His Own Hand*, ed. Skinner, Graebner Anderson, and Anderson, 174.

³¹⁸ Quote in Reagan, *An American Life*, 34.

³¹⁹ Reagan, *My Father at 100*, 98-101, quote on 98 (Ron Reagan, after much research, took a more sympathetic view of his grandfather: “If he was weak, he was also principled. If he transgressed, he was, as well, a faithful and diligent provider.” He went on to say that “I can’t fault Dutch for being disappointed by his father’s lapses; I only wish Dad had been able to reconcile his feelings for Jack so we all might have enjoyed him more thoroughly for the man he was.” See 101-102)

³²⁰ Quote in Reagan, *An American Life*, 20.

³²¹ Slosser, *Reagan Inside Out*, 37.

him the value of prayer.³²² “Many of us have been taught to pray by people we love,” Reagan remarked while announcing a Day of Prayer in 1986. “In my case, it was my mother. I learned quite literally at her knee. My mother gave me a great deal, but nothing she gave me was more important than that special gift, the knowledge of the happiness and solace to be gained by talking to the Lord.”³²³ Reagan came to rely on prayer and the strength he drew from the “Man upstairs” – a word he often used to describe God.³²⁴ “Because a lot of Nelles’s (sic) great sense of religious faith rubbed off on me,” he wrote, “I have always prayed a lot.”³²⁵ In his first inaugural address as Governor of California, he declared: “It is inconceivable to me that anyone could accept this delegated authority without asking God’s help. I pray that we who legislate and administer will be granted wisdom and strength beyond our own limited power; that with Divine guidance we can avoid easy expedients, as we work to build a state where liberty under law and justice can triumph...”³²⁶

Nelle raised Dutch “*to believe that God has a plan for everyone and that seemingly random twists of fate are all a part of His plan.*” My mother,” he explained, “told me *everything in life happened for a purpose. She said all things were part of God’s Plan, even the most disheartening setbacks, and in the end, everything worked out for the best.*”³²⁷ Much like his father’s message of individual rights and free-will, his mother’s belief in a divine destiny featured prominently in Reagan’s religious/political thought. “The point of reading the bible is to realize that this world and our lives don’t really belong to us,” he told an interviewer. “What the good Lord wants from each of us, and from this world, is up to Him, not you

³²² Ronald Reagan, *Reagan, A Life in Letters*, ed. Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Graebner Anderson, and Martin Anderson (New York; London: Free Press, 2003), 42; Gary Scott Smith, *Faith and the presidency: from George Washington to George W. Bush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 326. Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 40; Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 25, 59, Gary Wills, *Reagan’s America: Innocents at Home* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1987), 17.

³²³ “Remarks on Signing the 1987 National Day of Prayer Proclamation (December 22, 1986),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1986*, vol. 2 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1985), 1639.

³²⁴ Quoted in Reagan, *My Father at 100*, 103.

³²⁵ Reagan, *An American Life*, 56.

³²⁶ Reagan, “The Creative Society (California and the Problem of Government Growth),” From the first Inaugural Message, January 5, 1967, in *A Time for Choosing*, 62.

³²⁷ Reagan, *An American Life*, 22 (emphasis added).

and me.”³²⁸ Throughout his life, he attributed both his successes and his failures to “God’s plan.”³²⁹ Though these ideas of free will and destiny are, on the face of it, contradictory, Reagan accepted them unquestionably. Many more progressive Christian groups, including the Disciples of Christ, had found a way to reconcile the two. While they were convinced that “God’s hand guides everything,” they also believed that human beings possessed “agency,” and thus the capability to shape the world around them. In this way, they were able to bring together “Christian thinking and its belief in an omnipotent God” and the “modern feeling that individuals matter.”³³⁰

While Jack was an irregular church-goer, Nelle was a deeply religious pillar of the community who “instilled a Christian attitude in the entire family” while immersing herself in Dixon’s First Christian Church.³³¹ The Disciples of Christ, who ran the church, were what one might consider liberal within the context of a generally conservative ideological framework.³³² Founded between 1807 and 1809 by Joseph Campbell and his son Alexander as the Second Great Awakening was spreading, the church, an offshoot of Presbyterianism, had its roots in the Unitarian movement, which had rejected the orthodoxy of Calvinism “and all the gloomy doctrines of depravity and predestination” (the belief that an individual’s salvation is predetermined) associated with it.³³³ An optimistic, progressive group, which retained a Puritan sense of piety and a tradition of perfectionism, theirs was a “relaxed religion” which welcomed “all believers,” supported “women in the ministry,” and urged a “Christian unity,” fostering an

³²⁸ Ronnie Dugger, “Does Reagan Expect A Nuclear Armageddon?,” *Washington Post*, Sunday April 8, 1984, C1, C4.

³²⁹ See for example, Reagan to Mrs. Van Hoorhis, Circa 1976, in Reagan, *Reagan, A Life in Letters*, 277-278; Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters (Feb. 9, 1982),” in *Public Papers, vol. 1*, 158;

³³⁰ Byrne, *Reagan*, 2-4, quote on “God’s hand” on 3, quotes on “Christian thinking” and “modern feelings” on 4.

³³¹ Quote on “Christian attitude” in Michael Reagan, *On the Outside Looking In* (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 1988), 20.

³³² Here, the term liberal is used to describe the progressive ideas associated with the classical liberalism of John Locke, the Enlightenment, and Founding Fathers like Thomas Jefferson, rather than the New Deal liberalism of Franklin Roosevelt, which, of course, had yet to come into being. It also serves to differentiate the Disciples from more conservative evangelicals and their fundamentalist offspring discussed in chapter 2.

³³³ Garrison and Degroot, *The Disciples of Christ*, 88-91, quote on “gloomy doctrines” in Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 25.

ecumenical spirit within their congregations.³³⁴ Reagan appears to have absorbed the Disciples teachings, as much of his religious/political philosophy, expressed in his writings and rhetoric, reflected the beliefs and values espoused by the church.

Disciples held a positive view of human nature, rejecting the doctrine of original sin – the idea that individuals are born in sin. While they agreed that “man was sinful,” they did not subscribe to the idea of man’s complete wickedness, but rather espoused a “doctrine of moral sense.”³³⁵ Reagan echoed this belief on numerous occasions, publicly and privately, including in a letter to an old friend, in which he wrote: “I guess what I am trying to say is that I oppose the dogmas of some organized religions who ... believe all children to be born in sin. *My personal belief is that God couldn't create evil so the desires he planted in us are good.*”³³⁶ Hostile to theology, the church’s founders eschewed strict creeds and “doctrinal disputes,” while emphasizing the application of the historical method to an “intelligent approach” to New Testament Scripture.³³⁷ As one more contemporary Disciple leader, Kenneth L. Teegarden, expressed: “There is no such thing as a ‘pure’ exposition of what the New Testament says.”³³⁸

³³⁴ Quote on “relaxed religion” in Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 25; quote on “all believers” in Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President,” 111; quote on “women in ministry,” in Edwards, *Early Reagan*, 59; quote on “Christian unity” in Garrison and Degroot, *The Disciples of Christ*, 150; Note: Disciples were part of the Restoration Movement, which rejected the church’s growing sectarianism, divisions they attributed to the “church polity” rather than the Bible, and sought “to restore the church to the ideal of New Testament Christianity.” See Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*, 159, 577.

³³⁵ Gary Wills, “Nelle’s Boy: Ronald Reagan and the Disciples of Christ,” *The Christian Century* 103, no. 34 (November 12, 1986):1003; Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President,” 111; Teegarden, *We Call Ourselves Disciples*, 85 (This view of sin, combined with their belief that the sacraments must be accepted voluntarily, lead the church to reject the practice of baptizing babies. Teegarden, the onetime general minister and president of the Disciples, explained the church’s philosophy on baptism this way: “We have not baptized infants because, practically speaking, they have not sinned and because they are incapable of faith responses. ... Children reared in the church usually make their confessions of faith and are baptized when they are 12 to 15 years old. Often after a period of instruction. ... Disciples baptize only persons who have decided to respond to God’s initiative in Jesus Christ.”); also see Garrison and Degroot, *The Disciples of Christ*, 172.

³³⁶ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Florence Yerly, December 17, 1951, in Reagan, *A Life in Letters*, 139, emphasis added.

³³⁷ Hatch, “The Christian Movement and the Demand for a Theology of the People,” 555-557, 559-560; Garrison and Degroot, *The Disciples of Christ*, 87-88, 108; quote on “doctrinal disputes” in Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 59; Teegarden, *We Call Ourselves Disciples*, 31-32, quotes on intelligent approach” on 31; Alexander Campbell, *The Christian System* (New York: Arno Press, 1969 c1866), 9, 15-18, on the historical method, see 16, VI, Rule 1.

³³⁸ Teegarden, *We Call Ourselves Disciples*, 30.

Unlike conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists who were suspicious of, even antagonistic toward, the idea of progress, which they equated with modernism, Disciples had embraced the concept and reconciled it with their faith. As did Reagan, who “saw no contradiction between spiritual values and material hunger.”³³⁹ A majority of Disciples endorsed the basic principles of the free enterprise system. They “shared a desire for wealth and believed that hard work, combined with Christian honesty would bring worldly success.”³⁴⁰ While not unsympathetic to the plight of labor, they held a general mistrust of unions, which they viewed as “radical,” a suspicion of socialism, which they perceived to be anarchistic, and an outright hostility towards “communism and its atheistic foundations.”³⁴¹

Disciples believed in “individual responsibility,” and those who were more conservative often “equated poverty with sin,” suggesting that the poor would benefit more from “moral redemption” than “material relief.”³⁴² Still, most recognized a need to assist the poor and, beginning in the late-nineteenth-early-twentieth centuries, many Disciples began to embrace ideas associated with the Social Gospel.³⁴³ Reagan would later strongly endorse the concept of church, along with family and neighbourhood, charity over government assistance.³⁴⁴ “Charity has been made both impersonal and ineffective by assigning it to government bureaucracy,” he told an interviewer in 1975.³⁴⁵

Disciples were less progressive when it came to the Catholic Church. Like most Protestant religious groups, they harboured a “fear” of, and “hostility” toward, the Church of Rome, which co-founder Thomas Campbell believed was “a sect and an apostasy ... anti-American and subversive of free

³³⁹ Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 205; also see Garrison, *An Empire of Ideals*, 187.

³⁴⁰ Quote in Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President,” 111; Garrison and Degroot, *The Disciples of Christ*, 423.

³⁴¹ Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President,” 115; In opposition to most Disciples, Nelle (and Jack) were strong advocates for workers’ rights. See Cannon, *Reagan*, 26; quote on “communism” in Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 35.

³⁴² Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President,” 114.

³⁴³ Garrison and Degroot, *The Disciples of Christ*, 423-424.

³⁴⁴ See, for example, Garrison, *An Empire of Ordeals*, 161; Letter, Reagan to Greg Brezina (Communicating Christian Concepts, Inc), ID# 106663, October 25, 1982, box RM Religious Matters, RM000001-250000, no. 1, RRPL.

³⁴⁵ Hobbs, *Ronald Reagan’s Call to Action*, 104

institutions.”³⁴⁶ The church denounced Catholics’ “moral laxity,” particularly when it came to alcohol. The Disciples, who created the American Temperance Board in 1907, were outspoken prohibitionists – most notably, Carrie Nation.³⁴⁷ Many members also drew a connection between alcohol and poverty. Nelle shared the church’s disdain for liquor, a “sensitive topic in the Reagan household.” She may also have shared their suspicion of the Catholic Church, but her attitude towards Catholics seems evidently more accepting – she had, after all, married one.³⁴⁸ In any case, there appears to be a general consensus among scholars that prejudice - religious, racial, or otherwise - was not tolerated in the Reagan home.

Disciples believed, as one scholar so aptly put it, “that Christian principles should be applied to political and social issues because religion provides us with answers to ethical questions and politicians create laws that foster ethical behavior. Politics and religion can never separate, just as modern-day ideologies can never be separated from politics. How can any ethical system be separate from the field that tries to create a just society?”³⁴⁹ In relation, Disciples subscribed to a providential belief strongly infused with a sense of nationalism that linked “the country’s interest with God’s Will and occasionally explained America’s mission ‘in prophetic, millennialistic terms.’”³⁵⁰ Alexander Campbell saw the United States as a crusader state tasked by God with confronting and destroying “false religion and autocracy” around the world.³⁵¹

This idea of a “Christ Nation” had gained widespread support among “*progressive* Christian clergy” by the turn of the (19th/20th) century, broadly displacing the Puritan’s “idea of America as a New Israel,” which had been embraced throughout American history by many leading *conservative* religious and political leaders. Both views see America and its people as having been blessed by God. But the latter

³⁴⁶ Quotes on “fear and “hostility” in Wills, “Nelle’s Boy,” 1005; Thomas Campbell quoted in Garrison and Degroot, *The Disciples of Christ*, 228.

³⁴⁷ Wills, “Nelle’s Boy,” 1005.

³⁴⁸ Quote on “sensitive topic” in Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President,” 116. Note: Despite her religious tolerance, there may be some truth in Gary Wills suggestion that, in Jack’s “faith,” Nelle may “have found ... an enemy partly explaining her husband’s faults.” See Wills, *Reagan’s America*, 17.

³⁴⁹ Byrne, *Reagan*, 2

³⁵⁰ Vaughn, “The Moral Inheritance of a President,” 111, 114, quote on 114.

³⁵¹ Quoted in Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 34.

took “a more inward looking perspective which held that America was a ‘promised land,’ looking to perfect liberty, Christianity, and self-government at home,” while the former included a moral obligation to extend “freedom, democracy, progress, and peace” around the world.³⁵² Taken to its extreme was the idea that, if the United States was a godly nation with a “righteous” mission, then its enemies, by extension, “must be evil.”³⁵³

Reagan was a devout believer in the providential nature of the nation, adopting colonial American leader John Winthrop’s description of the United States as a “city upon a hill,” but adapting it to include “shining” (“shining city upon a hill”).³⁵⁴ Inspired by a passage in the Bible, the phrase encapsulated the idea of America as a beacon of light, or hope, in the world. Reagan publicly acknowledged his convictions as early as 1952. In a commencement address to the graduating class at William Woods College, he referred to the United States as a “promised land” and associated it with God’s “grace,” while framing the country within a “divine scheme.”³⁵⁵ Five years later, he made similar remarks in a commencement address at Eureka College, his alma mater.³⁵⁶ On another occasion he wrote, “I truly believe that to be an American is to be part of a nation with a destiny (sic) that God put this land here

³⁵² Garrison, *The Chimeric Imagination of Ronald Reagan*, 111, 112, 108, 168, emphasis added.

³⁵³ Garrison, *The Chimeric Imagination of Ronald Reagan*, 112. Founding Father John Adams, a conservative, cautioned against America becoming “the dictatress of the world,” warning its citizens “to keep a conscious limit on their ideological and political and geographical ambitions.” The United States “does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy,” he wrote. See John Lukacs, *A New Republic: A History of the United States in the Twentieth century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004 c1984), 435, 5.

³⁵⁴ Winthrop wrote: “For wee must consider that wee shall be as a citty upon a hill. The eies of all people are upon us. Soe that if wee shall deale falsely with our God in this worke wee haue undertaken, and soe cause him to withdrawe his present help from us, wee shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.” See John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity (1630),” in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston, 1838), 3rd series 7:31-48. <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html>; On Reagan’s reference to a “shining city upon a hill,” see, for example, Ronald Reagan, “Reshaping the American Political Landscape (A Majority of Americans Agree with Conservative Principles), Speaking at the American Conservative Union Banquet, Washington, D, C., February 6, 1977, in *A Time for Choosing*, 201.

³⁵⁵ Ronald Reagan, “‘America the Beautiful,’ June 1952,” in *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan*, ed. Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 6; also see Reagan, *Reagan, in His Own Hand*, ed. Kiron K. Skinner, Annelise Graebner Anderson, and Martin Anderson (New York; London: Free Press, 2001), 255

³⁵⁶ Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 89, 95.

between the great oceans to be discovered by a special kind of people and that God intended America to be free.”³⁵⁷

Reagan made clear many times, both publicly and privately, the inherent responsibility that came with America’s divine blessing. In one speech he declared that “There is no way for America to turn inward and embrace isolationism in the world as it is today without jeopardizing all the progress we have made toward peace in this century. ... If we carry the burden of responsibility destiny has placed on our shoulders, we do not become a dropout in world affairs.”³⁵⁸ “It was our policy that this great democracy of ours had a special obligation to help bring freedom to other peoples,” he wrote in his second autobiography.³⁵⁹ Winthrop’s vision of America as a city upon a hill, also help lay the foundation for the idea of American exceptionalism, which Reagan wholeheartedly accepted to be true. As he made clear, “It’s not an arrogant demand that others adopt our ways. It’s a realistic belief in the relative and proven success of the American experiment.”³⁶⁰

Nelle Reagan was, undoubtedly, one of the most liberal members of the Christian Church. She broke with the majority when it came to her opposition to religious prejudice (or prejudice of any kind) and her support for workers’ rights. But she embraced the basic tenets – an optimistic view of human nature, individual responsibility, respect for capitalism, opposition to communism, a preference for church and neighborly charity, and the providential nature of America and its role in the world - of the otherwise progressive religion, as expressed through Reverend Ben Cleaver’s sermon’s. These were passed on to the

³⁵⁷ Quoted in von Damm, *Sincerely Ronald Reagan*, 211-212; on America’s providential nature, also see Reagan to Dorothy D. Conaghan, Circa 1976, in Reagan, *Reagan, in His Own Hand*, 256; Reagan, “We Need a Rebirth in Leadership (Three Grave Threats to Our Way of Life), From the Presidential Nomination Acceptance Address, Republican National Convention, Detroit, Michigan, July 17, 1980,” in *A Time for Choosing*, 234; Reagan, “Remarks at Kansas State University at the Alfred M. Landon Lecture Series on Public Issues, September 9, 1982,” in *Public Papers, 1982, vol. 2*, 1121; and Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters (Feb. 9, 1982),” in *Public Papers, 1982, vol. 1*, 158 .

³⁵⁸ Reagan, “Ours is Not a Sick Society (Accomplishments of the American Free Enterprise System), Speaking at Sacramento Host Breakfast, Sacramento California, September 4, 1970, in *A Time for Choosing*, 105

³⁵⁹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 265; also see Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at a Spirit of America Festival in Decatur, Alabama, July 4, 1984,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1984, vol. II* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 1001.

³⁶⁰ Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Washington Conference of the American Legion, February 22, 1983,” in *Public Papers, 1983, volume 1*, 265-266.

young Dutch - implanting “in him a faith in God that built in intensity as he grew older.”³⁶¹ Nelle was a tireless supporter of, and activist within, the church. She taught Sunday school, led church groups, daily prayer, and Bible meetings. Embracing the Social Gospel, she “engaged in good works and acts of charity” – counselling the incarcerated, feeding the unfortunate, and visiting the sick.³⁶² Perhaps almost as strong as her sense of piety, was her inclination towards the theatre. Nelle was “a frustrated actress” with “literary yearnings.” She expressed these desires through her church skits and plays - including one about temperance - which were intended to convey a moral message, her work with the choir, giving theatrical readings, and teaching elocution.³⁶³

This was the world in which the future president grew up. The values and beliefs passed on to him by his mother and the church helped lay the foundations for his religious and, by extension, political views. He partook in many of Nelle’s activities, along with attending Sunday school and regular service, but it was Dutch’s choice whether to become baptized in the Christian Church.³⁶⁴ Nelle’s influence was surely a factor in his decision. Even the more immediate inspiration, a book, was given to him by his mother. Written by Harold Bell Wright, *That Printer of Udell’s* was a Social Gospel novel in which the protagonist, Dick Falkner, a young Christian man whose mother dies at the hands of an abusive, alcoholic father, sees good triumph over evil. Central to the book’s message is that God has a plan for everyone. Also prominent is a critique of organized religion and the need for a practical, or “applied Christianity.” Dick “saw that the church was proving false to the Christ; that her service was a service of the lips only; that her worship was a form and ceremony – not of the heart – a hollow mockery.”³⁶⁵ Lamenting the

³⁶¹ Nelle Reagan “was highly invested in and publicly promoted prominent progressive ideas about America’s role in the world.” See Garrison, *The Chimeric Imagination of Ronald Reagan*, 119; quote on “faith in God” in Reagan, *Reagan, A Life in Letters*, 42.

³⁶² Edwards, *Early Reagan*, 59-60; Wills, *Reagan’s America*, 16-17, 22; quote (“good works ... and charity”) in Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 25; Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 10-14; Wills, “Nelle’s Boy,” 1002, 1003; Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 10.

³⁶³ Wills, *Reagan’s America*, 22-24.

³⁶⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, 32,

³⁶⁵ Harold Bell Wright, *That Printer of Udell’s: A Story of the Middle West* (New York: A.L. Burt Company, 1911 c1902 and 1903), quote on “applied Christianity” on 213, quote on “the church...” on 45; Ron Reagan suggests that

societal ills and decline in religiosity that has befallen his midwestern hometown (Boyd City), Dick leads its transformation by mixing “business and Christian principles” and instilling a sense of “civic pride” and “municipal virtue” within its citizenry.³⁶⁶ While he advocates “a form of social welfare for the poor,” Dick makes clear “*the need ... to distinguish between the ‘deserving and undeserving.’*” Failing to do so, he warns, would ““prove a curse instead of a blessing.””³⁶⁷

The values and philosophies promoted in the book, and the message it conveyed (along with some of the protagonist’s family circumstances), “as Nelle surely appreciated,” would have resonated strongly with young Dutch, as they very closely mirrored those imparted to him at home and in Reverend Cleaver’s church.³⁶⁸ It “made such an impact on me,” Reagan wrote, “mainly because of the goodness of the principle character.”³⁶⁹ One writer concluded that reading the book “was a religious experience” for the future president.³⁷⁰ Only days later, he would announce his intention to be baptized in the Disciples of Christ, which he was, soon after, on June 21, 1922 at the young age of eleven.³⁷¹ Reagan would later write that he “found a role model in that traveling printer Harold Bell Wright had brought to life. He set me on a course I’ve tried to follow even unto this day. I shall always be grateful.”³⁷²

Paul Kengor suggests that the instability and loneliness of Dutch’s formative years “created a void” in his life “that religion came to fill.” Seeking stability, “he looked to where his mother, his heart, and his

“Nelle, like much of Wright’s readership, might have understood this” criticism of organized religion “as a broadside primarily aimed at the Catholic Church.” See Reagan, *My Father at 100*, 103.

³⁶⁶ Quote on “business and Christian principles” in Cannon, *Reagan*, 19; quote on “civic pride” and “municipal virtue” in Wright, *That Printer of Udell’s*, 220; also see Griswold, “Reagan’s Reading: ‘I’m a Sucker for Hero Worship,’” 11.

³⁶⁷ Quoted in Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 23 (emphasis added); also see Reagan, *My Father at 100*, 102.

³⁶⁸ Quoted in Reagan, *My Father at 100*, 101.

³⁶⁹ Quote on “impact” in Reagan, *An American Life*, 32; quote on “goodness” in Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 19.

³⁷⁰ Morris, *Dutch*, 40.

³⁷¹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 32; Reagan, *Reagan, A Life in Letters*, 6; Edwards, *Early Reagan*, 58-59. Note: The Disciples rarely baptized someone that young. Children were generally at least 12-15 years old when they were baptized in the church. See fn 37 above. Note: Reagan’s baptism came roughly four months after the incident involving his father passed out in the snow. See Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 9-10.

³⁷² Letter, Ronald Reagan to Jean B. Wright, March 13, 1984, in Reagan, *Reagan, A Life in Letters*, 6.

desolation pointed him – upward. And in God he found what he perceived as a permanent friend.”³⁷³ Reagan was, by most accounts, an enthusiastic member of the First Christian Church of Dixon. His entire Sunday was filled with religious activities – Sunday school, then regular service, followed by a Christian Endeavor (a church youth group) meeting, and finally an evening service. He attended a prayer group on Wednesday nights and various other holiday services and special events throughout the year. When he got older, Reagan taught Sunday school, ran prayer meetings, and worked to raise money for church improvements.³⁷⁴

In the church pastor, Ben Cleaver, the future president found a mentor who would serve as something of a father figure. Beyond his religious influence, Cleaver provided guidance, helped facilitate his entry into college, and “even taught him to drive.”³⁷⁵ In the Reverend’s daughter, Margaret (“Mugs”), Reagan found his high school sweetheart, who he was briefly engaged to. “I was sure she was going to be my wife,” he recalled fondly.³⁷⁶ Dutch spent so much time with the pastor and his family, noted Gary Wills, that “he was as close to being a ‘preacher’s kid’ as one can be without actually moving into the parsonage.” He “was in our house all the time,” remembered Margaret’s sister Helen.³⁷⁷ The Dixon pastor “played an integral role in Reagan’s adolescence – the formative years when the young man’s lifelong devotion to Christian principles was crystallized.”³⁷⁸ Reagan later expressed his appreciation in a letter to the Cleaver’s. “One thing I do know – all the hours in the old church in Dixon (which I didn’t appreciate at the time) and all of Nelle’s faith, have come together in a kind of inheritance without which I’d be lost

³⁷³ Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 8.

³⁷⁴ Edwards, *Early Reagan*, 58, 59; Charles W. Dunn, “The Irony of Ronald Reagan,” in *The Enduring Reagan*, ed. Charles W. Dunn (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 2; Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 27-32; Brown, *Hand of Providence*, 43-45; As a member of Christian Endeavor, one committed to daily prayer and Bible reading, living a Christian lifestyle, and regular church attendance. See Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*, 162.

³⁷⁵ Wills, “Nelle’s Boy,” 1003; Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 23; also see Wills, *Reagan’s America*, 18.

³⁷⁶ Smith, *Faith and the presidency*, 326; quote in Reagan, *An American Life*, 40.

³⁷⁷ Wills, “Nelle’s Boy,” 1003.

³⁷⁸ Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 36.

and helpless. ... My faith is unshakeable, and because all of you were so much responsible, I thank you for a peace beyond description.”³⁷⁹

It was also through the church and his mother’s love for the arts that the young Reagan was introduced to the theatrical world. Nelle gave him diction lessons and provided voice training. He regularly appeared in her morality plays, joined in her monthly visits to entertain patients at the local state hospital, and presented “dramatic recitations” – passages from popular books, poems, speeches, or plays.³⁸⁰ It was while participating in one of these recitals, at Nelle’s urging, that the shy young Dutch received his first taste of an audience. “I don’t remember what I said,” he recalled in his memoir, “but I’ll never forget the response: People *laughed and applauded*. ... For a kid suffering childhood pangs of insecurity, the applause was music. I didn’t know it then but, in a way, when I walked off the stage that night, my life had changed.”³⁸¹

Along with acting, Reagan also developed a love for athletics, as well as other extra-curricular activities. The small, shy boy who kept to himself, began to mature into a handsome and confident young man, though he would, by his own admission, never completely shed the need for attention, applause, and adulation that his childhood insecurities had implanted in his psyche. By the time he was a junior in high school he was nearly six foot and weighed over 160 pounds. A vision problem - that had gone undiagnosed until he casually put on a pair of his mother’s eyeglasses one afternoon, revealing a world of detail until then unknown to him - was remedied. Having overcome these impediments, Reagan began to transform, and those who knew him described him as an all-American kid. He went on to serve as senior class president, president of the drama club, and vice-president of the Hi-Y club.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ Ronald Reagan to Reverend and Mrs. Ben H. Cleaver, January 4, 1973, in Reagan, *Reagan: A Life in Letters*, 279

³⁸⁰ Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 59; Wills, *Reagan’s America*, 17, 22; Smith, *Faith and the presidency*, 326.

³⁸¹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 35.

³⁸² Reagan, *An American Life*, 42, 40, 36-37; Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 18-19; Robert Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 30; Cannon, Reagan, 28-29.

Football was his passion, and he played right guard on his high school team. He also managed to get a job as a lifeguard at Lowell Park, the local swimming hole, on the Rock River.³⁸³ Over the course of the next several summers, Dutch would save over seventy struggling swimmers and become something of a local hero, even appearing in the newspaper. Much like the stage and the football field, he craved the attention and adulation that came with being a lifeguard, though he lamented that few, if any, of the swimmers he saved showed appreciation for his efforts. Instead, most insisted they had “been fine” and chastised him for making them look the “fool.” From this, he learned “that people hate to be saved.”³⁸⁴ Some scholars have suggested that this perception, that people want to be left to take care of themselves, contributed to Reagan’s political outlook and approach to government, particularly his views on the welfare state.³⁸⁵ While Reagan’s interests grew beyond the church, his religion remained a central part of his life, evident in his high school commencement speech, in which he quoted Scripture (John 10:10): “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”³⁸⁶

Though she, like Jack, had only minimal formal education, Nelle mirrored the Christian Church’s belief in bettering oneself intellectually, and she strongly encouraged her sons to pursue higher education.³⁸⁷ Following high school, Dutch attended Eureka, a Disciples of Christ liberal arts college, which aimed “to promote and instill biblical values.”³⁸⁸ Short of the necessary funds to pay for it, he got by on a Needy Student Scholarship and by washing dishes. He majored in economics and sociology, though he managed only average grades, was involved in student government, worked on the Year Book,

³⁸³ Reagan, *An American Life*, 40.

³⁸⁴ Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 20-21; on attention and adulation, see, for example, Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History: America in the Reagan Years* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 44.

³⁸⁵ See, for example, Kenneth T. Walsh, *Biography: Ronald Reagan* (New York: Park Lane Press, 1977), 12; and Robert Dallek, *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 17-18 (Dallek wrote that these experiences “confirmed his conviction that any kind of dependency or loss of self-possession leaves people feeling angry, demoralized and foolish.” See 17).

³⁸⁶ Quoted in Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 32.

³⁸⁷ Cannon, *Reagan*, 27.

³⁸⁸ Byrne, *Reagan*, 8.

and indulged his passions for sports and acting.³⁸⁹ It was also here where a student strike over cuts in courses and faculty gave Reagan “his first taste of politics.” He recalled that he took on a leadership role, giving a well-received speech that rallied the student body to their cause, but Gary Wills’ research has cast doubt on Dutch’s interpretation of events surrounding the strike and his part in it. Regardless, the president remembered that “For the first time in my life, I felt my words reach out and grab an audience, and it was exhilarating.”³⁹⁰ Reagan continued to attend church regularly during his college years. While he provided, at this point, “little evidence of a special dynamism in his relationship with God,” Bob Slosser suggested that the seeds had been planted. After graduating from Eureka, Dutch spent some time (1932-1937) as a radio sports broadcaster in Davenport, Illinois. While covering the Chicago Cubs spring training in California, he managed to land a screen test with Warner Brothers Studios, who offered him a six-month contract.³⁹¹

After his contract was renewed, with a raise, Reagan moved Jack and Nelle to California. He bought them their first house and gave his father a job handling his fan mail. The shy, poor boy from Dixon, who started acting in his mother’s church morality plays, would go on to become a successful actor, appearing in over 50 feature films between the 1937 and 1964 (along with a handful of propaganda films during the Second World War). Dutch was by no means monastic while he was in Hollywood. He was known to have a drink or two and he dated his share of young starlets, but he was not a “drinker” and he was the furthest thing from a “playboy.” In 1940, he married a fellow performer, Jane Wyman. They had three children - Maureen (1940), Michael (adopted in 1945), and Christine (born in 1947, but died the same

³⁸⁹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 44-47, 49-50; Collins, *Transforming America*, 32.

³⁹⁰ Reagan, *An American Life*, 47-48, quote on “politics” on 47, quote on “an audience” on 48; on the strike, see Edwards, *Early Reagan*, 84-92; Slosser, *Reagan, Inside Out*, 44; Wills, *Reagan’s America*, 40-52 (Will’s in-depth exploration of the event, and the broader, historical context of the issues surrounding it, concludes that Reagan’s recollection of the strike and his role in it are inaccurate, suggesting that “Almost everything about the strike had been erased from Reagan’s mind...” See 51.)

³⁹¹ Slosser, *Reagan Inside Out*, 44; Reagan, *Reagan, A Life in Letters*, 1; on Reagan’s brief career in radio, see Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 163-165; and Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 48-52, 54-74. Reagan was fond of recounting an incident in which the teletype went dead and he was forced to make up the game until the machine came back on. See, for example, Letter, Reagan to Buzzy Sisco, December 24, 1985, in *Reagan, Dear Americans*, 245.

day). That same year (1940), Reagan landed his breakout role, starring in *Knute Rockne: All American*. But it was *King's Row*, released in 1942, for which he received the highest praise. His career was set to take off, but World War Two intervened. When the United States became embroiled in the conflict, Reagan shifted to acting in propaganda films, while serving as an Army cavalry reserve officer. During the postwar period his career climaxed, while Wyman's was on the rise (she earned a 1946 Oscar nomination for Best Actress, winning the award in 1948). Politics, of which Wyman had little interest, began to occupy more and more of his time. Reagan, "relaxed, thrifty, and confident," and Wyman, "anxious, insecure," and "impulsive," proved incompatible. They grew apart and their marriage ended in 1948 (finalized in 1949), with Wyman gaining custody of their two children, with whom Reagan had been somewhat detached.³⁹²

This was a difficult time in his life and he, admitted that he "did not handle his divorce ... well." He felt lost.³⁹³ His mother's belief, that everything happens for a reason and in the end it all works out for the best, may have come into his mind when, at his lowest point, he was introduced to a young actress named Nancy Davis. Their meeting was one of several events in his life that convinced Reagan that God "had a plan for" him. In Nancy, the daughter of a wealthy conservative (read classical liberal) doctor, he found the love and support he had been missing. She "moved into my heart and replaced an emptiness that I'd been trying to ignore for a long time," he later wrote.³⁹⁴ They married in 1952 and had two children, Patti (1952) and Ron Jr. (1958). The following year (1953), Reagan began a life-long friendship with Billy

³⁹² Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 71-79, quotes on 78; Edwards, *Early Reagan*, 320-321, 325, 353-355; Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 78-79; Bob Colacello, *Ronnie and Nancy: The Path to the White House, 1911-1980* (New York: Warner Books, 2004), 164-165, 179, 202, 205-209, 221-224; Cannon, *Reagan*, 24, 56-58; Smith, *Who is Ronald Reagan?*, 73; on Reagan's filmography, see Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, *Ronald Reagan's Films*, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sreference/ronald-reagan-s-filmography>.

³⁹³ Slosser, *Reagan, Inside Out*, 45-46, 61-62, quote on "divorce" on 62; Cannon, *Reagan*, 89.

³⁹⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, 123.

Graham, after the two were introduced by his mother-in-law, Edith Davis. Slosser points to this period as turning point in his life – “a significant time in the evolution of his faith.”³⁹⁵

The future president would establish friendships with several Christian leaders over his lifetime, including George Otis Sr., who prophesized Reagan’s ascension to the presidency, and Jerry Falwell.³⁹⁶ But he was, perhaps, closest to Graham, who was twice invited by then Governor Reagan to speak before the California State Legislature, and his pastor at Beverly Presbyterian Church, Reverend Donn Moomaw, who delivered the invocation and benediction at both of Reagan’s gubernatorial (1967 and 1971) inaugurations and his first as president (1981).³⁹⁷ It was Graham and Moomaw, the latter cutting short a trip to Bermuda, who rushed to Washington after being called upon to offer “spiritual encouragement and prayer” following the assassination attempt on the president’s life in April 1981.³⁹⁸ Throughout the time he knew them, Reagan maintained connections through correspondence and personal visits, including at the White House. Both ministers professed to Reagan’s faith and biblical knowledge. Graham wrote that he “had often detected a spiritual side to him,” noting that they regularly spoke about spiritual matters and biblical prophecy, including the “Second Coming of Christ...and salvation – who was to be saved and who was going to be lost.”³⁹⁹ Moomaw suggested that Reagan “can talk intelligently about Christian doctrine. He knows the Bible.”⁴⁰⁰ The California pastor, and former All-American football player, also

³⁹⁵ On Reagan’s relationship with Nancy Davis, see Colacello, *Ronnie and Nancy*; on meeting Billy Graham, see Billy Graham, *Just as I am: The autobiography of Billy Graham* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 1977), 530; Slosser, *Reagan Inside Out*, 135, 45-46.

³⁹⁶ On George Otis and his prophecy, see Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 135-137; Cannon, *President Reagan*, 247; Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics*, 43-46; and Slosser, *Reagan Inside Out*, 13-18.

³⁹⁷ Peter Weisser, “Reagan Will Take Over State's Helm in Dramatic Ceremony,” *Sacramento Bee*, January 1, 1967, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/49696380/reagans-1967-inauguration-clip-2/>; “Cannons, People Both Roar, Some With Disapproval, During Festivities,” *Sacramento Bee*, January 4, 1971; John Dart, “Clergy Prayers: Reagan Pastor to Monopolize Inauguration,” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 29, 1980, B11. Donn Moomaw also offered prayers at Reagan’s second inauguration in 1985. See <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/sreference/inaugurations>.

³⁹⁸ Billy Graham, *Just as I Am*, 536; Letter, Billy Graham to Linda Faulkner, April 6, 1981, and Linda Faulkner (Assistant Social Secretary to the White House) to Dr. Billy Graham, April 14, 1981, box Grady – Harrison no. 29, WHORM Alpha File, Ronald Reagan Library.

³⁹⁹ Graham, *Just as I Am*, 534; also see Halsell, *Prophecy and Politics*, 42-43.

⁴⁰⁰ John Dart, “Enlightened Church: Reagan Pastor Has Independent View,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 18, 1980, A34, A35; Gary Wills, “‘Born Again’ Politics’

acknowledged, what most who knew him understood, that Reagan had “difficulty” vocalizing “his faith” because he found the matter “so personal.”⁴⁰¹

Reagan was also not tethered to the idea that one demonstrated their connection to God through regular church attendance or open displays of prayer. His connection with God was just that, between himself and the almighty.⁴⁰² Ron Reagan remembered his father as a “man of faith” and “sincere” religiosity, who assumed a “low-key” and “nonexhibitionist approach”⁴⁰³ David A. Byrne argues that Reagan’s lack of “outward or public manifestations of Christianity doesn’t mean he was less religious or Christian.” Byrne points out that “Protestant Christianity is a relationship with Jesus Christ,” and “all that is technically required is faith in Christ. The good life is built on that. A more solid foundation cannot exist.”⁴⁰⁴ During his time in Hollywood, Dutch maintained this privacy, keeping his spiritual views to himself and a small group of friends, including a number of evangelical leaders.⁴⁰⁵ Paul Kengor suggests that “The evidence of Reagan’s continued faith during this period is scattered but intriguing.” Perhaps most revealing is an article he wrote for a trade publication and a private piece of correspondence. In the June 1950 edition of *Modern Screen* magazine, the future president admitted that he did not attend church as “regularly as I should,” but maintained “that a man can be religious without going to church.” He professed to the importance of prayer in his life, revealing that “there hasn’t been a serious crisis in my life when I haven’t prayed, and when prayer hasn’t helped me.”⁴⁰⁶

The article also shares his progressive, optimistic perspective on religion and God:

“I wouldn’t attempt to describe what God is like, although I place my greatest faith in Him. I think the wonderful line in the Bible, which says God is love, comes as close as words can. I

⁴⁰¹ Donn Moomaw quoted in Slosser, *Reagan Inside Out*, 50; also see Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 161.

⁴⁰² Slosser, *Reagan, Inside Out*, 47, 50.

⁴⁰³ Reagan, *My Father at 100*, 103. The president’s son has suggested that *That Printer of Udell’s* with its criticism of gratuitous displays of religiosity, may have served as “an early mold for my father’s spiritual sensibilities.” “No religious harangues echoed through our house,” he recounted. See 103.

⁴⁰⁴ Byrne, *Reagan*, 6.

⁴⁰⁵ Slosser, *Reagan, Inside Out*, 47, 50.

⁴⁰⁶ Ronald Reagan, “My Faith,” *Modern Screen*, June 1950, 37, 88-89, quoted in Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 49-52, quotes on 49.

certainly don't expect to spend eternity on a cloud, but I do think there's something beyond the grave, that we were given souls for a reason, that if we live as the Bible tells us, a promise will be kept. *I don't believe in hell.* I can't believe that an all wise and loving Father would condemn any one of his children to eternal diminution. *Nor do I believe that God can be blamed for all the tragedies in the world. ... the responsibility is in our hands alone.* Our lives are in our hands. ... *I think God gave us certain control over our own destiny.* He showed us by rules and by countless examples how to live happily and well."⁴⁰⁷

Reagan also revealed a practicality to his religious philosophy, without compromising his principles, in a letter he wrote to an old friend about her husband's recent passing, being able to move on, and "guilty feelings" concerning sex:

I too was raised in a home where 'ideals' similar I'm sure to yours were taught, by my Mother. Now I have the highest regard for her and for her teachings (sic) but I have had to go on from there and find a 'code for living' in keeping with my conscience and knowledge of right and wrong. This does not mean casting her principles aside but rather it is building to meet my present needs on a foundation I learned from her. At the same time (sic) I have learned painfully that some 'idealism' is in effect a flight from reality.⁴⁰⁸

Beyond religion, the 1950s would also be a significant period in terms of Reagan's political philosophy, which was beginning to crystalize. During the 1940s, he described himself as a "a near-hopeless hemophilic liberal," and "a New Dealer to the core" who "idolized" Franklin Roosevelt, for whom he had cast his first presidential vote only days after his 21st birthday.⁴⁰⁹ Forever the optimist, it

⁴⁰⁷ Reagan, "My Faith," quoted in Martin Anderson and Annelise Graebner Anderson, *Reagan's Secret War: The Untold Story of his Fight to Save the World from Nuclear Disaster* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2009), 98 (emphasis added).

⁴⁰⁸ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Florence Yerly, December 17, 1951, in Reagan, *A Life in Letters*, 139 (Reagan ended the letter with a remark that revealed how sensitive he found the comments contained within: "Now I'm going to seal this letter very quickly and mail it because if I read it over I won't have the nerve to send it.").

⁴⁰⁹ Quote on "hemophilic liberal" in, Reagan and Hubler, *Where's the Rest of Me*, 139; Reagan, *An American Life*, quote on "New Dealer" on 105, quote on "idolized" on 66.

was his faith in FDR, in his message of hope and inspiration, and in the belief that he was doing everything he could “to restore the American dream,” that accounted for Reagan's New Deal enthusiasm, rather than “faith in any particular policy or program.”⁴¹⁰ Despite the horrific carnage of the Second World War, Reagan maintained his optimistic outlook. As the United States entered the postwar period, he envisioned a world of untold potential, sharing his expectations in his memoir:

“Like most soldiers who came back, I expected a world suddenly reformed. I hoped and believed that the blood and death and confusion of World War II should result in a regeneration of mankind, that the whole struggle was simply the immolation of the phoenix of human liberties and that the bird of happiness would rise out of the ashes and fly everywhere at once. It seemed impossible that anyone could go on as usual. If men could cooperate in war, how much better they could work together in peace!”⁴¹¹

With the hopes of bringing about “a better world,” he joined numerous progressive and peace-oriented organizations – the Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professionals (HICCASP), Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), the United World Federalists (UWF), and the American Veterans Committee (AVC). He would later would quit HICCASP and the AVC when he discovered that they were alleged to be communist fronts.⁴¹² Reagan’s initial postwar concern had been what he saw as “the rise in fascism” in the United States, evident in the numerous right-wing organizations, many associated with veterans, springing up around the country. “Thus (sic) my first evangelism came in the form of being hell-bent on saving the world from neo-fascism,” he later wrote. Against authoritarianism of any stripe, he opposed communism, but he did not believe it posed a real danger to the country. It was a local reverend who helped him “refocus his attention on the growing threat.” After hearing one of Reagan’s lectures, in which he denounced fascism, the pastor suggested he

⁴¹⁰ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 165.

⁴¹¹ Reagan, *Where's the Rest of Me?*, 139.

⁴¹² Quote on “a better world” in Reagan, *An American Life*, 106; George Henry Smith, *Who Is Ronald Reagan?* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1968), 62-75; Collins, *Transforming America*, 34-35; Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 28-29, 31-33.

consider voicing equal criticism of communist tyranny. Reagan “agreed it was a fair” request. In his next speech, his customary comments elicited “riotous applause,” but when he warned about communism, the crowd fell silent.⁴¹³ It would take some time for “Reagan’s suspicions about communists ... to develop,” but this incident tweaked his radar.⁴¹⁴

In 1947, he became president of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), after having already sat on the board of directors, and would serve in the role until 1952 and then again from 1959-1960. It was the “bitter battle over Communist influence in the movie industry” and his involvement with the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) investigations involving Hollywood actors, directors, writers, etc., that awakened him to the real threat posed by communism.⁴¹⁵ The postwar years (1946-1948) saw labour unrest in a number of entertainment-related trades, and strikes broke out among the various unions. When strike leaders called for actors to join the walkout, Reagan began to suspect “a communist effort to paralyze the film industry.” Having initially counselled neutrality, he now “led SAG in taking a stand,” urging actors to refrain from participating. The strikes turned violent and Reagan’s life was threatened, after which he received police protection and began to carry a gun.⁴¹⁶

Reagan also began cooperating with the FBI in April 1947, after they convinced him that HICCASP and AVC were communist fronts. He became a confidential informant, providing names of actors suspected of subversive activities, while continuing to push his anti-communist message, even recommending SAG members pledge an oath to support patriotic programs. After having initially believed that “Communists – if there really were any – were liberals who were temporarily off track,” his

⁴¹³ Quotes on “fascism” and “a better world” in Reagan, *An American Life*, 106; Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 141-142, quote on “first evangelism” on 141, quotes on “fair” and “riotous applause” on 142; quote on “attention” in Kengor *God and Ronald Reagan*, 50 (Kengor identified the minister as Reverend Cleveland Kleihauer).

⁴¹⁴ Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 101.

⁴¹⁵ Smith, *Who Is Ronald Reagan?*, 62-75; quote on “battle” in Collins, *Transforming America*, 34-35; Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 28-29, 31-33.

⁴¹⁶ Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 99-100, quotes on 99; Collins, *Transforming America*, 35; Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 174.

experiences during this period revealed the depth of subversion in the industry.⁴¹⁷ Still, at the time he testified before HUAC that those responsible were a “small, militant, well organized minority” - the vast majority of members, including those who identified as liberal, he believed, were genuine anti-communists.⁴¹⁸ The “Reds” were “stopped ... cold in Hollywood,” in no small part due to Reagan, who one actor described as “a one man battalion.”⁴¹⁹ In the process, the careers, and lives, of countless innocent men and women were destroyed, and Reagan later acknowledged that “many fine people were accused wrongly of being Communists simply because they were liberals.”⁴²⁰ During this period, Reagan came to understand “how Communists used, lies, deceit, violence, or any other tactic that suited them to advance the cause of Soviet expansion.”⁴²¹ He was beginning to appreciate “that America faced no more insidious or evil threat,” and he was uncertain that liberals were able to deal with it - unwilling or unable to “see the truth” about the dangers it posed.⁴²²

While he was questioning liberals’ anti-communist commitment, Reagan was also becoming disillusioned with the direction of the federal government. Reagan’s view of government was that of Thomas Jefferson, who he quotes in his biography: “Democrats consider the people as the safest repository of power in the last resort; they cherish them, therefore, and wish to leave in them all the powers to the exercise of which they are competent ... the equal rights of every man and the happiness of every individual are now acknowledged to be the only legitimate objects of government.” Jefferson believed “that the best government was the smallest government, that ‘governments are not the masters of the people, but the servants of the people governed.’” Reagan came to believe that the Democratic Party had begun to move away from these basic assumptions during the Depression, expanding government and

⁴¹⁷ Edwards, *Early Reagan*, 305-307, 332-337; quote on “liberals.... off track” in Reagan, *An American Life*, 115.

⁴¹⁸ Willard Edwards, “Cooper Tells of Rejecting ‘Pinko’ Scripts,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 24, 1947, 1, 12, quote on “militant ... minority” on 12.

⁴¹⁹ Quote on “stopped ... cold” in Reagan, *An American Life*, 114; quote on one man battalion” in Reagan and Habler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 174.

⁴²⁰ Reagan, *An American Life*, 115.

⁴²¹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 115.

⁴²² Quote on “evil threat” in Reagan, *An American Life*, 115; Smith, *Who is Ronald Reagan?*, 62-73, quote on “truth” on 66.

progressively claiming greater “right to regulate and plan the social and economic life of the country.”⁴²³ While he acknowledged “the best of intentions,” he argued that the rapid expansion of the federal bureaucracy in the postwar years set the United States “along a path to a silent form of socialism.” He was becoming convinced, that anything, “short of assuring the national security,” could be “handled more efficiently by the forces of private enterprise than by” Washington officials.⁴²⁴

Because politics and religion were inseparable, Reagan also viewed government through a biblical lens, often referencing the parable of the Good Samaritan when articulating his position. In it, a pilgrim in the street, the victim of assault and robbery, is helped by a Samaritan after being ignored by countless people. Traditionally, the parable is meant to convey the message that man has an obligation to love and care for one another.⁴²⁵ But Reagan drew a somewhat different lesson. While he agreed that “the story is about the virtue of the Samaritan who didn’t pass the pilgrim by, who stopped, bound up his wounds, carried him to an inn, saw to it that he was cared for, and paid for that care,” he believed that the story contained a deeper meaning. “I think the travelers (sic) who ignored the pilgrim,” he continued, “are the people who today take the attitude of ‘Let the government do it.’ The Samaritan,” he concluded, “recognized that the pilgrim’s problem was a human problem, not a government problem.”⁴²⁶

Federal government overreach most directly affected Reagan financially. As an actor he began earning a significant income and his tax bill increased considerably. He opposed liberal Democratic tax policies, specifically those aimed at the wealthy. In 1941, he earned \$1000 a week (over 50 times the national average) and paid a marginal tax rate of about 60%. By 1946, he was making \$170,000 a year (over 150 times the national average) and paying a rate of about 90%. Reagan resented losing more and more of his income to the government, but he also believed that burdensome taxes disincentivized individuals from working harder, leading to an inevitable decline in productivity and innovation, harming

⁴²³ Reagan, *An American Life*, 119.

⁴²⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, 120.

⁴²⁵ For a succinct discussion of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, see Garrison, *An Empire of Ordeals*, 160-161.

⁴²⁶ Ronald Reagan quoted in Hobbs, *Ronald Reagan’s Call to Action*, 150.

the economy and thus the country.⁴²⁷ Such a view was supported by Scripture, he argued, while pointing to the parable of talents. Traditionally understood to express “the Christian sense of unity of spirit and purpose realized through a diversity of members and faculties,” the parable uses money (talents) to “symbolize gifts given by Jesus to his disciples that will help them work toward their salvation and spread his message.” Reagan, like many conservative Christians, absorbed a more literal message, and he argued that it was really meant to convey “the virtues” of free enterprise.⁴²⁸

Ironically, it was innovation in the area of entertainment that soon came to threaten his livelihood. In the early 1950s, the movie industry was changing as television emerged as a competitor. Studios cut budgets to cope with economic uncertainties, and the quality of films declined. Not willing to risk his reputation in bad movies, and now a freelance actor, Reagan became more selective when it came to roles, leading to a decline in his income. But if television posed a threat to the film industry and his pocketbook, it simultaneously offered him economic salvation at time when the Reagan’s “were property rich, but cash poor.”⁴²⁹

By the early part of the 1950s, he had found stability in his personal life, but his film career was beginning to decline and, after a stint in Las Vegas (as a nightclub host), Reagan turned to television, eventually being offered a permanent role hosting General Electric Theatre (1954-1962).⁴³⁰ Dutch’s salary at G.E., \$125,000 a year, later increased to \$150,000, solved his financial problems, though it pushed him back up into the 90% tax bracket.⁴³¹ More importantly, this period marked the pivotal final step toward the evolution of his political identification, which was, thanks to his growing wealth, disillusionment with

⁴²⁷ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 168; Slosser, *Reagan, Inside Out*, 56-57; Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 30; Collins, *Transforming America*, 37; Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 53; On Tax Rates, see Tax Foundation, “Federal Individual Income Tax Rates History, Nominal Dollars, Income Years 1913-2013,” https://files.taxfoundation.org/legacy/docs/fed_individual_rate_history_nominal.pdf

⁴²⁸ Garrison, *An Empire of Ideals*, 162. In justifying a true proportionate tax-based system, what amounted to a flat tax, Reagan evoked the Bible and the example of tithing (giving one-tenth of your earnings to the church). See Reagan, “Encroaching Control (The Peril of Ever-Expanding Government),” Annual Meeting of the Phoenix, Arizona, Chamber of Commerce, March 30, 1961, in *A Time for Choosing*, 33

⁴²⁹ Cannon, *Reagan*, 91-92, quote on 92; Reagan, *An American Life*, 124-125 (Reagan wrote that he turned down more than half a million dollars or more in work during this period, which lasted over a year.).

⁴³⁰ Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 75-77.

⁴³¹ Cannon, *Reagan*, 91; Reagan, *An American Life*, 131.

big government, and anti-communism, already slowly shifting away from the Democratic Party. Reagan would later refer to his time at G.E. as “almost a postgraduate course in political science.”⁴³²

While at G.E. Reagan would fall under the mentorship of vice president and labour strategist Lemuel Boulware, a staunch economic conservative who shared with the actor an ardent anti-communism and interest in labour issues.⁴³³ Under Boulware’s direction, G.E. had created what was called the “Employee and Community Relations Program,” with the aim of promoting a “better business climate.” Simply put, they sought to shift the electorate to the right by inculcating their 25 000 employees with a conservative (read classical liberal) ideology. Those individuals would, in turn, share it with those they connected with – “spreading GE’s (and Boulware’s) view of the nation and the economy at the same time as they spread the message about their products.” While Boulware and G.E. favoured Republican policies, to cloak their intentions, they made sure that the message “was always presented as ... non-partisan” in nature. Over time, the future president would play an increasingly important public role promoting the program in company literature and speeches to employees.⁴³⁴

Along with hosting the weekly television program, Reagan spent part of his time travelling the country visiting G.E. plants – meeting with executives and factory workers alike. While doing so, he took to giving talks about his time in Hollywood. These talks evolved into speeches. Reagan had been giving speeches for years. As he was fond of saying: in Hollywood, if you didn’t dance or sing, you ended “up as an after-dinner speaker.”⁴³⁵ Over time, he began to include warnings about government intrusion into the private sphere. The employees responded with stories of their own experience with government bureaucracy and overregulation, fueling Reagan’s own beliefs. He would then educate himself on the issues he heard and incorporate them into later speeches, which were becoming more and more political

⁴³² Reagan, *An American Life*, 129.

⁴³³ Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan*, 11, 21-22 (Boulware had been an influential figure in William F. Buckley’s early career, and one of *National Review*’s original backers. See 104-106).

⁴³⁴ Evans, 90-97, quote on “better business climate” on 92, quote on “view of the nation” on 91, quote on “non-partisan” on 95.

⁴³⁵ Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan*, 15.

as his relationship with G.E. and Boulware developed. Eventually, “the Hollywood part just got lost and I was out there beating the bushes for private enterprise.”⁴³⁶ As Robert Dallek noted: “During these years his speeches evolved into an attack on collectivism and centralization of power in Washington.”⁴³⁷

It was during this time that Reagan was becoming exposed to the works of intellectuals associated with the emerging modern conservative movement, significantly Friedrich Hayek and the former communist Whittaker Chambers.⁴³⁸ These writers both argued that liberalism leads to communism. For Hayek the process was institutional, through the centralization of the state, whereas Chambers viewed it in psychological terms. He suggested, and many conservatives agreed, that the liberal mindset, geared as it was towards the “urge to transform society,” was “susceptible” to the “temptation” of totalitarianism. Though they approached the issue from different perspectives, both Hayek and Chambers conveyed the same message - liberalism was the gateway to communism. Reagan never became an “obsessed Red hunter,” and he never believed that all liberals were communists. Rather he saw himself as more of a “citizen-crusader ... mobilizing decent people to defend a threat.” Nonetheless, he did come to share Chambers’ belief that liberalism was the enemy - and fighting communism meant fighting liberalism.⁴³⁹ He did not, however, adopt Chambers’ pessimistic, even fatalistic, view of human nature and history, or his belief that communism would inevitably triumph over the West. It was not in Nelle’s boy’s character to do so.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁶ Reagan, *An American Life*, 128-129, quote on “private enterprise” on 129; Evans, 112-113.

⁴³⁷ Robert Dallek, *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 26

⁴³⁸ See, for example, Kengor, *God and Ronald Reagan*, 76-87; Garrison, *An Empire of Ideals*, 24-27; and Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 167-168.

⁴³⁹ Diggins, *Ronald Reagan*, 110-112; quotes on “Red hunter” and “citizen crusader” in Pemberton, *Role of Honor*, 33; also see Garrison, *An Empire of Ideals*, 27.

⁴⁴⁰ While Hayek may have feared for the west in the face of communism, Chambers was all but certain that the Soviet Union would dominate the world. When he abandoned communism after his own disillusionment, he was convinced that he was joining the losing side in the ideological battle. The philosophical views he subsequently adopted were more akin to traditional conservatism than the optimistic classical liberalism embraced by Reagan. Chambers, unlike Reagan, was distrustful of progress and held a very dim view of human nature. See, Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952).

Under the tutelage of Boulware and the influence of conservative intellectuals, Reagan completed his evolution from liberal Democrat to conservative Republican. “The process was gradual,” observed Lou Cannon, “but pervasive.” It was his years at G.E. “more than anything,” he continued, “that changed Reagan from an adversary of big business into one of its most ardent spokesmen.”⁴⁴¹ In 1962, his association with the company ended when the television program was cancelled. His political speeches were becoming a little too controversial. Already, in 1959, he had started attacking the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) as an example of out of control big government. While G.E. opposed bureaucratic expansion, they also appreciated the economic bottom line and the TVA was one of their most lucrative accounts. When executives finally requested that Reagan eliminate the politics from his speeches, and stick to “selling G.E. products,” he refused. By now, he was a much sought-after speaker in conservative circles, and a great deal better off financially thanks to his earnings and real estate holdings, acquired with the assistance of wealthy conservative friends.⁴⁴²

While he was still a registered Democrat, it was in name only – “the process of self-conversion” was complete. Reagan had realized that “all these things I’ve been criticizing about government being too big, well it just dawned on me that every four years when an election comes along, I go out and support the people who are responsible for the things I’m criticizing.” Having once believed that Americans’ freedom and liberty were under threat by corporate interests, he now saw big government as the “real enemy.” In 1960, he voted for Richard Nixon over John F. Kennedy, and in 1962, he finally became a member of the Republican Party.⁴⁴³ He did a short stint hosting another television program, and appeared in his final Hollywood film, *The Killers* (1964), but his days as an entertainer were over. His transition to politician

⁴⁴¹ Cannon, *Reagan*, 94.

⁴⁴² Cannon, *Reagan*, 95-97, quote on “G.E. products” on 96; Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 170; Pemberton, *Exit With Honor*, 51; Lemuel Boulware had this to say about big government: “We don’t like the proposals for further greatly enlarged government and union officials. ... The size of taxes – now and proposed – is bad enough.” Quoted in Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan*, 42, also see 46.

⁴⁴³ Reagan, *An American Life*, 132-136, quote on “self-conversion” on 134, quote on “all these things” on 132, quote on “real enemy” on 135.

had already begun. That same year, he would electrify the political world with his speech, “A Time for Choosing,” in support of Barry Goldwater’s presidential run.⁴⁴⁴

For many, Reagan’s evolution from liberal Democrat to conservative Republican appeared to be a complete 180-degree philosophical turn. Reagan, however, argued that he had not changed, but rather the Democratic Party and its ideology had. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Franklin Roosevelt had adapted classical liberalism to combat the forces of big business, which had “concentrated into their own hands an almost complete control over other people’s money, other people’s labor – other people’s lives.” In doing so, they had eroded, and in some cases, stripped, many Americans of their freedom, liberty, and ability to pursue happiness. Only the “organized power of government,” Roosevelt argued, could protect the American people from the modern scourge of “economic tyranny.”⁴⁴⁵ He was not a radical intent on dismantling free market capitalism or infringing on Americans’ fundamental rights. Nor was he even that ideological. Roosevelt sought to ensure basic American freedoms, as expressed in the Constitution, which were under threat in the modern industrial age of the twentieth century.

While Reagan opposed government “intrusion and interference,” he also believed it had “a sacred responsibility to protect the constitutional rights of every individual whatever and whenever those rights are being unduly denied.”⁴⁴⁶ He, for the most part, accepted Roosevelt’s argument, and recognized that “Many of the relief programs FDR instituted during the Depression were necessary measures during an emergency.” Where he took issue was with the permanence and expansion of these programs during the Second World War and throughout the postwar period, which he saw as an attempt “to rein in the energy of the free enterprise system and capitalism, create a welfare state, and impose a subtle kind of socialism.” He was “convinced that it was never” Roosevelt’s “intention – nor those of many of his liberal supporters

⁴⁴⁴ Ronald Reagan, “A Time for Choosing (The Speech), National Television Address, October 27, 1964,” in *A Time for Choosing: The Speeches of Ronald Reagan, 1961-1982*, ed. Alfred A. Balitzer, and Gerald M. Bonetto (Chicago: Regnery Gateway Inc., 1983), 39-57.

⁴⁴⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt, acceptance speech, Democratic National Convention, Philadelphia, June 27, 1936. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/june-27-1936-democratic-national-convention> (accessed December 30, 2017).

⁴⁴⁶ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Ernestine Taylor, July 17, 1984, in Reagan, *Dear Americans*, 158-159.

– to make giveaway programs that trapped families forever on a treadmill of dependency a permanent feature of our government.”⁴⁴⁷ To support his contention, Reagan quoted the former president: ““The federal government must and shall quit this business of relief. Continued dependence upon relief induces a spiritual and moral disintegration fundamentally destructive to the national fiber.””⁴⁴⁸ The idea of liberalism was undergoing a significant shift during the mid-twentieth century. Many liberals embraced the social democratic element that was beginning to define the Democratic Party, while others, like Reagan, came to see it as a betrayal of the principles of classical liberalism.⁴⁴⁹

“The classical liberal used to be the man who believed the individual was, and should be forever, the master of his destiny,” he wrote. “That is now the conservative position. The liberal used to believe in freedom under the law,” Reagan continued, but “he now takes the ancient feudal position that power is everything,” embracing “a stronger and stronger central government, in the philosophy that control is better than freedom.”⁴⁵⁰ “Somewhere along the line,” he concluded, “the liberal Democrats ... changed their party. It was no longer the party of Thomas Jefferson or Woodrow Wilson.”⁴⁵¹ There is some, even much, truth to Reagan’s argument that the party and its ideology had changed. Whether or not Roosevelt had intended it, the liberalism that emerged out of the New Deal, and the Democratic Party that embraced it, was different, and continued to become even more so, from the classical liberalism from which it evolved and on which Reagan’s political ideology was based. It is also true that circumstances and events in Reagan’s life helped crystallize those basic principles which he had first absorbed in his youth.

Over the next three decades Reagan would articulate these views privately and with more and more frequency, publicly. Central to his thought was a strong conviction in the rights and freedoms of the individual, coupled with the idea of individual responsibility. Embodied within this philosophy was a belief in limited government (except when it came to national defense); a trust in capitalism, combined

⁴⁴⁷ Reagan, *An American Life*, 134.

⁴⁴⁸ Reagan, *An American Life*, 134.

⁴⁴⁹ Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 297-298.

⁴⁵⁰ Reagan and Hubler, *Where’s the Rest of Me?*, 297-298.

⁴⁵¹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 135.

with a faith in progress and admiration for those who achieve success/wealth; and an ardent anti-communism linked with a firm belief in America's providential origins and role in the world. And while these views were influenced by classical liberalism, rather than traditional conservatism, his political thought was infused with a strong sense of religiosity. As he bluntly stated on one occasion, "Democracy is just a political reading of the Bible."⁴⁵²

Indeed, for Reagan, politics and religion were inseparable, because the former was rooted in the latter. His political views were, in large part, an extension of his religious beliefs, which were themselves a product of his being raised in the Disciples of Christ and the influence of his mother, Nelle, and his pastor, Ben Cleaver. While Reagan's religion was not the gloomy Christianity of traditional conservatives or right-wing evangelical and fundamentalist activists, and he was no saint, though his mother was often referred to as one, his religious upbringing helped instill in him many of the basic social and cultural mores they espoused, perhaps best encapsulated in a phrase Reagan later helped to popularize, "family values."⁴⁵³ Reagan's strong religious faith and these shared Christian principles, along with his robust support for the social issues they supported, are what served to bridge Reagan's classical liberalism and the political thought of traditional conservatives. It was not a seamless connection, nor could it be for reasons discussed above and in the previous chapter, but it was, in essence, the link Frank Meyer had theorized in the concept of fusion.

Initially, Reagan's religiosity was most evident in what could be seen as "secular" issues - everything from his beliefs on freedom and foreign policy to taxes and free enterprise. With the re-emergence of the culture wars in the mid-late 1960s, it would also come to find expression in his views on what were termed "social issues." As the conservative movement was taking hold, social and cultural shifts,

⁴⁵² Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at a Spirit of America Festival in Decatur, Alabama, July 4, 1984," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1984, vol. II* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 1001.

⁴⁵³ The church, for example, provided instruction to "young adults" on how to properly conduct themselves, and was uncomfortable "with literature and art that questioned the family or challenged notions of proper sexual behavior." See Vaughn, "The Moral Inheritance of a President," 115, 109, also see 118.

highlighted by Reagan's 1966 gubernatorial campaign and symbolized by an emerging counterculture and a crystallizing feminist movement, were evident across the country. In response, conservatives began placing increased emphasis on their opposition to issues such as drug use, homosexuality, and the sexual revolution, symbolized by "the pill." As Reagan settled into his first term as governor, a controversial subject, thought dealt with nearly a century earlier, made its way to the centre of the public and political discourse.

Chapter #4

Abortion: Building a Movement on a Myth

“But the court's decision has by no means settled the debate. Instead, *Roe v. Wade* has become a continuing prod to the conscience of the nation.”

Ronald Reagan, *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation.*

Perhaps no other issue is as central to the narrative explaining the rise of the Religious Right and its subsequent relationship with the 40th president of the United States, Ronald Reagan, then that of abortion. It was an issue that had come to fore of the public discourse in the past, but lay relatively dormant for about one hundred years, following a successful mid-late nineteenth century crusade to criminalize the procedure throughout the country. The Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision overturned those laws, which states had already begun to address independently with reform legislation of their own, beginning with Colorado, North Carolina, and California in early-mid-1967. In time, these legislative efforts and judicial ruling were challenged by anti-abortionists who launched a campaign to re-criminalize the practice. These efforts continue to this day, in one form or another.

By the early-mid-nineteen-eighties, the campaign to eradicate abortion had become so closely associated with the emerging coalition known as the Religious Right, that many journalists and scholars have suggested that abortion was the issue that brought the movement into being. That the Religious Right's leadership, and indeed its members, claimed just that - that their activism was a response to the *Roe v. Wade* decision - only lent credence to the theory. While the evidence suggests otherwise, this does nothing to diminish the role abortion and the anti-abortion movement played in the history of the Religious Right. It was, quite simply, the central issue upon which the interest group was built. For the movement's political and religious leaders, “busily cobbling together a political agenda,” abortion encapsulated many of the social issues associated with the culture wars of the 1960s and '70s, most

significantly feminism, which were seen as responsible for the ostensible breakdown of the “traditional” family. As such, it provided an ideal issue around which evangelicals, fundamentalists, and other conservative Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, concerned with the socio-cultural shift away from traditional values, could coalesce.⁴⁵⁴

The modern movement against abortion paralleled similar struggles during the previous century. While there is no doubt that activists in the nineteenth and twentieth century anti-abortion campaigns were influenced by moral values and/or religious beliefs, both movements co-opted the issue, the former at the outset and the latter over time, to further alternative agendas. In both instances abortion had come to the fore of the public-political discourse as a result of either socio-cultural phenomenon or judicial rulings, and it provided, for both groups, a convenient and effective issue on which to campaign. The first crusade against abortion (which lasted from roughly the late 1850s to about 1880) was not religiously inspired, but rather driven by what were termed “regular” (or elite) physicians who sought to improve and professionalize an undeveloped field, and in the process set themselves above other medical practitioners and achieve some semblance of control over the practice of medicine in the United States.

That is not to say that some, perhaps even most, doctors in the nineteenth century did not believe that abortion was a crime (to save the mother’s life generally being an exception), or that a sense of morality did not play a role. In fact, the latter was a central theme of their movement and integral to the arguments on which they made their case. Their efforts were successful and, by the late 1800s, virtually every state had enacted strict abortion laws. Not only had physicians shaped state legislation throughout the country and, in the process, largely achieved their professional ambitions, they had also managed to discredit more than two thousand years of philosophical and theological debate and reshape the popular view of abortion in the United States.

⁴⁵⁴ Randall Balmer, *Religion in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 94; also see Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes have Seen the Glory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 121-123.

Some one hundred years later, a second anti-abortion crusade slowly emerged in response to the United States Supreme Court's landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision of January 22, 1973, overturning existing state abortion laws. These efforts would take place within a revised context, a consequence of the physicians' crusade, but unlike its nineteenth century counterpart, religion would loom large in this campaign. This twentieth-century struggle to end abortion was, initially, largely a Catholic effort. In time, though, the issue brought evangelicals and fundamentalists, who had remained relatively quiet, at least as a collective group, since the evolution debate of the 1920s, back into the fore of the public-political discourse. In the process it provided conservative political activists and fundamentalist and evangelical church leaders an issue upon which to unify conservative Christians, and others of like mind, and build a national movement to advance a broader socio-political vision.

While the Religious Right's more immediate roots lay in the struggle between the Internal Revenue Service (I.R.S.) and Christian schools, significantly Bob Jones University, over compliance with Civil Rights legislation and the question of tax exemption, abortion was the issue upon which the movement was consolidated during the 1980 presidential election and beyond. Despite Ronald Reagan's signing of a liberal abortion bill, in 1967, while governor of California, he emerged as the candidate whom the budding movement chose to support as the Republican conservative flag-bearer. He would prove a vocal advocate for the anti-abortion cause and a virtual spokesman for the Religious Right.

Most studies of the Reagan era pay short shrift to social issues, such as abortion, and those focusing on the Religious Right generally take up the discussion in the 1960s or early 1970s with the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision. Yet, to understand the pivotal role that the controversial abortion issue played in the mid to-late twentieth century United States in the rise of the Religious Right and the relationship between conservative evangelicals and Reagan (and his presidential administrations), it is necessary to appreciate the origins and subsequent evolution of the philosophical, legal, religious, medical, and social views surrounding the discourse. The issue of abortion and the question most central

to the debate - whether an embryo/fetus constitutes a life and whether its destruction constitutes murder - as well as the laws to regulate it in Western civilization, have their roots in ancient Greek philosophy.⁴⁵⁵

In his seminal writings on infanticide, the prominent nineteenth-century physician John Beck, a strong anti-abortionist, observed, “A slight review of its history, will show us that this practice prevailed in almost all of the ancient nations.” Beck further noted: “In most Grecian states, infanticide was not merely permitted, but actually enforced by law.” Indeed, not only was it legal, “it was defended by the ablest men of Greece.” He pointed to Aristotle’s writings on government, in which the Greek philosopher cites the threat of overpopulation as justification for the exposure of weak or deformed babies, and argues that “if this idea be repugnant to the character of the nation, fix at least the number of children in each family; and if the parents transgress the law, let it be ordained, that the mother shall destroy the fruit of her body before it shall have received the principles of life ... and sensation.” Plato, too, condoned infanticide, making clear, in *Republic*, that “children born with any deformity, shall be removed and concealed in some obscure retreat.”⁴⁵⁶

Despite abortion’s legal status and social acceptance, there emerged in ancient Greece two schools of thought. The law and accepted morality were rooted in the Stoic philosophy, which suggested that a soul was acquired only at birth. An embryo was not of the same “moral order” as a person and thus terminating a pregnancy was not equivalent to murder. The Pythagorean sect held a conflicting view, that the soul was present at the moment of conception and thus abortion at any stage was immoral and no different than taking the life of a person. This ancient disagreement lies at the root of the abortion debate, from ancient times to the present. Those who hold to the Pythagorean philosophy begin the discussion

⁴⁵⁵ For a succinct historical review of the subject, from ancient Greece into the twentieth century, see John T. Noonan, Jr., “An Almost Absolute Value in History,” in *The Morality of Abortion: Legal and Historical Perspectives*, ed. John T. Noonan, Jr. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), 1-59.

⁴⁵⁶ John B. Beck, “Infanticide,” in *Elements of Medical Jurisprudence*, vol. 1, ed. Theodric Romeyn Beck (Albany, 1835), 185, 187; Aristotle quoted from *Anarcharsis*, vol. 5, 270, and Plato from *Anarcharsis*, vol. 4, 342, in Beck.

committed to a premise, that the embryo is a human being, that the opposition, the Stoics if you will, see as decidedly problematic.⁴⁵⁷

Greek philosophy would later help inform the Roman Catholic Church when the debate was shaped by “the positions among theologians ... and the practical situations of pregnant women.” While all abortion was denounced early on by some of the leading clergy, church doctrine, between the mid-fifth and mid-fifteenth century, accepted the practice provided it took place prior to what was referred to as quickening. Before the advent of modern medical technology, it was impossible to determine whether a woman was pregnant until quickening, which basically amounted to the point at which she first perceived movement in the womb - approximately the fourth to fifth month, or midway through the gestation period.⁴⁵⁸

Well into the nineteenth century, the central focus of the theological “debate over the status of the fetus ... tended to revolve around the concept of ‘ensoulment.’” That is, the moment the fetus was “infused by God with a soul,” thereby becoming a person. There was a general consensus among Catholic theologians that ensoulment took place when the fetus quickened. Despite some verbal censure, abortion before quickening was rarely addressed legally, and the practice, even after quickening, was not considered equitable to murder and thus the punishment was less severe. English common law, which arose in the thirteenth century, also revolved around the concept of quickening. And while theological debate as to when the fetus became ensouled continued, common law, particularly after England’s split with the Catholic Church, considered abortion after quickening no more than a minor offense which was

⁴⁵⁷ Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 11, 2; Lawrence Lader, *Abortion* (Indianapolis; New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1966), 76; Walter Goodman, “Troublesome Abortion Issue: Theological Roots Are Spread Wide and Deep,” *New York Times*, Sep 8, 1984, 8.

⁴⁵⁸ Dallas A. Blanchard, *Anti-Abortion Movement and the Rise of the Religious Right: From Polite to Fiery Protest*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994), 10-11; Lader, *Abortion*, 21; R. Sauer, “Attitudes to Abortion in America, 1800-1973,” *Population Studies*, 28, no. 1 (Mar., 1974): 54.

rarely enforced.⁴⁵⁹ Thus, from a historical perspective, there has always existed a moral ambiguity, both philosophically and theologically, when it comes to the status of the embryo.

Consequently, as social historian Kristin Luker notes, “Nineteenth-century America ... did not inherit an unqualified opposition to abortion.” Prior to the early-mid 1800s, abortion was recognized as a “women’s” or “family” issue, and while the practice may not have been widespread during this period, it does not appear to have been a rare one either. There were no laws on the books regulating the procedure in the United States, which was carried out by various methods - surgical techniques, pharmaceuticals, and natural/herbal remedies. Moreover, women themselves had access to information (including books on women’s health and home medical guides) regarding an assortment of techniques, tonics, and drugs, as well as practitioners such as herbalists, midwives, and trained physicians.⁴⁶⁰

Without legislation regulating the practice, abortion’s legal status was left to the individual states’ local judiciaries and their reading of common law. Prior to the nineteenth century, a fetus was not legally recognized under common law, or even viewed as a child, until the time of quickening. The reasoning behind this position was that, up to that point, there were other potential medical explanations for what may have appeared to be pregnancy, mainly involving some type of blockage that was interrupting the menstrual cycle. The remedy for this was to remove whatever may be obstructing the flow of the woman’s menses, and this necessitated what amounted to the same procedure as bringing on an early abortion. To abort a fetus after quickening was against the law. Still, in accordance with Western

⁴⁵⁹ Blanchard, *Anti-Abortion Movement and the Rise of the Religious Right*, 11; N.E.H. Hull and Peter Charles Hoffer, *Roe v. Wade: The Abortion Rights Controversy in American History* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 17-18; Lader, *Abortion*, 77-79

⁴⁶⁰ Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, 3-4, 14; Eva B. Rubin, *The Abortion Controversy: A Documentary History* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 1-2; Hugh L. Hodge, *Foeticide or Criminal Abortion* (Philadelphia: Livingston and Blake, 1872), 3; also see William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine, or a Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985, c 1772), 647-660.

tradition, terminating a pregnancy after quickening was not equal to murder and the penalty was therefore less harsh.⁴⁶¹

In 1821, Connecticut would become the first state, followed by nine others over the course of the next two decades, to enact legislation that officially, and explicitly, brought abortion into the criminal code. These laws dealt primarily with the use of poisons, herbal tonics and other toxic substances, which were increasingly viewed as dangerous, even fatal, and the guilty party was not the woman but rather the individual who procured the poison.⁴⁶² Thus, these early abortion laws were enacted to prevent the woman's death, rather than deny the procedure or serve as punishment, and as such intended to regulate pharmacists and physicians, not discourage abortions. Rather than a response to public pressure, they were the result of physicians and legislators attempts to control medical practice. Historian James Mohr suggests that the laws were likely a reflection of "the continued perception of abortion in the United States as a fundamentally marginal practice usually resorted to by women who deserved pity and protection rather than criminal liability." By the 1950s, however, this understanding of who was having abortions and for what reasons began to change, and legislators and physicians found this shift most troubling.⁴⁶³

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of significant social and cultural shifts in the United States that challenged the social order and laid the groundwork for profound change in the approach to abortion legislation. The country underwent a demographic shift as it experienced a large influx of immigrants, primarily European and largely Catholic (but including a significant number of

⁴⁶¹ Beck, "Infanticide," 200-203; Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, *Abortion and Women's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1984), 29-30.

⁴⁶² Rubin, *The Abortion Controversy*, 1-2; Hull and Hoffer, *Roe v. Wade*, 20-22; Lader, *Abortion*, 86-87.

⁴⁶³ James C. Mohr, *Abortions in America: The Origins and Evolution of National Policy, 1800-1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 43-45; John Beck observed, in 1835, that "The practice of causing abortion, is resorted to by unmarried females, who, through imprudence or misfortune, have become pregnant, to avoid the disgrace which would attach to them from having a living child. See Beck, "Infanticide," 207; for references to the female demographic who engaged in the practice of abortion in the early nineteenth century, also see Marvin Olasky, *Abortion Rites: A Social History of Abortion in America* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1992), 37-38,.

Jews, and Orthodox Christians as well), while simultaneously transitioning from a largely rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrial based one. Urbanization, along with the stirrings of the first women's empowerment movement, a manifestation of a rise in female consciousness that would culminate in the suffragette movement at the turn of the century, help account for a subsequent decline in birthrates among white women. In 1800, the average was 7.04. By 1900, that number had fallen by nearly fifty percent, to 3.56.⁴⁶⁴

Added to the prostitutes and young, single women, or “poor unfortunates,” who had always accounted for the vast majority of abortions, were a growing number of married, white, native-born, Protestants, drawn significantly from the middle and upper classes who sought the procedure. This disturbing observation, combined with the commercialization of abortion which gave the practice greater public exposure, resulted in a significant increase in the number of abortions. The matter became a “widespread social phenomenon,” and a cause for concern. To explain this shift, many, particularly those in the medical community, suggested that the willingness of this demographic to suddenly partake in the practice of abortion was the manifestation of a rising feminist ideology. Women were empowering themselves in their private lives, by taking control of their own reproduction. Conversely, feminists, who did not necessarily support the practice and urged birth control instead, but were sympathetic nonetheless, argued that abortion was a sign “of women's sexual exploitation” on the part of thoughtless men, rather than any “purposeful female conspiracy.”⁴⁶⁵ Regardless of the cause, some states sought to address this phenomenon through new abortion legislation.

⁴⁶⁴ Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, 15, William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 5-6; Petchesky, *Abortion and Women's Choice*, 73-77, 82.

⁴⁶⁵ Mohr, *Abortions in America*, 46-47, 84-85, 110; Petchesky, *Abortion and Women's Choice*, 76; Rubin, *Abortion, Politics, and the Courts: Roe v. Wade and its Aftermath* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 12-13; Hull and Hoffer, *Roe v. Wade*, 23-27; Linda Gordon has argued that “There is substantial evidence that birth control has always been a ‘women's liberation’ issue,” see *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York, 1977), 27.

While twenty states enacted or revised statutes between 1840 and 1860, legislators generally acted with restraint and ultimately did little or nothing to infringe on common law, the quickening doctrine, or women's rights vis a vis abortion. Without widespread public pressure or any concerted anti-abortion effort on the part of a socio-politically aware movement with the motivation to bring about stricter regulations, lawmakers were reticent to move further. Indeed, such a campaign was underway. Led by a group of regular (or elite) physicians, they sought, by reaching out to the public through "popular writings" and lobbying state legislators, to bring about a shift in public attitudes toward, and the legal status of, abortion. The wave of anti-abortion legislation throughout the United States in the mid-late 1800s, owes more to their efforts than those of any other group. More significantly, because the physicians' anti-abortion campaign was largely motivated by broader "political and social" objectives, their opposition to the practice was framed in a very purposeful manner. The consequences of which would colour the abortion debate to the present.⁴⁶⁶

The physicians' larger socio-political agenda was driven by professional ambitions. There was nothing like a respected, structured, and strictly regulated system of medicine in the United States in the early-to-mid nineteenth century. Unlike Europe, there were no "well-defined guild structures ... that took responsibility for teaching," which "maintained the right to determine who could practice and exercised some control over the conduct and craft of the profession." Consequently, regular doctors had long desired "effective licensing laws" like their European counterparts, that would regulate the profession and serve to "restrict the competition." It would also allow them to take control of the practice of medicine in the United States. In 1847, physicians established the American Medical Association (AMA) as a first step toward achieving these objectives.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁶ Gordon, 52-53; Mohr, *Abortions in America*, 145-146; Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, 15-16.

⁴⁶⁷ Eva Rubin, *Abortion, Politics, and the Courts*, 11; Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, 16-18; "Responsibility of the Medical Professions," *New York Times*, Aug 5, 1868, p. 4; "The University Medical College," *New York Times*, Sep 11, 1868, 2; On the history of the professional status of medical practitioners in America, see Richard Harrison Shyrock, *Medical Licensing in America, 1650-1965* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1967); and Ronald L. Numbers, "The Fall and Rise of the Medical Profession," in *Sickness and Health in America*:

In this context, professional physicians sought to set themselves apart from their less elite competition, including homeopaths, herbalists, and midwives. Spearheading this campaign was Dr. Horatio Storer who, with the support of several regular doctors associated with the AMA, initiated what would become known as the physicians' crusade, in 1857. Aiming to bring about legislative change, they looked to affect a shift in public opinion, away from acceptance or tolerance towards skepticism and opposition, by delegitimizing the quickening doctrine.⁴⁶⁸

Kristin Luker argues that to achieve these goals, physicians sought to “both create and control a moral problem.” Abortion provided regular doctors an issue on which they were able to “claim both *moral stature* (as a high-minded, self-regulating group of professionals) and *technical expertise* (derived from their superior training).” Luker suggests that to accomplish this goal, the physicians needed “to exaggerate the differences between themselves and the lay public,” and they did this by taking the position of the ancient Greek Pythagoreans, arguing, without any real medical justification, that human life begins at conception. Subsequently, to end a pregnancy was tantamount to murder, which implied that women who practiced abortion, even in the early stages, “placed *no* value on embryonic life.”⁴⁶⁹

In their opening move, and after much controversy and debate, Storer gained approval from the Suffolk County Medical Society to form a committee to investigate the need for stronger abortion legislation. There was much push-back from elements within the Boston medical community, who took umbrage with Storer's crusade. Nevertheless, the Suffolk County Medical Society agreed to recommend

Readings in the History of Medicine and Public Health, ed. Judith Walter Leavitt and Ronald L. Numbers (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 185-205.

⁴⁶⁸ Mohr, *Abortions in America*, 147-148; Riva Siegel, “Reasoning from the Body: A Historical Perspective on Abortion Regulation and Questions of Equal Protection,” *Stanford Law Review* 44, no. 2 (January 1992): 287-288.

⁴⁶⁹ Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, 31-32 (original emphasis) (Note: Luker points out that “the period during which the physicians began to organize against abortion (approximately 1850-1870) witnessed no major advances in the understanding of embryology; the real breakthroughs had come much earlier.” See 24); Riva Siegel suggests that “The doctors rested their case that life begins at conception on ‘objective,’ but objectively incomplete, facts about human development, depicting the developmental process in ways that obscured the physical and social work of reproduction women perform.” See Siegel, “Reasoning from the Body,” 290.

the findings of said report, once they were approved, to the Massachusetts Medical Society “for further action,” which, after some heated debate, they eventually were.⁴⁷⁰

Ultimately, by mid-1857, Storer had secured the support of not only the Boston medical community but surrounding areas outside the state as well. He then turned his efforts toward enlisting the support of the medical community nationwide, and his message resonated with many regular physicians. While the anti-abortion crusade was largely driven by professional ambitions, other factors contributed, or help lay its foundation. Significantly, a number of physicians had, or were beginning to have, issues with the concept of quickening, which they saw as a somewhat arbitrary metric for determining the point at which a developing embryo becomes alive. Some, even many, simply objected to ending any prospective life, though the vast majority believed that the procedure was justified, to save the life of the woman. As such, they saw abortion as immoral and felt a duty to end its practice.⁴⁷¹

Storer would eventually find common cause with the anti-obscenity movement, a powerful group led by Anthony Comstock. As secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, he successfully influenced the passage of federal legislation through the United States Congress in 1873, addressing the ‘Suppression of Trade in and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use.’ As a result of the law, abortion-related advertising quickly disappeared from the public sphere. Comstock’s campaign against vice would serve to support the physicians’ crusade, helping to reinforce their message. But in the early days of the campaign, the doctors’ moral arguments were, to their frustration, met with general apathy from the American public and little cooperation from the judicial system.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ Olasky, *Abortion Rites*, 116-117; Boston Medical and Surgical Journal LVI, no. 14 (May 7, 1857): 282-284; “Medical,” *New York Daily Times*, June 27, 1857, 8.

⁴⁷¹ Olasky, *Abortion Rites*, 117-118; Mohr, *Abortions in America*, 152-154, 164-165; Rubin, *Abortion, Politics, and the Courts*, 12.

⁴⁷² Lader, *Abortion*, 90-91; “Obscene Literature: Text of the Bill for Suppressing the Trade,” *New York Times*, Feb 28, 1873, 2; Gordon, 57.

In this light, the notion of saving the country became a pervasive theme associated with the crusade, and physicians took on the religious role of missionaries. Yet, unlike later movements against abortion in the twentieth century, organized religion would not play a pivotal role in these early efforts. When the “crusade” emerged, in the late 1850s, there was little common ground between doctors and religious leaders when it came to abortion, or much else for that matter. While the Vatican officially opposed abortion, neither the Protestant nor Catholic churches in the United States made public pronouncements on the issue. Their church and related journals were, largely, reluctant to talk about sex, and they quite likely found the notion of their readership engaging in such a practice unlikely. And, for the most part, the clergy, as well as its congregation, adhered to the traditional interpretation of quickening.⁴⁷³

In general, Protestant churches, in the absence of any agitation on the part of congregations, likely assumed pragmatic positions, preferring to treat the matter as a private one best left to their adherents to address themselves. A member of the clergy expressed as much to the Michigan State Board of Health, as late as 1880, suggesting that “there are obvious reasons why the pulpit should not always be used to denounce crimes of this nature. To do it continually would be to turn the pulpit and church into a place that many people would not like to visit.”⁴⁷⁴

This position on the part of the churches incensed the physicians whose whole campaign was tinged with a moral bent. In this light they viewed the clergy, the “established voices of moral authority,” as craven hypocrites, and accusations of placing profits from abortifacient (or abortion-related) advertising above their religious responsibilities were levied. Support came slowly from the religious community, and over time the physicians gained some key allies, perhaps most importantly Reverend John Todd, an anti-

⁴⁷³ Petchesky, *Abortion and Women's Choice*, 80; Mohr, *Abortions in America*, 182-183; also see Horatio Storer and Franklin Heard, *Criminal Abortion* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1868), 7.

⁴⁷⁴ Quoted in Mohr, *Abortions in America*, 184; also see Edward Cox, S.S. French, and H.O. Hitchcock, “Report of the Special Commission on Criminal Abortion,” Ninth Annual Report of the Secretary of the State Board of Health and the State of Michigan (Lansing 1882), 167.

abortionist and “popular moralizer” of the period.⁴⁷⁵ An even greater success came when one of the two Presbyterian churches in the United States, the Old School denomination, officially adopted an anti-abortion position on June 1, 1869. A handful of individual religious spokesmen lent their support to the cause, but they did not represent the official position of their churches. In addition, many Catholics had come out against abortion, but the hierarchy officially did not, and a small number of denominations that seemed less concerned with the morality of abortion and more troubled by their female congregants’ falling birthrates eventually lent mild support. Ultimately, the campaign failed to garner widespread national endorsements from religious leaders on mass. Not only did organized religion, Catholic or Protestant, contribute little to “the origins and evolution of anti-abortion attitudes” in the United States through the nineteenth century, their failure to act came with a cost.⁴⁷⁶

“Through the antiabortion campaign, doctors claimed scientific authority to define life and death,” argues historian Leslie Reagan. “In doing so, she continues, “they claimed the authority of religious leaders. In leading this moral crusade and thoroughly criticizing the ministry’s lack of interest in abortion, regular doctors set themselves above religious leaders as well as the general populace.” By the late nineteenth century, legislation across the states had “eliminated the common-law idea of quickening and prohibited abortion at any point in pregnancy.” The one exception to this was if the woman’s life was threatened, in which case a therapeutic abortion was allowed, but only if performed by a regular physician - a caveat that revealed the illogicality in their claim about “embryonic life” and absolute morality.⁴⁷⁷

When physicians achieved the power to shape states’ reproductive legislation, they not only eroded the church’s moral authority, they also delegitimized the quickening doctrine and, with it, over two

⁴⁷⁵ Petchesky, *Abortion and Women’s Choice*, 80; Mohr, *Abortions in America*, 187-188, also see Mohr, 194-195 re: accusations/confrontation between physicians and the Protestant clergy.

⁴⁷⁶ Mohr, *Abortions in America*, 191-196.

⁴⁷⁷ Leslie Reagan, *When Abortion was a Crime: Women, Medicine and Law in the United States, 1867-1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 13-14; Riva Siegel argues that “In deriding the concept of quickening, doctors thus attacked the sensations, judgments, and the testimony of the pregnant woman. The conception standard doctors advocated vested the medical profession with authority to determine the beginning of life, depriving women of control over public determinations of that fact.” See Siegel, “Reasoning from the Body,” 287fn95.

thousand years of theological and philosophical debate. And by discrediting the doctrine they undercut the moral foundation for abortion at any stage. When the subject of abortion resurfaced in the 1960s, the debate surrounding the issue would take place within the framework of this revised discourse. Indeed, in a 1969 letter, Reverend Roger Huser confirmed: “After the nineteenth century,” the idea of quickening had been “almost entirely neglected.”⁴⁷⁸

During roughly a century of heavily regulated abortion, the issue receded into the shadows, though abortions did not cease. While there was a measurable decline in the numbers that occurred, largely due to its illegality and the result of a better understanding of birth control on the part of women, the demand for abortions remained high and hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of abortions were carried out every year in the United States.⁴⁷⁹ In relation, it was perceived by many that those having abortions were, once again, largely “poor unfortunates,” though Leslie Reagan’s ground-breaking study, *When Abortion Was a Crime*, has shown this assumption to have been false. These developments help explain why the conversation essentially disappeared from the public discourse.⁴⁸⁰

Organized religion was basically silent on the issue, though the Catholic Church was quite vocal about birth control, now the predominant method preferred by married women to control their reproduction. Catholics led a drive against birth control for much of the first half of the twentieth century, but Protestants were ambivalent on the issue and many even opposed Catholic efforts. Reagan’s extensive research here shows that between 1949 and 1959, the *Index to Religious Periodical Literature* cites a mere 3 articles addressing abortion and 6 pertaining to birth control, and as late as 1961-1962, *The*

⁴⁷⁸ Reagan, *When Abortion was a Crime*, 13-14; Huser quoted in Lader, *Abortion*, 186fn1.

⁴⁷⁹ Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, 48-52; Reagan, *When Abortion was a Crime*, 23, 147, 159.

⁴⁸⁰ For a comprehensive study of abortion in the United States during the period of its criminalization, see Leslie J. Reagan, *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867-1973* (on who was having abortions, see 23).

Catholic Periodicals Index shows only 28 articles on abortion, while listing 111 devoted to birth control.⁴⁸¹

While Reagan's study revealed that newspapers, including the *Chicago Examiner*, still ran abortion-related stories, sometimes even sensational ones, coverage of the issue in the *New York Times*, which had increased dramatically during the 1860s and 1870s in support of the physicians' crusade, declined thereafter. The number of articles fell between 1880 and 1889 to only 136 and reporting on abortion virtually disappeared from the publication during the 1890s through the 1920s. There were few sensational stories and the term was referred to in only 40 articles in the 1890s, 26 between 1900 and 1909, 28 in the 1910s, and 48 during the 1920s. The number began to increase in the 1930s, up to 213, and continued to rise from 271 in the 1940s to an astonishing 1573 in the 1960s.⁴⁸² Helping to account for this spike were two incidents in the early-mid 1960s which served to bring the issue of abortion into the public eye on a national level. The first of these was the realization of the side-effects of the drug thalidomide.

Beginning in the late 1950s, European physicians began prescribing thalidomide, found in sedatives, to pregnant women to ease morning sickness. By 1961-62, thalidomide was being linked to reports, which began to emerge in greater numbers, of babies being born with fetal abnormalities. And while the drug had not been approved in the United States, Sherri Finkbine, a conservative mother of four and host of a popular children's program in Phoenix, Arizona, had inadvertently ingested thalidomide when she consumed sleeping pills her husband had brought back from a trip to Britain. After reading about the "thalidomide babies" in Europe, Finkbine, two months pregnant, consulted her doctor and, once the

⁴⁸¹ See Reagan, *When Abortion was a Crime*, 6-7, 262fn17).

⁴⁸² Reagan, *When Abortion was a Crime*, 125, 102; Review of the *New York Times* from Jan. 1, 1950 - Dec 31, 1989 (Search term: Abortion. Document Type: All except Comic, Fire Loss, Lottery Numbers, Military War News, Real Estate Transactions, Soldier List, Stock Quote, Table of Contents, Weather), <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/hnpnewyorktimes/results/170C37E977D24E36PQ/1?accountid=14906>; Note: Women, physicians, and even the press often resorted to coded language when referring to abortion. The newspapers might use terms such as "illegal operations," for example, which helps to explain the decline in numbers discussed above. See Reagan, 23-25, 125.

drug's presence was confirmed in the medication, they agreed that a therapeutic abortion was best. Citing psychological danger to the mother, Finkbine's abortion was quickly approved on July 23, 1962 by a panel of three physicians and a psychiatrist and scheduled to occur in a matter of days.⁴⁸³

In an effort to warn others of the drug's dangers, Finkbine went to the press. The initial story generated much publicity and, though the local celebrity remained nameless in the article, Good Samaritan Hospital, fearing legal action and bad publicity, subsequently cancelled the abortion and sought a judicial clarification through the courts. The court dismissed the case and the Finkbines, no longer anonymous, eventually sought an abortion in Sweden. The story dominated the news during the summer of 1962, and the couple quickly found themselves at the centre of a national discussion about abortion in the United States.⁴⁸⁴

The Finkbine case elicited strong public reaction. The couple received some criticism, particularly from the Catholic Church. The Vatican suggested that a "Crime is the only possible definition of what happened yesterday at Caroline Hospital in Stockholm, Sweden." But the overwhelming response was supportive and sympathetic. Many Americans already advocated for a liberalization of abortion laws, and some women simply could identify with Sherri Finkbine, including "churchgoing women" who may have disapproved of the practice, but recognized "a middle-class, happily married, conservative mother who believed that she and her husband were not ready to care for a disabled child." Indeed, many women took action and worked to decriminalize therapeutic abortions through grassroots efforts. They did not support

⁴⁸³ Betty Sarvis and Hyman Rodman, *The Abortion Controversy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 5-6; Kerry N. Jacoby, *Souls, Bodies, Spirits: The Drive to Abolish Abortion Since 1973* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger), 4.

⁴⁸⁴ Sarvis and Rodman, *The Abortion Controversy*, 6; David J. Garrow, *Liberty and Sexuality: The Right to Privacy and the Making of Roe v. Wade* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994), 286-287; Olasky, *Abortion Rites*, 279-280; "Abortion Suit Is Filed," *New York Times*, Jul 26, 1962, 25; "3 Babies Born Deformed Here: Thalidomide Taken by Mothers; Arizona Weighs Plea," Special to the *New York Times*, July 27, 1962, 12; "Mother Loses Round in Legal Battle for Abortion: Arizona Court," *New York Times*, Jul 31, 1962, 9; "Mother, Rebuffed in Arizona, May Seek Abortion Elsewhere ...," *New York Times*, Aug 1, 1962, 19.

complete legalization, but they saw the need to safeguard women in instances such as the Finkbine case.⁴⁸⁵

Roughly one-hundred years after physicians had led a crusade to reshape Americans' views on abortion and effect legislative change, Sherri Finkbine's experience was the catalyst for bringing abortion back into the public discourse, forcing the medical community, average Americans, and finally legislators to re-evaluate those attitudes. Following the Finkbine and other thalidomide-related cases, polls demonstrated that a majority of Americans supported therapeutic abortion. One thing did not change, and that was the context in which the physicians had framed the discourse a century earlier; life was assumed at conception. At two months, the embryo in Finkbine's womb was being referred to as a "baby" or "child," even by many who held pro-choice positions.⁴⁸⁶

When an outbreak of rubella (German measles) occurred only a few years later, the medical community was faced with much the same issue - "performing abortions in cases of possible fetal deformity."⁴⁸⁷ Much like the Finkbine's and thalidomide, those cases associated with the German measles epidemic gained much publicity and served to keep the abortion issue at the fore of the public discourse. Many who sought to liberalize abortion laws saw the prestigious American Law Institute's 1962 revision of the 1959 Model Penal Code as a "blueprint for reform." It called for the legalization of therapeutic abortion under any of these conditions: if to continue the pregnancy "would gravely impair the physical or mental health of the mother;" if the physician believes "the child would be born with grave physical or mental defect;" if "the pregnancy resulted from rape, incest, or other felonious intercourse." In addition, two physicians were required to provide written certification justifying the abortion. While opposition in

⁴⁸⁵ "Vatican Sees 'Crime' in Finkbine Abortion," *New York Times*, Aug 20, 1962, 9; Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 112; Garrow, *Liberty and Sexuality*, 289-290.

⁴⁸⁶ Garrow, *Liberty and Sexuality*, 289; Olasky, *Abortion Rites*, 280-281.

⁴⁸⁷ Sarvis and Rodman, *The Abortion Controversy*, 6.

the states on the part the Catholic Church and, surprisingly, some physicians served to defeat the bill, the Code would provide a model for future legislation.⁴⁸⁸

Regardless, the abortion issue was gaining traction, and, at the same time, the country was also undergoing “a birth control revolution,” after the introduction of the pill in 1960, which helped shape, and was influenced by, an emerging women’s liberation movement (or what came to be called “second-wave” feminism). Within this context, the American public’s comfort with the idea of a woman’s right to her own reproductive control grew. This sentiment was confirmed in 1965 by the judiciary in *Griswold v. Connecticut* when the United States Supreme Court found the remaining state laws regulating birth control distribution unconstitutional. The vast majority of Protestant leaders actually welcomed the ruling; many had actively supported the legislation’s repeal. As for Catholics who had vigorously engaged in a campaign to criminalize birth control throughout much of the century, some were outraged, but the leading clergy responded rather mildly. Hartford’s Archbishop summed up the general opinion when he remarked that “Catholics ... recognize this decision as a valid interpretation of constitutional law,” but noted that “this is a judicial opinion, and in no way involves the morality of the question.”⁴⁸⁹

Still, Catholic opposition to abortion remained resolute. Nevertheless, by the mid-late 1960s, emboldened state legislators, with growing public support and strong encouragement from the medical community (including the AMA), began introducing abortion reform bills that mirrored the 1962 Model Penal Code.⁴⁹⁰ Despite Catholic resistance, their efforts won support from certain segments of the religious community. In 1966, for example, New York’s largest interdenominational Protestant

⁴⁸⁸ Peter Bart, “California Faces Abortion Debate,” Special to the *New York Times*, June 19, 1966, 88; Garrow, *Liberty and Sexuality*, 300-302; “Model Penal Code Abortion Law, American Law Institute, 1962,” Model Penal Code: Proposed Official Draft (Philadelphia: American Law Institute, May 4, 1962), in Rubin, *The Abortion Controversy*, 80; Jane E. Brody, “Abortion: Once a Whispered Problem, Now a Public Debate,” *New York Times*, Jan 8, 1968, 28; Sarvis and Rodman, *The Abortion Controversy*, 6-7.

⁴⁸⁹ Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 112-113; Garrow, *Liberty and Sexuality*, 252-255; Robert D. Byrnes, “Birth Control Law Of State Nullified,” *The Hartford Courant*, June 8, 1965, 1; “Birth Control Information To Be Available in State,” *The Hartford Courant*, June 8, 1965, 11.

⁴⁹⁰ “Florida Abortion Bills Stalled,” Special to *The New York Times*, Apr 29, 1967, 14; “Start on Abortion Reform,” *New York Times*, Apr 29, 1967, 34; “Abortion Bill Voted By Oklahoma House,” *New York Times*, Mar 30, 1967, 39; “A.M.A., in Reversal, Favors Liberalizing of Abortion Laws,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1967, 1.

organization, the Council of Churches, representing over 1.5 million congregants, recommended the reformation of state laws to include therapeutic abortions. And only two years later, the Council came out in support of a total repeal of existing legislation.⁴⁹¹

The first state to pass liberalized legislation was Colorado, when a therapeutic abortion bill was signed into law on April 25, 1967, followed quickly by North Carolina (May 7, 1967).⁴⁹² In California, Anthony Beilenson, who would later go on to become a ten-term Congressman from that state, had been trying to pass abortion reform legislation since 1963, when he was an assemblyman, but was continuously stymied by the efforts of the Catholic Church. Undeterred, Beilenson, now a state senator submitted his bill again in 1967. Many, including the newly elected governor, believed that the bill would go nowhere, as it had in the past. Beilenson, however, benefited from the public's changing attitudes, which several recent German Measles cases involving doctors charged for performing abortions only served to reinforce. After much committee debate, the legislation appeared headed for a Senate vote. Francis Cardinal McIntyre argued that it was tantamount to "legalized murder," as the Catholic Church rallied its opposition once again, and the governor, who without much thought had earlier indicated general support, now began to lose his nerve.⁴⁹³

The intensification of the abortion controversy in California coincided with the early days of Ronald Reagan's first term as governor of the state. Despite spending more than a dozen years as an active

⁴⁹¹ Edward B. Fiske, "Bishops To Press Abortion Battle: Plan a Campaign to Defeat New Liberal State Laws," Special to *The New York Times*, Apr 14, 1967, 35; Sidney E. Zion, "State Council of Churches to Seek Abortion Law Liberalization," *New York Times*, Dec 13, 1966, 52; "State Protestants Now Back Repeal Of Abortion Statute," Special to the *New York Times*, Feb 7, 1969, 39.

⁴⁹² "Colorado Easing Curb on Abortion Bill," *New York Times*, April 26, 1967, 49; Fred P. Graham, "Law: Colorado Pioneers on Legal Abortions," Special to the *New York Times*, Apr 30, 1967, 194; "Abortion Act Passed in N. Carolina," *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1967, 12.

⁴⁹³ Garrow, *Liberty and Sexuality*, 290; Peter Bart, "California Faces Abortion Debate," special to the *New York Times*, June 19, 1966, 88; Lynn Lilliston, "Moral Questions Facing Law Change," *Los Angeles Times*, February 22, 1967, E1; Ken Reich, "Abortion Reform Sponsor Notes Shift in Attitude," *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1967, A6; Wallace Turner, "Doctors Backed in Abortion Clash: Drive Begun in California in German Measles Cases," special to *New York Times*, March 12, 1967, 82; Keith Monroe, "How California's Abortion Law Isn't Working," *New York Times*, Dec 29, 1968, SM10, 17; Cardinal McIntyre J. Francis, "Catholic Church and Abortion Bills," *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1967, B4; Lou Cannon, *Reagan* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 129; "Coast Unit Backs Bill on Abortions: Easing of Curbs Approved by Senate Committee," *New York Times*, Apr 29, 1967, 14.

political conservative spokesman, he had never actually held political office before. Now, only six months into his first term, Reagan was confronted with, what he would describe to the journalist Lou Cannon in 1968 as, “the most difficult” decision he had ever had to make. Reagan was raised to believe that life began at conception, and thus abortion was murder. That being said, he appeared sympathetic to cases where the woman’s life was at risk or those involving rape and incest, and expressed as much to the press, in early May 1967, when he suggested that “some liberalization is not only acceptable but proper.” Beyond his personal faith-based philosophy on abortion, there is no evidence to suggest that it was an issue he had devoted much thought to. He admitted as much when he later told Cannon that he had “never done more study on any one thing than the abortion bill.”⁴⁹⁴

Fearing that the bill may actually reach his desk, Reagan balked, publicly comparing the “fetal defects clause” to something out of Hitler’s Germany, and declaring that he could not “justify the taking of an unborn life simply on the supposition that the baby may be born less than a perfect human being.” He also called for the rape provision’s age requirement to be lowered from 18 to 14 and stated that he would sign the bill if these issues were addressed. One journalist later observed that the fetal defects clause was, “ironically ... the section most desired by the medical profession, because it would legalize such abortions as those for rubella.” Beilenson, nonetheless, grudgingly changed the bill to reflect Reagan’s position and the Senate passed the amended legislation. They then awaited the Assembly’s vote, and Craig Biddle (Republican), Assembly manager of the Therapeutic Abortion Act of 1967, had secured a commitment from the governor to sign the bill if it passed there. Reagan hesitated once again and, only hours before the Assembly vote, called a press conference to announce that further “loopholes” had been brought to his attention. The most troubling concerned the vague meaning of women’s health, which Reagan argued could be broadly interpreted. Perhaps most exasperating was his suggestion that he had been “assured that there was going to be a residence requirement,” which was received with bipartisan

⁴⁹⁴ Lou Cannon interview with Reagan, October 1968, quoted in Cannon, *Reagan*, 129; Jerry Gillam, “Abortion Measure Wins Major Test,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1967, 3.

disbelief and anger, as it had never been previously discussed.⁴⁹⁵ Indeed, when asked about a residency requirement by a reporter only weeks earlier, Reagan had replied that he had “never given any thought to one.”⁴⁹⁶

Biddle had had enough. He made clear that Reagan’s credibility was on the line and then sent the bill to the Assembly floor where it passed largely along religious lines. Most protestants voted in favour of the bill, while the more “devout Catholic Democrats ... voted against the measure.”⁴⁹⁷ Lynn Nofziger, the governor’s close adviser and a supporter of the bill, agreed that Reagan’s political reputation was at risk, particularly among the many Republicans, including conservatives, who had voted for the legislation, and urged him to sign it lest the administration lose control of the whole issue and suffer irreparable damage. Though he suggested that the bill was “by no means perfect,” the governor acquiesced, and on June 15 he signed the Therapeutic Abortion Act allowing for abortion in cases of rape or incest, or when a pregnancy endangered the health of the mother. Reagan, who confessed to Lou Cannon that “those were awful weeks,” lamented the decision the moment he made it.⁴⁹⁸

He strongly disagreed with the bill, specifically the section including a woman’s health, but he was politically inexperienced and his advisers and friends, rather than offering a unified front, were divided on the issue. Reagan also received conflicting advice from Francis Cardinal McIntyre who cited the bill’s immorality and, not surprisingly, counseled Reagan against signing it, and his father-in-law Loyal Davis, a prominent conservative (read classical liberal) Chicago physician, who expressed strong support. The real problem was that Reagan had backed himself into a corner when he signaled his early support for the

⁴⁹⁵ Lynn Lilliston, “New Law on Abortion Hailed as Health Aid: New Abortion Law Acclaimed,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 1967, D1; Jerry Gillam, “Reagan Says He Would Sign Bill on Abortion: Deformed Baby Provision Would Have to be Deleted,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1967, 3; Keith Monroe, “How California’s Abortion Law Isn’t Working,” *New York Times*, Dec 29, 1968, SM10, 17.

⁴⁹⁶ Ray Zeman, “Reagan Asks Changes, Delay in Abortion Bill: Governor Calls for Study,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 1967, 3.

⁴⁹⁷ Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 113.

⁴⁹⁸ Lou Cannon interview with Reagan, October, 1968, in Cannon, Reagan, 131, 130; “California Eases Curb in Abortion: Reagan Says He Will Sign it Despite Some Objections,” *New York Times*, June 14, 1967, 19; Jerry Gillam, “Governor Signs Law on Abortion: Abortion Bill Signed Into Law by Reagan,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1967, 3; “Reagan Reluctantly Signs Bill Easing Abortions,” *New York Times*, June 16, 1967, 24.

measure, and then once again to Biddle. Having done so, he tied his political credibility to the bill and all but undercut his position vis a vis a veto or even negotiation. After it passed with significant Republican support, Reagan had little choice, politically speaking, but to sign it. The future president made the pragmatic decision, assuaging his moral convictions with the fact that he had managed to eliminate the fetal defects clause.⁴⁹⁹

Kristin Luker has suggested that with the removal of the fetal defects clause, “the new law did not explicitly violate the belief that the embryo was a person. It broadened the grounds upon which one life could be sacrificed for another, but without necessarily calling into question the absolute value of embryonic life. Many early activists decided, therefore, that it might be possible to prevent further liberalization by continuing to persuade people that abortion was wrong in *principle* because it took a life.”⁵⁰⁰

While Reagan could, as he said, “morally and logically justify liberalized abortions to protect the health of a mother,” he had had concerns with the phrase’s ambiguity. Legislators and members of the medical community had assured him that doctors would take great care “in their application of this exception,” but the Catholic Cardinal had alerted Reagan to the potential for a broad interpretation of the provision and he had himself acknowledged the possibility when speaking to the press. When abortion rates increased over the next few years, the Cardinal and other anti-abortionists would claim vindication. For Reagan’s part, Cannon suggests that he “realized too late what the Beilenson bill would accomplish. Later in his governorship, he would have given early signals of a veto, making legislators more reluctant to pass such a controversial measure. But,” Cannon continued, “Reagan had not reflected on the abortion issue until long after he had made his commitment to Biddle.”⁵⁰¹ Reagan’s political inexperience, as well as his belief that the bill would fail, help explain his failure to educate himself earlier on the issue.

⁴⁹⁹ Cannon, *Reagan*, 131, 129; Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 113.

⁵⁰⁰ Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, 133 (original emphasis).

⁵⁰¹ Jerry Gillam, “Reagan Says He Would Sign Bill on Abortion,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1967, 3; Cannon, *Reagan*, 130- 131.

Perhaps as importantly, was his hope that the whole matter would just disappear. Reagan may have been open to the idea of legislative reform, but he wanted other states to serve as test-cases before California acted, hence his call for more study.⁵⁰² Given the contemporary zeitgeist, this approach was naive at best and potentially catastrophic. Reagan had been lucky to escape the situation unscathed.

Abortion as a political issue was new to the governor, but it was a subject he was not wholly unfamiliar with. Reagan, born in 1911, had been raised during a time when the procedure was criminalized and not openly discussed by many outside of a small group, mainly physicians and members of the religious community. Reagan's mother, Nelle, had been one of those who had taken a strong interest in the issue. Nelle was a devout member of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who actively engaged not only the public issues of the day, but also those looked upon as taboo. Along with their efforts toward the prohibition of alcohol, the Disciples were also very outspoken against abortion, particularly the "thriving ... clinics" found in a number of the larger urban centers. Still, the Disciples were what one might call "liberal fundamentalists," and though Nelle opposed the practice, "she never condemned any woman for illegitimately carrying a child," instead doing everything she could "to convince such local 'misfortunates' to have their babies."⁵⁰³ Reagan was heavily influenced by his mother and the Disciples of Christ, in which he was baptized at the age of eleven, and, as such, religion and the church played a central role in his youth and helped shape his world-view. Reagan's father, Jack, a lapsed Catholic, nonetheless adhered to the official doctrine that abortion was a crime, a position his son shared but tempered with the more empathetic outlook espoused by his mother.⁵⁰⁴ If Reagan had been ambiguous

⁵⁰² Ray Zeman, "Reagan Asks Changes, Delay in Abortion Bill: Governor Calls for Study," *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 1967, 3.

⁵⁰³ Anne Edwards, *Early Reagan* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1987), 45. For references to some of the Protestant fundamentalists that spoke out against abortion during the early-mid twentieth century, see Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 145-147, 274.

⁵⁰⁴ Gary Wills, "Nelle's Boy: Ronald Reagan and the Disciples of Christ," *The Christian Century* 103, no. 34 (November 12, 1986): 1001-1006; Ron Reagan, *My Father at 100* (New York: Penguin Group Inc., 2011), 51-52; Edwards, 45, 56, 58-59, 144; for an exploration of Reagan's religious faith, also see Mary Beth Brown, *Hand of Providence: The Strong and Quiet Faith of Ronald Reagan* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Current, 2004); Paul Kengor,

and indecisive in the late Spring of 1967, it was not because he lacked a firm philosophical view on abortion. Moving forward, his position would be clear and resolute.⁵⁰⁵

As for the anti-abortion struggle, the Catholic hierarchy and some of their constituents continued their efforts to hold back the tide of reform legislation, but it was an uphill battle - over the next three years, twelve states addressed their existing laws with more liberalized ones - and they found few allies. Protestants, especially fundamentalists, harboured their traditional suspicion of the Vatican's motives, exacerbated by their perception that "Catholics' attempt to prohibit abortion" was "another manifestation of their decades-long fight to restrict legal access to birth control."⁵⁰⁶ To alleviate fears such as this, Patricia Miller suggests that the Catholic clergy, in an effort to avoid the appearance of a "top-down" movement, worked toward cultivating "the appearance of widespread Catholic grassroots opposition." As well as rallying their parishioners who in turn flooded their state representatives with protest letters, one of their first steps was to create the "Right to Life League of Southern California" in the mid-1960s. Originally comprising members of the clergy and a small number of "local anti-abortion activists," including "a few conservative Lutheran Pastors," it was the first of its kind in the country. In 1967, as the first wave of abortion reform legislation hit, the Catholic Church expanded their regional grassroots efforts when the National Council of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) funded an initiative to "coordinate national anti-abortion activities, laying the groundwork for what would become the anti-abortion movement."⁵⁰⁷

If Protestants, with few exceptions, had been absent from the campaign against abortion throughout the formative years of the struggle, Darren Dochuk's exploration of evangelicals in California

God and Ronald Reagan: A Spiritual Life (New York: Harper Collins, 2004); and Bob Slosser, *Reagan Inside Out* (Word Books, 1984).

⁵⁰⁵ Reagan would later express his views on abortion in an article (in *Human Life*), *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation* later included in a book by the same name.

⁵⁰⁶ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 113.

⁵⁰⁷ Patricia Miller, *Good Catholics: The Battle Over Abortion in the Catholic Church* (Berkeley: University of Los Angeles Press, 2014), 44-47; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 113; John Dart, "Catholic Church United by Opposition to Abortion Issue," *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 1971.

demonstrates that the passage of Beilenson’s abortion reform bill spurred members of that community to act in concert with their Catholic counterparts. Initially caught off guard by Reagan’s decision, California’s evangelical community failed to “marshal the same level of resistance they saw (and admired) among Catholics.” Though the two religious groups had a history of disagreement, by the 1950s they had already found common cause in anti-Communism and education related issues. In the 1970s, “by stressing the pre-Reformation catholicity of Christian believers,” Protestants were persuaded “to commune with Catholic brethren in an ecumenical, experiential faith.” Together they collaborated in a series of “crusades for moral reform,” such as the 1972 anti-obscenity campaign’s efforts to pass Proposition 18, giving citizens the right to “police pornography.” Despite Reagan’s endorsement, it failed. Regardless, by the early 1970s, evangelicals and Catholics in California were active in the anti-abortion movement, but the same could not be said for the rest of the country.⁵⁰⁸ It would take a Supreme Court decision wiping out abortion laws en masse throughout the United States to stir evangelicals to action. Even then, they were slow to respond.

There had always been both legal and moral dimensions to the discourse surrounding abortion, but these took on new meaning when, in February 1970, two young attorneys, Linda Coffee and Sarah Weddington, took on as a client a pregnant 23-year-old seeking an abortion but unable to qualify for one under Texas state law (where it was legal only when the life of the woman was in danger). Both lawyers and their client had reservations. Coffee and Weddington’s ideal plaintiff was a “married couple who wanted the right to an abortion,” and they had also sought a physician looking to “end ... the restrictions on abortion” to sign on to the suit. The plaintiff, Norma McCovey, was divorced, without means or family, and had, by her own admission, “abused herself and been abused by her society.” Moreover, she had no desire to appear or testify in court. Skepticism aside, the three would proceed with the suit, with McCovey taking on the pseudonym Jane Roe to protect her identity. In a case that became known as *Roe*

⁵⁰⁸ Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 346-348.

v. Wade (Dallas District Attorney, Henry Wade), the attorneys argued that Texas state abortion law infringed on an individual's constitutional right to privacy. In their 1973 decision, the United States Supreme Court agreed (7-2), and in doing so overturned abortion laws in all but those states that had already fully liberalized their legal code.⁵⁰⁹

In the wake of the *Roe* ruling, lead attorney Linda Coffee (a Southern Baptist) made clear that “legal personhood is separate entirely from a moral or religious view of personhood,” suggesting that “the Supreme Court decision does not absolve anyone of individual moral or religious responsibility.”⁵¹⁰ For the most part, *Roe v. Wade* did not elicit much of a response from the country's Protestants, who seemed to appreciate the legal and moral distinctions expressed by Coffee. Conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists, for the most part, were mute. Even Jerry Falwell admitted that “four thousand pastors stood by and did little to stop it.” More liberal Protestants generally favoured a pro-choice position, with, perhaps, some restrictions. Gallup's June 1972 poll revealed that while fifty-six percent of Catholics agreed that “the decision to have an abortion should be made solely by a woman and her physician,” the number for Protestants was sixty-five percent. The Southern Baptist Convention actually approved of the *Roe* decision for two very important reasons. Baptist tradition had always held to the notion of separation of church and state as critical to the freedom of religion, and viewed abortion as a moral issue, not a legal or political one. The Court had affirmed both these positions.⁵¹¹

The lack of any real evangelical response was likely a combination of factors. Along with a deep-rooted suspicion of the Catholic Church, evangelicals, with historical exceptions - the Temperance League, Suffrage Movement, and the debate over evolution, for example - had, at least as a unified group, generally steered clear of public politics. Perhaps most importantly, Protestants, unlike their Catholic

⁵⁰⁹ Hull and Hoffer, *Roe v. Wade*, 1-3, 113-179.

⁵¹⁰ Quoted in Randall Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America* (Amherst, N.Y.: Perseus Books, 2006), 19.

⁵¹¹ Randall Balmer, *Religion in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 94; Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* Garden City, (N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980), 253; George Gallup, “Abortion Seen Up to Woman, Doctor,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 25, 1972, A2; also see Seth Dowland, “Family Values” and the Formation of a Christian Right Agenda,” *Church History* 78, no. 3 (September 2009), 606–631.

counterparts, had no historical church doctrine to offer direction when it came to abortion. While the Vatican had made a number of official pronouncements on the subject over the centuries, evangelicals relied on the Bible and, as the evangelical raised historian Randall Balmer points out, the “biblical case against abortion appears to be somewhat less than obvious.”⁵¹² The physician S.I. McMillen also acknowledged, in a *Christianity Today* article, that “the Bible does not give a direct answer” as to the acceptability of abortion.⁵¹³ Indeed, when challenged on the issue, Willem A. Van Gemeren, professor of Old Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School admitted, “Of course, nothing addresses abortion directly,” but argued, rather ironically, that “the biblical inference as accepted over the centuries is a witness that cannot be ignored.”⁵¹⁴

Despite the absence of any unified resistance to abortion, there was a scattering of conservative evangelical opposition.⁵¹⁵ Reverend Billy Graham spoke out against what he referred to as a “sin” (though he later “distanced himself from the pro-life movement by the time abortion became a political issue”), and the theologian and associate-editor of *Christianity Today*, Harold O.J. Brown, responded with an editorial in which he made clear that abortion “constitutes a repudiation of the Hippocratic Oath and Judeo-Christian ethics.”⁵¹⁶ And then there was Francis Schaeffer, a fundamentalist theologian who had, after having left the United States in the late 1940s, founded, with his wife Edith, L’Abri (the shelter mission in Switzerland in 1957). There he had spent his time writing a number of influential books, and mentoring and counseling thousands of evangelicals, fundamentalists, and those of no particular religious affiliation, young and old, from all walks of life. Open to all who made the pilgrimage, the mission’s

⁵¹² William C. Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 193; Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 114; Michael S. Winters, *God’s Right Hand: How Jerry Falwell Made God a Republican and Baptized the American Right* (New York: Harper One, 2012), 97, 98; Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 7-8.

⁵¹³ Quoted in Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 114.

⁵¹⁴ Quoted in Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 8.

⁵¹⁵ For the best exploration of Protestant evangelical opposition to abortion, before and immediately following the *Roe* decision, see Daniel K. Williams, *Defenders of the Unborn: The Pro-Life Movement before Roe v. Wade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁵¹⁶ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 193; Steven P. Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South: Politics and Culture in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 205.

intention was to “present an alternative to what he regarded as the harsh, uncompassionate side to ... fundamentalist Christianity without giving up the ... theology.” Once a strict fundamentalist, by the 1970s Schaeffer had, through his interactions with the many youths who passed through L’Abri, embraced much of the spirit of the counterculture and was beginning to adopt a less harsh and more ecumenical approach, becoming more open to those with theological differences.⁵¹⁷

Despite his more liberal (or cosmopolitan) outlook, Schaeffer, still theologically conservative, saw secular humanism – particularly its tendency to de-emphasize the centrality of God – as a threat to Christianity, and believed it the cause of a moral, cultural and spiritual decline in the United States. Unlike conservative evangelicals, who he often rebuked, Schaeffer, an environmentalist, saw “materialism, the greed, of corporate America” - or what he referred to as the “plastic culture” - as the leading cause. Though not political himself, he encouraged other Christians to engage in not just politics, but with the world generally. Events and personalities would soon nudge Schaeffer into the forefront of a nationwide evangelical movement and an unlikely alliance. Schaeffer believed life began at conception and thus was strongly opposed to abortion, as was his son Frank (or Frankie), at least ostensibly. In 1974, Frank, a budding Christian filmmaker in his early twenties, convinced his father to develop a book and documentary series, *How Should We Then Live?*, about Western history and culture. In a call to political action, the book argued that Western societies risked drifting towards authoritarian rule, a manifestation of secular humanism, if they did not “return to a biblical standard of morality.” The documentary was intended to be more informative in nature (to demonstrate “how checks and balances get out of whack when you lose your overarching Christian principles”), but considering the recent *Roe* decision, the

⁵¹⁷ Frank Schaeffer, *Crazy for God: How I Grew Up as One of the Elected, Helped Found the Religious Right, and Lived to Take All (or Almost All) of it Back* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2007), 10, 30, 114-118, 205-212; Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 137-138; Marjorie Hyer, “Evangelist Attacks the Moral and Political Climate in America,” *The Washington Post*, Feb 13, 1982, B6; PBS, “God in America,” Interview with Frank Schaeffer, October 23, 2009, <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/interviews/frank-schaeffer.html> (Note: Francis Schaeffer lectured university students, as well as the increasing number of hippies and backpackers that passed through, on the meaning behind Bob Dylan songs, was familiar with the writings of Jack Kerouac, embraced environmentalism, and was something of a self-taught art historian. He was able to speak to the younger generation - to draw the connections between Christianity and the spirit of the counterculture).

younger Schaeffer admitted to pressuring his father, the host, into politicizing two relevant episodes into anti-abortion polemics.⁵¹⁸

The late 1960s and early 1970s had seen evangelicals, if only a minority, begin to engage in the broader struggle against secular humanism, including efforts against the legalization of abortion. *How Should We Then Live?*, released in 1976, lured greater numbers out into the public arena. To say that both the book and the accompanying documentary were extremely well received by the evangelical community would be an understatement. Conservative Christians, and even more moderate evangelicals who were beginning to sense the existence of “a culture war” and felt the need to engage in it, saw in *How Should We Then Live?* “a framework” for understanding the nation’s “secular drift.”⁵¹⁹ Still, for most evangelicals and fundamentalists, abortion was only one of many issues facing the country, and in the mid-late seventies few singled it out as any worse than divorce, homosexuality, or feminism, to name only a few of society’s perceived ills. Schaeffer’s continued efforts, including *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (1979), a book addressing abortion he co-authored with C. Everett Koop, a noted pediatrician and future Surgeon General in the Reagan administration, would help reshape those priorities.⁵²⁰

If not for the decriminalization of abortion in 1973, Francis Schaeffer would, in the words of his son, likely “be remembered as a somewhat obscure, slightly-to-the-left, interesting cultural anomaly, a guru who had this following, who loved art and music and Jesus, and that would have been the end of it.”⁵²¹ Instead, Schaeffer became the most significant influence on the Protestant anti-abortion movement and

⁵¹⁸ Schaeffer, *Crazy for God*, 265-267, 261; Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?* (Old Tappan, N.J.: F. H. Revell Co, 1976), 13; PBS, “God in America,” Interview with Frank Schaeffer (including quote on “checks and balances...”); Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 138-141; On Schaeffer’s environmentalism, see Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977; Note: Frank Schaeffer would, himself, play an integral role, along with his father Francis, in the founding of the Religious Right, before he renounced the movement in the late 1980s and converted to Greek Orthodox.

⁵¹⁹ Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 140-141; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 195-196.

⁵²⁰ See Francis Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (Old Tappan: New Jersey, 1979).

⁵²¹ PBS, “God in America,” Interview with Frank Schaeffer.

the most important theological inspiration behind the emergence of the Religious Right. The latter was a movement he looked upon with some skepticism and only fully embraced belatedly, along with the Republican Party, two years before his death in May 1984, as the best means for achieving an end to abortion.⁵²²

Not only did Schaeffer provide intellectual guidance, he played a significant role in laying the foundation for recruiting the man who would become the face of the Religious Right, though he could not know that at the time. Reverend Jerry Falwell was the fundamentalist pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, and the host of *Old Time Gospel Hour*, a popular religious television program. He was also one of the many evangelicals who looked to Schaeffer for his theological wisdom. In the early-mid 1970s, Falwell, with few exceptions, dwelt in the realm of the Lord, leaving politics to the “outside” world. He had, for example, said nothing publicly following the *Roe* decision. In fact, while he referenced it along with other sins in his preaching, it took the influence of Schaeffer before Falwell made abortion the central subject of a sermon in 1978 - part of an anti-abortion campaign he initiated that same year. As Schaeffer began to engage in a more aggressive campaign to rally conservative Christians to action, he exhorted Falwell to enter the public-political discourse and encourage his numerous followers to do likewise. At the same time, Schaeffer also persuaded Falwell to take a more ecumenical approach, not an easy thing to do for a fundamentalist who adheres to a literal interpretation of the Bible, when it came to those who might differ theologically, but who shared similar objectives.⁵²³ Within a few years Falwell would become a significant political player and, arguably, the most influential, and

⁵²² Williams, *God's Own Party*, 208; Marjorie Hyer, “Evangelist Attacks the Moral and Political Climate in America,” *The Washington Post*, Feb 13, 1982, B6.

⁵²³ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 196-197, 193; Balmer, *Religion in Twentieth Century America*, 94; Jerry Falwell, *Strength for the Journey: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 361-362; Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 98, 99; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 155-156, 172-173.

controversial, religious figure in the United States, and his organization, Moral Majority, synonymous with the Religious Right.⁵²⁴

On the political front, prior to the mid-late '70s, neither the Republican nor Democratic Party seemed a willing ally in the struggle. The political platforms of the two major parties failed to include a policy position on abortion, and members of both parties either introduced or supported bills calling for the reformation of abortion legislation during the late 1960s-early 70s.⁵²⁵ In fact, the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* opinion was "written and supported" by recent Republican appointees, one of whom successfully lobbied for extending "constitutional protection from the first to the second trimester of pregnancy." Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun wrote the majority opinion, and among items later found in his case file was a newspaper article from August 1972 highlighting a recent Gallup poll on abortion. It noted that sixty-four percent of Americans agreed with the statement that "the decision to have an abortion should be made solely by a woman and her physician," up from fifty-seven percent cited in a poll from January of the same year. In terms of politics, the numbers were sixty-eight percent of Republicans with fifty-nine percent of Democrats supporting what amounted to the "full liberalization of abortion laws." The poll demonstrates that the Justices legal views reflected not just the public at large, but those with similar political affiliations even more closely. While Republicans would be at the forefront of efforts to reform abortion legislation in the late 1960s and early 1970s, their position on the issue was already evolving. Within a decade their resources would be redirected towards reversing the new laws they had help bring about.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴ For an exploration of Falwell and his rise, see, for example, Michael S. Winters, *God's Right Hand: How Jerry Falwell Made God a Republican and Baptized the American Right* (New York: Harper One, 2012); Dirk Smillie, *Falwell Inc.: Inside a Religious, Political, Educational, and Business Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008); James L. Guth, "The New Christian Right," in *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation*, eds. Robert C., Liebman and Robert Wuthnow (Hawthorne, N.Y.: Aldine Publishing Co., 1983), 31-45; and Dr. William R. Goodman, Jr., and Dr. James J.H. Price, *Jerry Falwell: an unauthorized biography* (Lynchburg, Virginia: Paris and Associates, Inc., 1981).

⁵²⁵ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 113.

⁵²⁶ Linda Greenhouse and Reva B. Siegel, "Before (and After) *Roe v. Wade*: New Questions About Backlash," *The Yale Law Journal* 120, no. 8 (June 2011): 2031-2032; George Gallup, "Abortion Seen Up to Woman, Doctor," *Washington Post*, Aug. 25, 1972, A2; Hull and Hoffer, *Roe v. Wade*, 164-165.

In the 1972 presidential campaign, Richard Nixon had spoken out against abortion, for political expediency (to help secure the Catholic vote), despite the absence of an abortion platform in either party.⁵²⁷ In the '76 campaign, both parties platforms acknowledged the controversial nature of abortion, but their positions, though tempered, showed they were moving in opposite directions. The Democrats suggested “that it is undesirable to attempt to amend the U.S. Constitution to overturn the Supreme Court decision in this area.” Conversely, while the Republican’s acknowledged internal disagreement and supported “a continuance of public dialogue,” they ultimately endorsed “the efforts of those who seek enactment of a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children.”⁵²⁸ Much of the reason for the GOP’s shift to the right on abortion was due to Ronald Reagan, who had challenged the sitting president, Gerald Ford, a moderate, in the primary. Though Reagan ultimately lost, his popularity provided his conservative supporters enough influence to demand the inclusion of a pro-life position.⁵²⁹

Nineteen-seventy-six also saw Congress, after multiple attempts, pass the Hyde Amendment, sponsored by Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL), which put restrictions on Medicaid funding for abortions, other than in cases of rape, incest, or if the woman’s life or long-term health was at risk. In other words, for any abortion other than those considered therapeutic. This step affected those less financially well-off who relied on government subsidization. Despite being challenged in the courts, the Hyde Amendment(s) have been upheld by the judiciary.⁵³⁰ The Republican position on abortion, both officially and on the part of individual politicians, was only one, but perhaps the most visible, sign that the party’s conservative

⁵²⁷ Byron W. Daynes and Raymond Tatalovich, “Presidential Politics and Abortion, 1972-1988,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 22, no. 3, *Eisenhower and Presidential Elections* (Summer, 1992): 546; also see 1972 Republican Party Platform, August 21, 1972, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25842>; and 1972 Democratic Party Platform, July 10, 1972, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29605>

⁵²⁸ Daynes and Tatalovich, 546-547; also see 1976 Democratic Party Platform, July 12, 1976, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29606>; and 1976 Republican Party Platform, August 18, 1976, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25843>.

⁵²⁹ Daynes and Tatalovich, 547; Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 120; Dochuk, 372.

⁵³⁰ Bruce Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition: The Reagan Campaigns and White Evangelicals* (New York: P. Lang, 1994), 44-45; Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 136-137.

faction was steering it rightward, aided by those of like-mind outside of official politics including a growing number of evangelicals.

While the deep, long-term origins of the Religious Right can be debated, the more immediate roots of the movement are often traced to the culture wars of the 1970s, significantly the re-emergence of the abortion issue.⁵³¹ Indeed, the leadership and supporters alike propagate the narrative that the movement came about in response to the United States Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. The evidence, however, reveals that the ruling elicited, with few exceptions, little moral indignation on the part of evangelicals. What the evangelical historian Randall Balmer refers to as the "abortion myth," one so "pervasive among evangelicals that few questioned it," has been successfully debunked.⁵³² Abortion was an issue seized upon by conservative political and religious activists, in the late 1970s, who had initially united in response to the 1976 Internal Revenue Service's case against Bob Jones University over the issue of Civil Rights legislation and tax exemption.⁵³³ Still, if abortion did not serve to spark the Religious Right, it was the visible issue around which the leadership consolidated the movement.

⁵³¹ For studies that look to long-term historical roots see, for example, Allan J. Lichtman, *White Protestant Nation: The Rise of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Atlantic Press Monthly, 2008); and Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party*. For studies that concentrate on the culture wars see, for example, Robert C. Liebman, Robert Wuthnow, and James L. Guth, *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation* (Hawthorne, N.Y.: Aldine Publishing Co., 1983); William Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); and Clyde Wilcox, *God's Warriors: The Christian Right in Twentieth Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

⁵³² See Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 32-33; Along with Paul Weyrich, Ed Dobson, a leading evangelical and early executive at Moral Majority, has also acknowledged that he did "not remember abortion ever being mentioned as a reason why we ought to do something." See Edward G. Dobson, "Comments," in *No Longer Exiles: The Religious New Right in American Politics*, ed. Michael Cromartie (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1993), 52.

⁵³³ See Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 14; also see, for example, Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: race in the conservative counterrevolution, 1963-1994* (Baton Rouge, LA.: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); and Joseph Crespino, "Civil Rights and the Religious Right," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, ed. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian Zelizer (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 90-105. Note: Paul Weyrich, one of the political architects of the Religious Right has admitted as much. See Paul Weyrich, "Comments," in *No Longer Exiles: The Religious New Right in American Politics*, ed. Michael Cromartie (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1993), 25-26; also see Charles Babcock, "Religious Right Decries Shift on Tax Exemptions," *Washington Post*, January 28, 1982, A4; and George G. Higgins, "The Prolife Movement and the New Right," *America*, 13 September 1980, 108.

It provided the movement's political and religious leaders, "busily cobbling together a political agenda," an ideal issue on which to campaign. Abortion encapsulated the perceived decline of the social order, especially the perceived breakdown of the "traditional" family, which conservatives blamed on the emergence of the feminist movement, gay rights, and the counterculture of the mid-late 1960s and early 1970s. These trends continued through the seventies, evidenced by an increase in the rates of divorce and abortion. The latter "symbolized everything that was wrong with America: women entering the workplace in large numbers, expressing themselves sexually outside marriage, and then refusing to deal with the consequences, choosing abortion rather than responsibility"⁵³⁴

As the 1970s came to a close, evangelicals were coalescing around a second anti-abortion campaign. Much like the nineteenth-century struggle to end the practice, this twentieth-century movement's roots owed little to the efforts of the evangelical community. And much like the earlier physicians' crusade, conservative evangelicals and their political allies would hijack the abortion issue to further a broader socio-political agenda. What had changed was the framework in which the conversation would take place. There would be little, or no debate as to the status of the embryo/fetus as there had been in the past. Life was assumed to begin at conception, thanks to the efforts of the physicians who worked to delegitimize what had been an accepted understanding of the pregnancy process for centuries.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ Balmer, *Religion in America*, 94; Dominic Sandbrook, *Mad as Hell: The Crisis of the 1970s and the Rise of the Right* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 347; also see Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes have Seen the Glory*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, 121-123.

⁵³⁵ This would eventually manifest in a Human Life Bill sponsored by Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) that called for banning abortion on the premise that life began at conception, thereby making it murder. See Bill Peterson, "Worries for New Right: Group Thwarted on Social Policy, Badly Split Over Abortion Tactics," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 16, 1982, A4.

Chapter #5

A Conservative Coalition

“America is basically a conservative country. The potential for revolt has always been there, under the most favorable conditions. But those conditions have to be made. That’s where the New Right comes in.”

Richard Viguerie, *The New Right: We’re Ready to Lead*

“It is time we come together and rise up against the tide of permissiveness and moral decay that is crushing us in on our society from every side. America is at a crossroads as a nation; she is facing a fateful ‘Decade of Destiny’ - the 1980s. I am speaking about survival and am calling upon those Americans who believe in decency and integrity to stand for what is good and what is right. It is time to face the truth that America is in trouble.”

Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!*

While a large number of traditional conservatives, along with small numbers of right-wing evangelicals and fundamentalists, objected to the liberalization of abortion laws across many states in the mid-late 1960s, for many libertarians, as well as the vast majority of conservative Protestants, the issue itself was not high on their list of priorities when it came to the ills of society in the closing years of the decade. Before abortion served to build the Religious Right in the 1980s, conservative Christians’ activism was in response to what were considered more pressing societal problems. If anti-communism and opposition to liberal economic policies served to bring conservatives of varying stripes, including right-wing Christians, together in the first twenty-odd years following the Second World War, the progression of the 1960s would see new issues seep to the forefront of the conservative agenda.

The fight against communism and Keynesian economics continued to remain a priority, but by the mid to late 1960s the movement began to perceive new threats to the nation’s socio-cultural foundations.

The reorientation of the conservative agenda was, expressed professor of theology Curtis J. Evans, a response to fundamental shifts “in family life, sexual liberation, a growing youth culture, and Supreme Court decisions that broadened the scope of personal freedoms.”⁵³⁶ These same forces compelled a growing number of evangelicals and fundamentalists to enter the political sphere. Racial unrest, counterculture revolt (including drugs and rock music), the entrenchment of feminism (symbolized by divorce, women in the workforce, and abortion), and the emergence of a gay rights movement, “helped to fuse a political coalition” of conservative activists and right-wing Christians.⁵³⁷ Roughly a half-century after fundamentalists like Williams Jennings Bryant struck back, with limited success, against the forces of modernity, their theological descendants, individuals such as Francis Schaeffer, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson, aided by New Right activists, significantly Paul Weyrich, Howard Phillips, and Richard Viguerie lead a crusade to turn back the secular humanist tide that was awash over the country by the end of the 1970s.

While it was true that the conservative movement had solidified and taken hold by the late 1960s, as Mary Brennan and others have observed, it was also true, as the historian of the conservative movement Donald T. Critchlow has pointed out, that, despite these gains, “liberalism was on the ascendance.”⁵³⁸ The decade and a half between Reagan’s gubernatorial victory in 1966 and his Presidential inauguration in 1981 saw the conservative movement fighting an uphill battle against what they perceived to be an ever more secular, more progressive, and more disorderly society. “Shocking cultural changes,” in the words

⁵³⁶ Curtis J. Evans, “White Evangelical Protestant Responses to the Civil Rights Movement,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 102, no. 2 (April, 2009): 248.

⁵³⁷ Evans, “White Evangelical Protestant Responses to the Civil Rights Movement,” 248; Phillip E. Hammond, “Evangelical Politics: Generalizations and Implications,” *Review of Religious Research* 27, no. 2 (Dec., 1985): 191; also see Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow, eds., *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation* (Hawthorne, N.Y.: Aldine Publishing Co., 1983); Samuel S. Hill and Dennis E. Owen, *The New Religious Political Right in America* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982); and Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 217-261.

⁵³⁸ Mary C. Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 118,139-140, 119; also see Jonathan Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press 2001), 216-217; Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 142.

of Daniel K. Williams, were sweeping the nation, highlighted by events that took place during the summer and fall of 1967. Detroit saw the manifestation of growing African American frustrations when riots broke out in late July, causing destruction across large parts of the city and hundreds of millions of dollars in damage. It took four days and the National Guard before the unrest was brought under control. In October, anti-war protestors, roughly fifty thousand strong, sent a message of their own when they rallied in the nation's capital to condemn the Vietnam War. Many of these individuals were disenchanting youths who had embraced the spirit of the emerging counterculture - young men began to grow long hair, young women "openly flouted the prevailing sexual norms," and drug use became casual. All this was perhaps best symbolized by the San Francisco neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury, and what came to be called the "Summer of Love." It was here that "thousands of hippies converged ... for a summer of drugs, sex, music, and counterculture protest."⁵³⁹

On the legal front, conservatives pointed to, what they perceived to be, an increasingly liberal federal government. The first half of the decade had seen, along with the passing of far-reaching civil rights legislation in 1964, two Supreme Court decisions in 1962 (*Engel v. Vitale*) and 1963 (*Abington v. Schempp*) banning state-prescribed prayer and Bible reading in public schools, which were seen by those on the right as an assault against states' rights, religion, and Christian society generally.⁵⁴⁰ The following

⁵³⁹ Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 80; On the Detroit riots, also see "Detroit Is Swept by Rioting and Fires; Romney Calls In Guard....," *New York Times*, July 24, 1967, 1; Jerry M. Flint, "Detroit Riots Seem at End," *New York Times*, July 28, 1967, 1; Robert A. Wright, "Economists Look at Cost of Riots," *New York Times*, July 30, 1967, 1, 9; On the Washington Protest, also see "Collegians Dominate Mall Rally," *Washington Post, Times Herald*, October 22, 1967, A11; John Herbers, "Youths Dominate Capital Throng....," *New York Times*, October 22, 1967, 58; William Chapman, "GIs Repel Pentagon Charge; 50,000 Rally Against War...." *Washington Post, Times Herald*, October 22, 1967, A1; Joseph A. Loftus, "Guards Repulse War Protestors at the Pentagon," *New York Times*, October 22, 1967, 1; On the counterculture, also see Gordon Grant, "Hippies Voice Philosophy, Love..." *Los Angeles Times*, July 23, 1967, SF_A4; Horace Sutton, "Hip Ideas on How to Visit Hippieland in the Bay Area," *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1967, G7; Richard Goldstein, "Hurok of Haight Street," *Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 1967, M16.

⁵⁴⁰ On school prayer, see "Text of Opinion in Supreme Court Case Holding School Prayer," *New York Times*, June 26, 1962, 16; Roy R. Silver, "5 L.I. Parents Who Started Suit Hail Decision," *New York Times*, June 26, 1962, 17; Anthony E. Lewis, "Supreme Court Outlaws Official School Prayers in Regents Case....," *New York Times*, June 26, 1962, 1, 16; on Bible reading, see Steve Bruce, *The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America, 1978-1988* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 39-40; Anthony Lewis, "2 Cases Decided: Government Must Be Neutral in Religion, Majority ...," *New York Times*, June 18, 1963, 1, 27; also see

year, the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) developed a comprehensive sexual education curriculum, which had been adopted by roughly half of the nation's schools by the end of the decade. In response, Billy James Hargis and Christian Crusade commenced a campaign, in mid-1968, to abolish its teaching. Other smaller, local grassroots organizations across the country, significantly Orange County, California, took up their own efforts to do the same. Not only had religion been eliminated from public schools, and replaced by sex education, the classrooms were also being overtaken by modern (or humanist) pedagogical ideologies, first promoted by individuals such as John Dewey in the early-mid twentieth century and more recently Harvard psychologist B.F. Skinner. Most threatening was the concept of "situation ethics," which suggested that moral values were relative. Fundamentalists, in particular, saw this as an affront to "God's law."⁵⁴¹ A number of Christian conservatives lay much of the blame on the disappearance of religion from schools, and particularly the *Engel* and *Schempp* rulings, for not just accelerating the drift toward secularism in the classroom, but for the breakdown of society in the latter part of the decade.⁵⁴²

Representative of this breakdown was the solidification of the feminist movement and the crystallization of the culture wars by the late '60s, which served to draw more Christian conservatives into the public-political discourse and strengthen their association with more traditional political activists and the Republican Party. Still, their numbers remained relatively small, and their coordination, largely non-existent. Most significantly, because evangelicals and fundamentalists traditionally eschewed the political process - many were still not even registered to vote - their influence at the ballot box was

David E. Engel, "Abington v. Schempp; Murray v. Curlett," in *Religion in Public Education: Problems and Prospects*, ed. David E. Engel (New York: Paulus Press, 1974), 12-19.

⁵⁴¹ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 82, 83-84; Tim LaHaye, *Battle for the Mind* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1979), 46; Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980), 66-67. On the fight against sex education in Anaheim, California, see McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 228-231; Dudley Clendinen, "Christian New Right's' Rush to Power: Test of Strength Lies Ahead ...," *New York Times*, August 18, 1980, B7; for Dewey's views on education, see John Dewey, *The school and society* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1967, c1915).

⁵⁴² See, for example, Falwell, *Listen, America!*, 205-216.

“disproportionately small.”⁵⁴³ As political scientist Bruce Nesmith noted, “white evangelicals” were not even recognized as a “definable group within the electorate” until the mid-1970s.⁵⁴⁴

A large number of these individuals were part of what Richard Nixon called the “silent majority,” and lived in a region of the United States that political activist Kevin Phillips labeled the “Sun Belt.” In his influential book, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1969), Phillips traced the history of the American electorate, broken down into regions, and coined the term “Sun Belt” to describe a swath of America from Virginia in the East to California in the West (encompassing much of the South and Southwest). This vast region was rapidly growing in population, along with potential electoral influence, increasing by nearly 300 percent between 1920 and 1950, and, according to Phillips, “outstripping the declining urban Northeast in the process.”⁵⁴⁵ As a significant number of Sun Belt residents identified as evangelical, this population shift was accompanied by a national redistribution of the “religious balance of power.” As southern conservative evangelical churches grew, they supplanted the once dominant northern mainline Protestant denominations, represented by the more moderate National Council of Churches (NCC), whose membership, as well as wealth and influence, was on the decline by the late 1960s.⁵⁴⁶

An increasing number of these Sun Belt evangelicals were college educated, white conservatives. They benefitted from prosperous local economies spurred by Cold War military spending and manifest in an ever-expanding defense industry, which transformed the region and in which many of them were employed. As such, they ardently supported a strong foreign policy fueled by the building and maintenance of a powerful military, as well as the politicians who promoted those positions. In the face of

⁵⁴³ James A. Reichley, “Religion and Political Realignment,” *The Brookings Review* 3, no. 1 (Fall, 1984): 30.

⁵⁴⁴ Bruce Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition: The Reagan Campaigns and White Evangelicals* (New York: P. Lang, 1994), 5.

⁵⁴⁵ Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969), 437-438.

⁵⁴⁶ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 93-94; Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 115; for polling data on the return to Christian orthodoxy, see George Gallup Jr. and David Poling, *The Search for America's Faith* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980), 133-139; for an exploration of the decline of the NCC from the mid-60s to the mid-70s, see Jill K. Gill, *Embattled Ecumenism: The National Council of Churches, the Vietnam War, and the Trials of the Protestant Left* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011).

increasing crime rates, counterculture protests and civil rights-related unrest, the “law and order” rhetoric of conservative politicians, like Ronald Reagan, “resonated in new ways” with a growing number of “white and middle-class suburban Americans.”

While Sun Belt conservatives were uncomfortable with explicit racism and “economic populism,” they were receptive to Republicans who understood how to cloak racial commentary in the guise of discourse surrounding social issues such as drugs, crime and welfare.⁵⁴⁷ The earliest efforts to appeal to this voting constituency had been made during Goldwater’s run for the presidency in 1964. The Reagan gubernatorial campaign in ‘66 developed this approach further, and with more success, in California. As historian Lisa McGirr points out, Ronald Reagan “profited by playing to white racism” with “coded” racial appeals focused on crime, welfare, rising taxes, and open housing laws.⁵⁴⁸ It was Kevin Phillips, however, who refined and popularized what became known as the “Southern strategy,” also known as the “Sun Belt” strategy.⁵⁴⁹

As these Sun Belt evangelicals, and conservatives generally, grappled with the social and cultural shifts of the late 1960s, they placed their hopes on the 1968 presidential election and a Republican candidate who would bring about a return to moral and social order. The party they looked to was in the midst of its own crisis. In the wake of the 1964 presidential election, a 1965 Republican National Committee (RNC) poll revealed a divided party, with 30 percent of its membership in favour of a more liberal agenda, 37 percent in favour of a conservative platform, while 33 percent remained undecided.⁵⁵⁰ The four years between the 1964 and ‘68 presidential elections saw moderates attempt to wrest back control of the GOP by purging Goldwater supporters from influential positions within the party. Despite the protestations of those on the right that nearly thirty million Americans had “voted for a conservative

⁵⁴⁷ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 93; Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 438, 440-441; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 25-26, 202-205, quotes on 205.

⁵⁴⁸ McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 203-205, quote on 204.

⁵⁴⁹ James Boyd, “Nixon's Southern strategy 'It's All In the Charts,’” *New York Times*, May 17, 1970, 25, 105-109; also see Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 329-332.

⁵⁵⁰ Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 165.

Republican presidential candidate,” Donald Critchlow points out that “the election returned the GOP Right to the fringes of the party.”⁵⁵¹

As Critchlow remarked, “even many of those who had supported Goldwater in 1964 were persuaded that ideological conservatism needed to be replaced by realistic pragmatism.”⁵⁵² Still, efforts to oust “Goldwaterites” from the Republican National Committee (RNC) elicited opposition from many conservatives, including Ronald Reagan. The former co-chairman of California Citizens for Goldwater defiantly stated that they had no intention of relinquishing control of the party to the moderates, who he referred to as “traitors.” The establishment stood firm, with one Senator, High Scott of Pennsylvania, “who had just barely survived reelection (sic),” insisting that “the present party leadership must be replaced - all of it.” The liberal-moderate wing carried out an assault, beginning with Dean Burch, the Goldwater appointed chairman of the RNC. After eventually securing his dismissal, or rather resignation, on January 12, 1965, he was replaced with the chairman of the Ohio Republican Party, Ray Bliss. Bliss was a moderate pragmatist, who denounced the extremist wing of the party while achieving a revitalization of the GOP on the national, state, and local levels. At the same time, he was able to handicap the right-wing by restoring “party discipline,” thereby curbing their “ability to seize control of the GOP.”⁵⁵³

The purge of the party’s right wing extended to associated organizations, including the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW). Singled out for expulsion was the sitting vice-president of the NFRW - Phyllis Schlafly. After having built the NFRW’s Illinois chapter (IFRW) into one of the strongest state affiliates, Schlafly had been elected, by a unanimous vote, to the vice-presidency of the organizations national branch in 1964. A hard-line conservative, staunch Goldwater supporter, and the author of *A Choice Not an Echo*, a disparaging attack on the Republican establishment, Schlafly was seen

⁵⁵¹ Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 76, 78.

⁵⁵² Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 142.

⁵⁵³ Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 78-80.

as too “far to the right,” and a “potentially divisive influence,” by the moderate wing of the party. With the assistance of Ray Bliss, Michigan Republican State Chairman Elly Peterson initiated a campaign to prevent Schlafly from winning the NFRW’s presidency in 1967. After much backroom maneuvering and a hard fought, and acrimonious, campaign, Schlafly, who counted Ronald Reagan’s daughter, Maureen Reagan Sills, among her supporters, was defeated by the moderates’ chosen candidate, Gladys O’Donnell, a long-time California Republican activist and a pioneering female pilot of some celebrity. While O’Donnell was a conservative, she ran a campaign centred on “unity” and vocally spoke out against extremism in the party.⁵⁵⁴

Schlafly, and other right-wingers, saw the efforts undertaken against her in the NFRW election as further evidence of an “attempt by New York liberals to purge from office those who whole-heartedly supported Barry Goldwater for the Presidency in 1964.”⁵⁵⁵ Undeterred, she regrouped, continued to build support within the organization and the party itself, and issued the first edition of her monthly newsletter, the *Phyllis Schlafly Report*, in August 1967. The bitter divisiveness of the NFRW election and its aftermath reflected, to some extent, internal schisms in the Republican Party as a whole.⁵⁵⁶ Still, there were reasons for Republicans generally, and conservatives specifically, to be heartened. The 1966 midterm elections had seen the party gain eight state governorships, forty-seven seats in the House and three in the Senate, though Democrats remained in control of the latter two bodies. Many of these politicians were conservatives, including four governors, John Williams (Arizona), Ronald Reagan (California), Claude Kirk (Florida), and Paul Laxalt (Nevada), which served to bolster conservatives’ influence in the Congress and the Republican Governors’ Association.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁴ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 138-158; Warren Weaver Jr., “G.O.P. Women Face Right-Wing Test,” *New York Times*, April 30, 1967, 69 (including quotes).

⁵⁵⁵ Weaver Jr., “G.O.P. Women Face Right-Wing Test,” 69.

⁵⁵⁶ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 162, 160-161.

⁵⁵⁷ Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 119; William C. Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 95.

As the 1968 presidential election approached, Ray Bliss and the RNC emphasized party unity, and while there were some conservatives who “took exception,” most agreed that, for the sake of the party, and perhaps its survival, the nominee needed to be a moderate. Richard Nixon, who had spent the last few years working to unify the party, in large part by emphasizing a “big tent” philosophy which welcomed views from both the liberal and conservative factions, appeared poised to take the nomination. The former vice-president had been cultivating right-wing support well before he announced his intention to run, and he enjoyed the backing of Goldwater. While many conservatives were skeptical of Nixon, and his intentions, they also believed that he was owed some loyalty, while others simply felt that he was their best hope of regaining the presidency in ‘68.⁵⁵⁸ Phyllis Schlafly, an ardent anti-communist, for example, threw her support behind Nixon, in large part because of his promise “to restore America’s nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union and to build an antiballistic missile (ABM) system.” But Nixon also promoted other conservative-friendly positions. For example, he opposed court-ordered busing, promised to reform welfare, and espoused “law and order” rhetoric.⁵⁵⁹

Other right-wingers doubted Nixon’s electability, and looked to the emerging conservative star, the recently elected governor of California, Ronald Reagan. Reagan was conflicted about running, as were his advisers, and the future president never completely committed himself to the campaign. “My feeling,” Reagan explained to Lou Cannon, “was that to go straight from Hollywood to governor and one year after you were there to be in a position of saying, ‘I want to be president of the United States,’ there was no way I could do that and be credible.”⁵⁶⁰ In fact, though his name was on the ballot in many state primaries, Reagan did not officially declare his candidacy (Cannon referred to it as a “romantic non-candidacy” and Reagan, “the non-candidate candidate”) until just days before the GOP convention, August 5-8, by which time Nixon had all but locked-down the nomination. Reagan had last-minute

⁵⁵⁸ Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties*, 120-121, 122; Sarah Katherine Mergel, *Conservative Intellectuals and Richard Nixon: Rethinking the Rise of the Right* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 14, 12, 2.

⁵⁵⁹ Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 163.

⁵⁶⁰ Lou Cannon, *Reagan* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 157-160, Cannon interview with Reagan, July 30, 1981, quoted on 159.

counseling indicating that he had strong support behind the scenes, but his belated declaration was not, generally, well received (he placed third behind Nixon and Rockefeller on the first ballot), and he ended up withdrawing on August 8. At 2 A.M., he addressed the convention in Miami Beach and urged it to “declare itself unanimously and unitedly (sic) behind the candidate Richard Nixon as the next president of the United States.”⁵⁶¹

Reagan’s foray into the leadership race in ‘68 initially appeared to have been a mistake. While a number of conservatives, including Frank Meyer and William Rusher, hoped Reagan’s shadow candidacy would serve to keep Nixon from shifting to the left, it upset many Republicans, especially his eleventh-hour announcement, which was seen as divisive at a time when the party sought, and had largely achieved, unity.⁵⁶² Still, there were conservatives who were convinced Nixon was not one of them and desired a shift further to the right, and they connected with Reagan’s rhetoric and appreciated his last minute attempt to upturn the Nixon nomination. Moreover, Lou Cannon has persuasively argued that the experience and exposure gained during the ‘68 primaries was invaluable, suggesting that while “Reagan came out of Miami Beach a loser ... his losing had helped prepare him for the victories which lay ahead.”⁵⁶³ Much the same could also be said for his ‘76 run for the presidency.

The Republican Party platform on which Nixon campaigned in the general election called for a reduction in the federal government’s role domestically coupled with a greater reliance on the private sector, the strengthening of law and order, and a more robust foreign policy.⁵⁶⁴ While it did not give conservatives everything they would have liked, they found it to be, generally, satisfactory. Frank Meyer suggested that “conservatives could ‘support the Republican ticket with confidence,’” provided Nixon

⁵⁶¹ Cannon, *Reagan*, 160-164, Reagan’s convention address, quoted on 164; also see Thomas E. Evans, *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of his Conversion to Conservatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 185-188.

⁵⁶² Mergel, *Conservative Intellectuals and Richard Nixon*, 21.

⁵⁶³ Cannon, *Reagan*, 164-165.

⁵⁶⁴ See the 1968 Republican Party Platform, August 5, 1968, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25841>.

governed according to his rhetoric. Intellectuals, such as Meyer, believing that “their ideas would affect the shaping of policy at the federal level,” welcomed the prospect of a Nixon presidency.⁵⁶⁵

Nixon could also count on the votes of Protestants who feared that internal forces were destroying the country. Fundamentalists, such as the editor of the *Baptist Bible Tribune*, Noel Smith, and John R. Rice, editor of *Sword of the Lord*, suggested that the removal of religion from schools, the sexual revolution, racial unrest, and increasing crime rates were signs that the country was witnessing a collapse of its collective morality. A growing number of evangelicals, too, were troubled, including Billy Graham, whose sermons were progressively oriented around issues such as crime, drugs, sex, teenage rebellion, student protests, and civil unrest.⁵⁶⁶ Nixon, raised by Quakers and professing to have been converted to the evangelical faith as a teenager, “achieved a rare empathy” with this constituency. Desperate for “a champion of traditional morality,” they were convinced he was a “true believer” who shared their concerns.⁵⁶⁷

Graham, for his part, was drawn to his old friend’s rhetoric and the GOP platform. After President Lyndon B. Johnson, with whom the preacher had developed a friendship, decided not to run for re-election in 1968, Graham threw his full support behind Nixon and the Republicans.⁵⁶⁸ Nixon reached out to Graham for advice prior to announcing his candidacy in ‘68. The preacher was very supportive, even working to whip up votes for Nixon, particularly among the Southern delegates, at the Republican national convention. Nixon made sure to highlight his association with Graham during the campaign, and Graham, though he claimed to be nonpartisan, “decided that the nation’s rapid moral decline made it impossible for him to remain neutral.” The Baptist preacher feared that the United States’ “very survival” was at stake in the election. He was sure that Nixon, who best represented Christian conservative values,

⁵⁶⁵ Mergel, *Conservative Intellectuals and Richard Nixon*, 18, 2, Frank S. Meyer, “A Conservative Convention,” *National Review* 20 (August 27, 1968): 859, quoted in Mergel, *Conservative Intellectuals and Richard Nixon*, 25.

⁵⁶⁶ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 80-81.

⁵⁶⁷ Gary Wills, “‘Born Again’ Politics,” *New York Times*, August 1, 1976, 8; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 88, 90.

⁵⁶⁸ Wills, “‘Born Again’ Politics,” 8; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 95-97.

would restore “moral order” and implement evangelical friendly policies.⁵⁶⁹ The Republican would go on to decisively defeat the Democratic nominee, Hubert Humphrey, in the general election. Kevin Phillips concluded that Nixon’s 1968 presidential victory signaled “the end of the New Deal Democratic hegemony, and the beginning of a new era in American politics.”⁵⁷⁰

Almost immediately, in an appeal to evangelicals, Nixon introduced a series of Sunday White House church services, though he himself was not a regular churchgoer, and chose Billy Graham to officiate the first such occasion. Nixon also evoked God and religion, but he was not unique among presidents in this way. What set him apart from his predecessors, historian William Martin argued, was his “conscious, calculating use of religion as a political instrument.” Nixon’s administration was more interested in co-opting the evangelical community for their own purposes. A White House memo directed Charles Colson, Special Counsel to the President, to “Develop a list of rich people with strong religious interests to be invited to the White House Church services.” Colson, Nixon’s “hatchet man,” actively engaged, and manipulated, Protestant Christians on the part of the administration, doing much to maintain close relations with the evangelical community.⁵⁷¹ Intentions aside, Martin has suggested that Nixon’s first term saw the nation’s civil religion elevated to a level perhaps not seen since the Eisenhower administration and the early years of Billy Graham.⁵⁷² Evangelicals rejoiced in their renewed influence and the credibility bestowed upon them through Graham’s close relationship with the new president. They remained some of Nixon’s strongest supporters right through until 1974 and the release of the White

⁵⁶⁹ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 96-97; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 90.

⁵⁷⁰ Kevin Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority*, 25.

⁵⁷¹ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 94-95; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 97, 98; on Charles Colson, see Wills, “Born Again' Politics,” 8, 9, 48, 49, 52; and Michael Dobbs, “Charles Colson, Nixon’s ‘dirty tricks’ man, dies at 80,” *The Washington Post*, April 21, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/whitehouse/chuck-colson-nixons-dirty-tricks-man-dies-at-80/2012/04/21/gIQAaoOHYT_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.790e9db9800a

⁵⁷² Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 97.

House Watergate tapes, which revealed the president to be anything but a “good Christian.” Evangelicals felt betrayed.⁵⁷³

On the ideological front, Nixon’s time in office would prove to be more akin to Eisenhower Republicanism than that of Goldwater conservatism. Though he attempted to keep to his pledge to enforce “law and order” at home, there were over 1,000 demonstrations across more than 200 campuses causing millions of dollars in property damage during Nixon’s first year. More serious were the shootings at Kent State in Ohio and Jackson State in Mississippi, in 1970, which left six students dead and the country in shock. Even more troubling, it seemed as though the rise in protests, particularly against the Vietnam War, paralleled a similar increase in crime, particularly rape and assault, as well as recorded incidents of violence against the police. While most, if not all, conservatives held the liberal left responsible for the domestic unrest, it fell to Nixon to deal with it.⁵⁷⁴

There appeared to be little improvement on these fronts during Nixon’s first term, giving traditional conservatives cause for concern. Nor did the administration satisfy fiscal conservatives. There was no reduction in the size or expense of government, but rather an expansion of the welfare state and regulatory system. The Nixon White House introduced wage and price controls, supported the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and affirmative action, and oversaw the creation, in 1970, of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) - none of which pleased conservatives who viewed the actions as government overreach.⁵⁷⁵ Similarly, the nation’s socio-cultural lurch toward the left continued unabated during the Nixon years. Indeed, it only seemed to accelerate as

⁵⁷³ Wills, “Born Again’ Politics,” 8; on Billy Graham’s reaction to Watergate, see Steven P. Miller, *Billy Graham and the Rise of the Republican South: Politics and Culture in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 182-199.

⁵⁷⁴ Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 253.

⁵⁷⁵ Mergel, *Conservative Intellectuals and Richard Nixon*, 18, 2; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 203; Office of the President of the United States, *Reorganization Plans Nos. 3 and 4 of 1970*, Report to House of Representatives, 91st Congress, 2d Session, July 9, 1970, Document no. 91-366, [https://archive.epa.gov/ocir/leglibrary/pdf/created pdf](https://archive.epa.gov/ocir/leglibrary/pdf/created%20pdf); Richard Nixon, “Remarks on Signing the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1970,” December 29, 1970, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=2869&st=&st1=>.

the '60s drifted into the '70s. The strengthening of the feminist movement and the emergence of gay rights activists reflected what seemed to be an unstoppable liberal trend.

Well before Nixon's first term was over many conservatives came to appreciate that the former vice-president was going to govern as a moderate. They were not happy, and their sentiments were not lost on the administration. Republican strategist and presidential adviser Patrick Buchanan went as far as suggesting that Nixon was "no longer a credible custodian of the conservative political tradition of the GOP."⁵⁷⁶ Some high-profile conservatives, who had initially thrown their support behind Nixon, gradually began to distance themselves from the president, much as they had done with Eisenhower.⁵⁷⁷ Phyllis Schlafly, a strong supporter of the Republican presidential candidate in '68, was already, in June 1971, condemning Nixon's failure to carry out his campaign promises and suggesting that he would lose re-election in 1972.⁵⁷⁸

Conservatives were disillusioned with the president's domestic and foreign policies - expansion of the welfare state at home, and the implementation of detente with the Soviet Union abroad. Many, including Schlafly, saw the strategic arms limitation negotiations as, essentially, appeasement, and a sell-out to their allies. A number of leading conservatives, including William F. Buckley Jr. and William Rusher, signed and published a declaration, printed in *National Review*, in which they announced the suspension of their "support of the Administration" - a pressure tactic that failed. In an ultimate sign of rebuke, Buckley and *National Review* endorsed Republican candidate John Ashbrook in the 1972 presidential election, as did Phyllis Schlafly.⁵⁷⁹ Reagan, too, after having given Nixon his support, eventually became disenchanted with his "failure to embrace the GOP's conservative causes," though he

⁵⁷⁶ Patrick Buchanan quoted in Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, 338.

⁵⁷⁷ Mergel, *Conservative Intellectuals and Richard Nixon*, 18, 2; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 203.

⁵⁷⁸ Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 255.

⁵⁷⁹ Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing*, 255; Michael S. Winters, *God's Right Hand: How Jerry Falwell Made God a Republican and Baptized the American Right* (New York: Harper One, 2012), 111; also see Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 183, 203, 204-208; for a more thorough examination of conservatives assessment of Nixon's foreign policy, see Mergel, *Conservative Intellectuals and Richard Nixon*, 57-80.

stayed loyal to the president while he remained in office.⁵⁸⁰ Despite disaffected conservatives, Nixon managed to win a second term, though it was mired in political chaos, manifestations of the Watergate scandal which would finally bring about his resignation in August 1974.

Perhaps most disconcerting for conservative Christians was the acceptance and normalization of shifting gender roles, represented by, among other things, the rapidly changing attitudes many women had toward sexual relations. At the close of the 1950s, the United States was still, largely, conservative when it came to sex, a generally taboo subject. Those norms were shattered by a sexual revolution the following decade, beginning with the introduction of the birth control pill in 1960, offering women control over their own reproduction as well as sexual freedom. The liberalization of pornography and abortion laws followed, along with the emergence of the counterculture. By the decade's close, American society, or at least a large segment of it, had become more permissive, in a number of ways. In this atmosphere, many women abandoned traditional expectations with regards to accepted sexual behaviour. The stigma, as well as the guilt attached, surrounding sex outside of marriage largely disappeared. Opinion polls confirmed these assessments, demonstrating that a sizeable number of college women in the late 1960s condoned premarital sex "devoid of long-term commitment," when the majority of them had opposed it in the early part of the decade.⁵⁸¹ This sexual revolution was part of what was referred to as "second-wave feminism," the first wave having taken place in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries.⁵⁸²

In 1966, the National Organization of Women (NOW) was established to advance the rights of women, particularly through the agitation for an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which conservative Christians viewed as a challenge to traditional gender norms. The ERA was not new. It had first been introduced during the 1920s, and women had been divided on the issue ever since. A number of progressive women, speaking out on behalf of working-class women, argued that "hard-won protective

⁵⁸⁰ David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 183.

⁵⁸¹ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 81; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 101.

⁵⁸² See chapter #5 for references to the roots of first-wave feminism.

legislation” for females in the workplace would be lost. Conversely, advocates of the amendment, primarily professional women, countered that gender-specific protections merely served to reinforce the notion of female inferiority. With regards to politics, by the early 1940s, Republican principles regarding government intervention coincided with the spirit of the ERA. The 1940 party platform called for the amendment, and GOP politicians from Robert Taft in the ‘40s through Dwight D. Eisenhower in the ‘50s could be counted among its supporters. Labor unions, representing a significant constituency within the Democratic Party, opposed the legislation, but the Democrats, too, eventually threw their support behind the ERA. Despite political backing, the issue remained a contention of debate among female activists through to the mid-1960s, at which point modern feminists came to a consensus that “a legal guarantee of full equality” outweighed any “loss of ... protective legislation.”⁵⁸³

Radical feminists thought the ERA insufficient, but they supported it just the same, as did politicians in Washington, where it received bipartisan support. In the wake of civil rights legislation, equal rights for women seemed in line with the progressive spirit of the times. Accordingly, the United States Congress passed the ERA, in October 1971, by a vote of 354 to 23. Despite (NC) Senator Sam Ervin’s resistance, including multiple attempts to have it revised, the Senate eventually followed suit on March 22, 1972, by a vote of 84 to 8. The essential element of the Equal Rights Amendment read: “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex.”⁵⁸⁴ It was then sent to the states’ legislatures for ratification, where it was expected to easily achieve the three-quarters support (38 states) required to revise the Constitution.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸³ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 139-140; also see the 1940 Republican Party Platform, June 24, 1940. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29640>.

⁵⁸⁴ “The Equal Rights Amendment,” *Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, October 10, 1971, C6; “Ervin Readies Sex Bias Fight: Congressional Report,” *Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, October 14, 1971, A22; “Ervin Prepares to Renew His Fight On Women’s Equal Rights Measure,” *Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, Oct 26, 1971, A8; “The Day in Congress: Yesterday: Senate,” *Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, October 13, 1971, A4. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 213-214, 216; Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 142.

The ERA divided Americans and helped fuel a growing polarization. Unlike decades earlier, when resistance came from advocates of working-class women, in the early-1970s, opposition was framed in terms closer to the home. Those who championed the ERA were sure that “equal access to education, jobs, and other resources,” would provide women economic independence from men. “Traditional family roles,” were incompatible with this outlook, and detrimental “to the interests of women.” Conversely, those who opposed the ERA argued “that the only effective safeguards for women in a male world are the privileges and protections” available through marriage and family.⁵⁸⁵ For some conservatives, particularly evangelicals and fundamentalists, but also a number of Catholics, the “spirit” of the law challenged their biblically-based understanding of the relationship between the genders and their concept of “family.”⁵⁸⁶ Still, the amendment elicited little visible reaction from these communities, and its ratification appeared a foregone conclusion. It is no exaggeration to say, if not for one individual, it surely would have been.

Phyllis Schlafly had focused her earliest efforts on the fight against communism, but she had always rooted her activism in her role as a mother and a champion of “family values” and traditional gender roles. In 1952, she had run for Congress on the slogan “A Woman’s Place is in the House.”⁵⁸⁷ As the 1970s began to unfold, her attention was drawn more closely to the culture wars, which were beginning to heat up. In late 1971, as the United States Senate debated the ERA, Schlafly turned her attention towards the feminist movement. In July 1972, she launched a campaign to prevent the amendment’s ratification, founding the organization ‘Stop ERA’ in September/October of the same year. By the first anniversary of the ERA’s passage through the House, thirty states had already ratified it in their legislatures. Schlafly was undeterred. Arguing against government intervention into the private sphere of the family, she suggested that women would lose much more than they would gain - the rights and financial security

⁵⁸⁵ Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 106.

⁵⁸⁶ See, for example, Falwell, *Listen, America!*, 150-164.

⁵⁸⁷ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 108-109; For a thorough examination of Phyllis Schlafly's role in battling the ERA, see Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 212-242.

associated with marriage, divorce, and child custody; the benefit of protective labour laws; and freedom from military service, which Schlafly found “horrifying.”⁵⁸⁸

Schlafly’s opposition was motivated by her traditional religious convictions as well as her political conservatism. Accordingly, she, and most other conservatives, believed that the maintenance of moral order took priority over calls for equality, and the former was reliant upon the existence of “a traditional religious family life.” Framing the clash between feminists and conservative women in the context of “the enduring value of womanhood, motherhood, and wifely duties in America,” she helped conservatives appreciate the central role that family values played within “their multi-faceted cause.” Jerry Falwell and other Religious Right leaders would adopt this same approach later in the decade, centering their message around morality and the family. Phyllis Schlafly would go on to stall ratification of the ERA until the early 1980s when it was, for all intents and purposes, declared dead. In the process, her grassroots “family values” movement, centred on her organization, Eagle Forum, rapidly grew, as did her committed political base.⁵⁸⁹

Schlafly’s mobilization against the ERA drew her further into the culture wars that were quickly unfolding as the 1970s progressed. In the early-mid 1960s, two Supreme Court decisions (in 1962 and 1964) had done much to liberalize pornography laws in the United States. Christian conservatives fought back. In California, the largely evangelical group California League for Enlisting Now (CLEAN) initiated an anti-obscenity campaign, sponsoring Proposition 16 - to redefine pornography and shift “regulatory control” to the local level. The measure failed, despite the support of influential members of the business community and gubernatorial candidate Ronald Reagan. Nonetheless, conservatives in Orange County

⁵⁸⁸ Frederick Stecker, *The Podium, the Pulpit, and the Republicans: How Presidential Candidates use Religious Language in American Political Debate* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), 24; Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and the Roots of Conservatism*, 214; Carol Felsenthal, *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority: The Biography of Phyllis Schlafly* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1981), 239-241, 234-235, 236-238.

⁵⁸⁹ Farber, *The Rise and Fall of American Conservatism*, 122, 121; Eileen Shanahan, “Equal Rights Test is Near In Illinois,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1975, 1, 45; Elisabeth Bumiller “Schlafly's Gala Goodbye to the ERA,” *Washington Post*, July 1, 1982, C1, C6; Falwell, *Listen, America!*, Part II, particularly 121-137 (on the family), 138-149 (on children's rights), 150-164 (on the feminist movement).

continued their campaign to clean up their communities.⁵⁹⁰ Despite efforts such as this, by the early 1970s, “strip clubs” had become commonplace, and magazines, such as *Playboy*, were readily found in adult bookstores and even neighborhood convenience stores. Even more shocking was the growing availability of gay pornography.

As the 1960s were coming to a close, the nation saw the emergence of a Gay rights movement, ignited and best symbolized by the Stonewall riots (late June - early July 1969). Prior to the 1970s, homosexuality was criminalized across the United States, and gays and lesbians subject to harassment. During a June 28 police raid on the Stonewall, a gay bar, the patrons, in an unusual act of bravery, physically resisted, provoking a five-day riot. The incident, captured on the evening news, served to elevate the issue of homosexuality into the public-political discourse and inspired in earnest a movement which had been quietly developing since the 1950s with the founding of the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Billitis, organizations for gay men and lesbians respectively.⁵⁹¹ Christian conservatives, particularly fundamentalists and evangelicals, viewed pornography and the gay rights movement, and the open acceptance they received from liberals, as signs of the nation’s moral decay.⁵⁹² Schlafly had warned, in 1974, that the ERA would “confer ‘special rights’ on gays and lesbians,” and by the mid-1970s, more than two dozen cities had passed ordinances protecting homosexuals’ civil rights. Evangelicals had had enough, and when Bloomington, Indiana did likewise in 1975, social conservatives organized a petition to overturn the law. The following year, the Southern Baptist Convention officially came out against homosexuality.⁵⁹³

⁵⁹⁰Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 226-227; Note: CLEAN's advisory board included, among others, Tim LaHaye, pastor of San Diego's Scott Memorial Baptist Church. LaHaye would go on to play a significant role in the emergence and development of the Religious Right.

⁵⁹¹ On the Stonewall riots and the gay rights movement, see Martin B. Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Plume, 1994, c1993).

⁵⁹² Randall Balmer and Lauren F. Winner, *Protestantism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 155; David Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 154; Falwell, Listen, America!, 200,203, 181-185.

⁵⁹³ Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 102; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 147.

The battle took on a whole new dimension when, in 1977, Anita Bryant took up a crusade against homosexuals, whom she suggested “posed a menacing threat to her children.” Bryant was a former Miss America contestant, pop singer, and spokesperson for the Florida Citrus Growers Association, so she was something of a celebrity. The committed Southern Baptist was stunned when she learned that the Dade County Board of Commissioners was debating a gay rights ordinance. Bryant lobbied the commissioners and rallied others to her cause, but their efforts failed to prevent the law from passing in January 1977. Undeterred, the activist founded Save Our Children Inc. and, with the support of influential individuals, significantly Phyllis Schlafly and Jerry Falwell, continued her campaign. Later that year, in June, citizens overwhelmingly voted to repeal the measure through referendum.⁵⁹⁴

With her “child-centred rhetoric,” Bryant provided something of a model for how to frame the debate over the issue of homosexuality, which was echoed by other evangelicals and fundamentalists, most significantly Jerry Falwell who declared that homosexuality was “an outright assault on the family.” In doing so, Bryant helped foster and popularize three “remarkably resilient” arguments; “that nondiscrimination laws grant, in Bryant’s words, ‘special privileges to homosexuals,’” as opposed to “guaranteeing ... basic civil rights”; that homosexuality is not genetic, but rather a choice (by drawing associations between “the idea of ‘special privileges’ to the idea of choice”); and that there exists a homosexual political agenda, led by gay activists and funded by well-organized backers.⁵⁹⁵ Randall Balmer and Lauren Winner have noted that “Focusing on children was ... a shrewd political move, and it allowed Bryant, a mother, to stand at the center of a public political battle.”⁵⁹⁶ Much as 1967’s “Summer

⁵⁹⁴ Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America*, 155-157; Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 154-155; Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 103; “Bias Against Homosexuals Is Outlawed in Miami,” *New York Times*, January 19, 1977, 14; “Around the Nation: Miami Area Aides Uphold Homosexual Rights Law ...,” *New York Times*, April 20, 1977, 16; B. Drummond Ayres, “Miami Votes 2 to 1 to Repeal Law Barring Bias Against Homosexuals: ...,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1977, 73; B. Drummond Ayres, “Miami Vote Increases Activism on Homosexual Rights: Vote Heightens Homosexual Debate,” *New York Times*, June 9, 1977, 1; “Miss Bryant's Victory Over Homosexuals,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1977, 152.

⁵⁹⁵ Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America*, 158; Falwell quoted in Jo Thomas, “75,000 March in Capital in Drive To Support Homosexual Rights,” *New York Times*, October 15, 1979, A14; Falwell mirrored much of Bryant's argument in his book, *Listen, America!*. See Falwell, *Listen, America!*, 181-186.

⁵⁹⁶ Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America*, 157.

of Love” had symbolized the crystallizing counterculture, Bryant’s campaign against the Dade County ordinance symbolized the conservative response to the culture wars that were gripping the nation.⁵⁹⁷

In January 1976, one year before the anti-gay rights movement emerged, a legal case, initiated by the federal government, had rocked the evangelical and fundamentalist communities. These groups had begun in the late nineteenth century and continued in earnest in the early-mid twentieth, building their own subcultures in response to “modernism” and what they perceived as an increasingly secular society. A significant part of this subculture included academic institutions, significantly Moody Bible College (originally founded in 1889) and Wheaton College.⁵⁹⁸ In the wake of the 1954 Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board* ruling and subsequent efforts to desegregate public schools, there emerged a strong, concerted effort to circumvent government-ordered integration by creating all-white, predominantly Protestant (and even more specifically evangelical and fundamentalist), private schools.⁵⁹⁹ As religious-based, “nonprofit, charitable institutions,” they were eligible for tax-exemption. As such, and somewhat ironically, these schools, then, were heavily reliant on what was, essentially, “a government subsidy.” This beneficial situation was threatened when, in 1970, the Nixon administration granted the Internal Revenue Service the power to enforce provisions of the Civil Rights Act against private schools. In essence, this meant the ability to revoke the tax-exempt status of those schools practicing segregation in contravention to civil-rights laws.⁶⁰⁰ Evangelicals and fundamentalists had cause for concern, as many of their schools were, indeed, segregated.

⁵⁹⁷ Note: Bryant became something of a martyr for the conservative movement after an activist threw a pie in her face at an October 14, 1977 press conference in Des Moines, Iowa, shocking conservatives.

⁵⁹⁸ Nancy T. Ammerman, “North American Protestant Fundamentalism,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, ed. Martin E. Marty and Scott R. Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 32.

⁵⁹⁹ Michigan Law Review Association, “Civil Rights: Segregation: Federal Income Tax: Exemptions and Deductions: The Validity of Tax Benefits to Private Segregated Schools, Michigan Law Review 68, no. 7 (June 1970): 1410.

⁶⁰⁰ James Nathan Miller, “Ronald Reagan and the Techniques of Deception,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (February, 1984): 62; Martin Schram and Charles R. Babcock, “Reagan Advisers Missed School Case Sensitivity: White House Saw Legalistics, Not Sensitivity, of School Policy,” *The Washington Post*, January 17, 1982, A1, A9; Charles R. Babcock, “School Tax Status: Old Issue Was Heated Up by Courts in 1978,” *The Washington Post*, January 25, 1982, A4.

In January 1970, the District Court for the District of Columbia, deliberating on a case known as *Green v. Kennedy*, issued a temporary injunction denying segregated private schools' tax-exempt status. Later, in June 1971, the court delivered its ruling on the case, which had now become known as *Green v. Connally*, declaring that any organization operating a private school that discriminates in admissions on the basis of race was ineligible for tax-exempt status or deductible contributions. The Court enjoined the IRS from recognizing any organization operating a private school that failed to comply with the ruling. While the case dealt with private schools in Mississippi, the law was applied nationwide. Segregationists strongly resisted, arguing that "a tax collecting agency had no right to enforce social policy." Congress was unresponsive to their appeals, declining to quash the order, and subsequent courts ruled the practice lawful.⁶⁰¹ The issue of private schools and tax exemption would come to a head when the IRS set their sights on one of the most prominent Protestant Christian schools in the country.

Bob Jones University, founded in 1927 by the strict fundamentalist Bob Jones Sr. as an alternative to the growing secularization of the nation's universities, had practiced segregation since its inception.⁶⁰² In 1971, to comply with the court's ruling, the institution began to allow married African Americans. Four years later, in 1975, Bob Jones University opened admissions to single blacks, but still forbade interracial dating. The IRS, in April of 1975, informed the school that it was in violation of the law. The following year, on January 19, 1976, after the university refused to abandon its discriminatory policies, the IRS revoked the institution's tax-exempt status. The decision was applied retroactively, as of 1971, to correspond to the date on which the university had first been informed of the new policy, over which time

⁶⁰¹ Wilfred F. Drake, "Tax Status of Private Segregated Schools: The New Revenue Procedure," *William and Mary Law Review* 20, no. 3 (1979): 464, 464fn9; Miller, "Ronald Reagan and the Techniques of Deception," 62; Randall Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America*, (Amherst, N.Y.: Perseus Books, 2006), 14; Schram and Babcock, "Reagan Advisers Missed School Case Sensitivity..." *The Washington Post*, January 17, 1982, A1, A9; for an examination of the relevant legal history, see "The Internal Revenue Code and Racial Discrimination," *Columbia Law Review* 72, no. 7 (November, 1972): 1215-1248.

⁶⁰² For an exploration of Bob Jones University, see Mark Taylor Dalhouse, *An island in the lake of fire: Bob Jones University, fundamentalism, and the separatist movement* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1996); also see Lynn Darlin, "Bob Jones University: Keeping to the Straight and Narrow When the Way is Filled With Doubters," *The Washington Post*, May 10, 1982, C1, C14; and Lynn Darling, Bob Jones University: Safe and Saved in South Carolina, *The Washington Post*, May 9, 1982, H1, H4.

it had accumulated nearly a half-million dollars in back taxes. Bob Jones University initiated a suit to preserve its tax-exempt status.⁶⁰³ A little over seven years later, May 1983, the Supreme Court ruled on the IRS's case against Bob Jones University, and Goldsboro Christian Schools, which had also filed a suit. Before that happened, over one hundred private schools had lost their exemptions.⁶⁰⁴

The same year, 1976, that the IRS brought action against Bob Jones University, the country went to the polls to elect a new president. The Democratic Party nominated Jimmy Carter, the former Governor of Georgia, to run against the Republican incumbent, Gerald Ford. A “born again” Southern Baptist, Carter’s religious credentials were unimpeachable giving him great appeal to a large number of conservative Protestant Christians who yearned for one of their own in the White House. Politically active evangelicals had been cultivating a relationship with the Republican Party since the early 1950s, and consistently supported the party in presidential elections. During the 1976 campaign, Carter courted, and gained, the support of a significant number of these evangelicals (including many Southern Baptists like himself) who spoke the same language and shared the same values. Indeed, a 1976 Gallup Poll revealed that roughly one-third of Americans (48% of Protestants) identified as having had, like Carter, a “born again” religious experience.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰³ “University to Admit Unmarried Blacks,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1975, B5; “School in South Carolina To Admit Single Blacks,” *New York Times*, August 7, 1975, 21; Stanley J. Hanna, “Bob Jones University vs. United States: Interpretations and Conclusions,” *Journal of Education Finance* 9 (Fall, 1983): 235; Randall Balmer, *Redeemer: The Life of Jimmy Carter* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 102-104; Randall Balmer, “Fundamentalism, the First Amendment, and the Rise of the Religious Right,” *William and Mary Bill of Rights Journal* 18, no. 889 (2010): 898; Schram and Babcock, “Reagan Advisers Missed School Case Sensitivity...,” A9; also see Christopher Connell, “Bob Jones University: Doing Battle in the Name of Religion and Freedom,” *Change* 15, no. 4 (May - June, 1983): 38-47.

⁶⁰⁴ Miller, “Ronald Reagan and the Techniques of Deception,” 62; Paul Taylor, “Fight Looms On Tax Break For Schools,” *The Washington Post*, January 11, 1982, A10; Note: The Court ruled that the IRS had the right to withhold tax-exempt status from private schools practicing segregation in violation of civil rights laws. See Supreme Court of the United States, *Syllabus, Bob Jones University v. the United States: Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit*, No. 81-3 (Argued October 12, 1982—Decided May 24, 1983), folder, “Bob Jones University v. the United States (OA 11721),” box 1, Sherrie Cooksey Files, Ronald Reagan Library; also see “Tax-Exempt Hate, Undone,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1983, A26; and Juan Williams, “Administration and the Tax Exemption Ruling,” *The Washington Post*, May 30, 1983, A3.

⁶⁰⁵ Balmer, *Religion in Twentieth Century America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 93; Balmer, *Redeemer*, 72; Roland Evans and Robert Novak, “Belted in the Bible Belt,” *The Washington Post*, July 4, 1980,

Andrew Flint and Joy Porter have suggested that Carter re-infused the political discourse with “an overt Biblical spirituality,” and in doing so, helped bring “Christian conservatism back to the political center.”⁶⁰⁶ The Democratic nominee evoked his religion at every turn, suggesting at one point, to the televangelist Pat Robertson, that in the case of conflict between secular law and God’s law, the latter should be “honor(ed).” Wearing his religion on his sleeve, he made clear the intimate role faith played in not just his life, but also his “political vision,” stating, “I’ll be a better president because of my deep religious convictions.”⁶⁰⁷ Carter’s religious credentials, which had helped define his campaign, suffered a heavy blow after he submitted to his advisers’ counselling and sat for an interview with *Playboy* magazine that was published in the closing weeks of September, 1976. Carter spoke about his marriage and a great deal about his faith. The interview was benign, save for a few comments in the closing excerpt, in which the presidential nominee, when referencing sex, used the word “screw,” and suggested that he had “committed adultery in” his “heart many times.” A number of evangelicals and fundamentalists latched on to his remarks about his own lust and voiced their displeasure with the Baptist’s choice of words, and the publication in which they appeared.⁶⁰⁸

The editor of *Christianity Today*, Reverend Harold Lindsell, addressed the interview in his sermon, asking, “How can the words he spoke be consistent with the Christianity he professes? ‘Free’ speech should not be ‘foul’ speech but the kind of speech that brings glory to Our Lord.”⁶⁰⁹ Some fundamentalist pastors condemned him in the harshest terms. Bob Jones Jr., labeled Carter “a foul-mouthed, double-crossing hypocrite” and charged him with “perverting Christianity.” On his television program, *Old Time Gospel Hour*, Jerry Falwell, outraged at the comments, criticized Carter for the

A15; “Poll Finds 34% Share 'Born Again' Feeling: Gallup Survey Shows That ...,” *New York Times*, September 26, 1976, 32; Kenneth L. Woodward, John Barnes, and Laurie Lisle, “Born Again!,” *Newsweek*, October 25, 1976, 68.

⁶⁰⁶ Andrew R. Flint and Joy Porter, “Jimmy Carter: The Re-emergence of Faith-Based Politics and the Abortion Issue,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (March 2005): 31; also see Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 169.

⁶⁰⁷ Flint and Porter, “Jimmy Carter,” 32, 31.

⁶⁰⁸ Charles Mohr, “Carter, on Morals, Talks with Candor,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1976, 1, 26; Balmer, *Redeemer*, 68-70; Myra MacPherson, “Remarks in Playboy Draw Pulpit Attack,” *Washington Post*, September 27, 1976, A3.

⁶⁰⁹ MacPherson, “Remarks in Playboy Draw Pulpit Attack,” A3.

interview. The pastor confessed to being “quite disillusioned and suggested that “the majority of the people I knew were pro-Carter,” but “that has totally reversed” now. Even Billy Graham, whose association with Nixon had tarnished his image and tempered his enthusiasm for politics, was seen visiting Gerald Ford mere days after *Playboy* hit the newsstands.⁶¹⁰

There is little doubt that the *Playboy* interview cost the Democratic nominee evangelical support in 1976. Nevertheless, Carter won the majority of the Baptist vote; and while he lost the overall evangelical vote to Ford by roughly three million, it was the second best showing with Protestants for a Democrat since the Roosevelt era. A number of evangelicals abandoned the GOP, and still others, who had eschewed political participation in the past, cast their vote for the Southern Baptist. They were convinced that “Carter represented both a validation of their faith and the opportunity to realize their social agenda.”⁶¹¹ Carter had, admittedly, given Protestant Christians a reason to believe that he would represent them and their interests, largely through his religious credentials and campaign rhetoric. He had, however, also been quite clear about his Baptist convictions, which included the “absolute and total” belief in the separation of church and state, the principle upon which the Church had been founded. As such, it was not his intention to impose his morality on others through “stricter laws on private behavior.”⁶¹² It was not long before evangelicals began to appreciate Carter’s firm adherence to this fundamental Baptist tenet of separation between church and state. Their disillusionment set in.

⁶¹⁰ Bob Jones and Jerry Falwell quoted in Balmer, *Redeemer*, 70-71; PBS: “God in America,” Interview with Ed Dobson, October 15, 2009; Dirk Smillie, *Falwell Inc.: Inside a Religious, Political, Educational, and Business Empire* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008), 84; “TV Time Is Offered By a Carter Critic,” *New York Times*, October 13, 1976, 23; “Criticism of Carter Off One Show But Will Remain for Another,” *New York Times*, October 15, 1976, 36.

⁶¹¹ Balmer, *Redeemer*, 72; Dudley Clendinen, “Rev. Falwell Inspires Evangelical Vote: Counter to Democratic Platform,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1980, B22; David John Marley, *Pat Robertson: An American Life* (Latham; Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 45; Richard Viguerie, *The New Right: We're Ready to Lead* (Falls Church, VA.: The Viguerie Company, 1981), 128; James Reichley, “Religion and the Future of American Politics,” *Political Science Quarterly* 101, no. 1 (Spring, 1986): 30; Flint and Porter, “Jimmy Carter,” 32.

⁶¹² Balmer, *Redeemer*, 69; “Personalities,” *The Washington Post*, September 13, 1986, H3; Mohr, “Carter, on Morals, Talks With Candor,” 1, 26; Andrew R. Flint and Joy Porter, “Jimmy Carter: The Re-emergence of Faith-Based Politics and the Abortion Rights Issue,” 48.

Of the many problems Christian conservatives came to have with Carter, the most consequential was one he had inherited from the previous administration. The immediate catalyst for bringing into being the Religious Right was the issue of tax exemption for Christian private schools. As the conservative activist Paul Weyrich explained: “What caused the movement to surface was the federal government’s moves against Christian schools. This absolutely shattered the Christian community’s notion that Christians could isolate themselves inside their own institutions and teach what they pleased. The realization that they could not then linked up with the long-held conservative view that government is too powerful and intrusive, and this linkage was what made evangelicals active. ... It was the recognition that isolation simply would no longer work in this society.”⁶¹³ Weyrich’s importance in the founding of both the New Right and the Religious Right cannot be overstated. Without his efforts, and those of a handful of other key figures, it is unlikely that either movement would have come into being.⁶¹⁴

Weyrich had been involved in the conservative cause since his college years, as a member of Young Americans For Freedom (YAF). Disillusioned with the Nixon administration, and the Republican establishment generally, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, he, along with a handful of others, significantly YAF alum Howard Phillips and Richard Viguerie, concluded that the current conservative movement lacked organization, effective outreach and, most importantly, leadership. In his book, *The New Right: We’re Ready to Lead*, Viguerie acknowledged their intellectual contributions, but charged the existing leadership with putting “party before principle,” and, ultimately, being incapable of advancing the conservative ideology in the political sphere. Taking the name, the New Right, to differentiate themselves from the post-war movement, these next generation conservatives sought to develop leaders capable of translating ideology into “a political force.” Intellectuals, such as Buckley and Meyer, and

⁶¹³ Paul Weyrich, “Comments,” in *No Longer Exiles: The Religious New Right in American Politics*, ed. Michael Cromartie (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1993), 26; also see Charles Babcock, “Religious Right Decries Shift on Tax Exemptions,” *Washington Post*, January 28, 1982, A4; and George G. Higgins, “The Pro-life Movement and the New Right,” *America*, 13 (September 1980), 108.

⁶¹⁴ Viguerie, *The New Right*, 53-56; Richard G. Hutcheson, *God in the White House: How Religion Has Changed the Modern Presidency* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 160. Jerry Falwell referred to Weyrich as “the godfather” of the Religious Right. See R. H. Melton, “Robertson Faded but Born-Again Christians Remain Potent Force,” *Washington Post*, Aug 16, 1988, A17.

politicians, such as Goldwater and Reagan, had been successful introducing modern conservatism into the public-political discourse. The New Right, in contrast, sought “to reorient the major political parties and political discourse as a whole around conservative principles.”⁶¹⁵ In Weyrich’s words: “We are no longer working to preserve the status quo. We are radicals, working to overturn the present power structure of the country.”⁶¹⁶

Key to this endeavor was the development of an organizational structure with which to develop and disseminate policies, monitor the media, enlist and train political candidates and movement leaders, as well as raise funds, advertise, and “mobilize public opinion.”⁶¹⁷ One of the earliest, and subsequently most influential, groups was created in 1973 by Paul Weyrich and Edwin Feuler. The Heritage Foundation was a conservative think tank funded by wealthy businessmen, significantly Joseph Coors and Richard Scaife, tasked with producing concise policy papers expressing “conservative values in economic, defense, and social policy,” and “sought to consciously influence Republican legislators.”⁶¹⁸ One year later, in 1974, Weyrich founded Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress (CFSFC), also funded by brewing magnate Joseph Coors, and Howard Phillips created the Conservative Caucus, both political action committees (PACs).⁶¹⁹ John Terry Dolan, a former Young Republican, added to these groups when he formed the National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) in 1975. Other organizations such as Accuracy in the Media (AIM), founded in 1969 by press watchdog Reed Irvine, served various single-issue campaigns. To coordinate these diverse groups and direct their efforts towards

⁶¹⁵ Viguerie, *To The Right*, 50-77, 31-32, 41-48, 6; Jerome L. Himmelstein, “The New Right,” in *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation*, ed. Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow (New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1983), 24-25; Jerome L. Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 80-81; Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the Right: The 'New Right' and the Politics of Resentment* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 7; for a brief review of Weyrich's early years in Washington, see David Grann, “Robespierre of the Right,” *The New Republic* 217, no. 17 (Oct 27, 1997): 20-21.

⁶¹⁶ Weyrich quoted in Grann, “Robespierre of the Right,” 20; Despite Weyrich's comments here, there was really little difference, in terms of leadership, ideology, or strategy, between the New Right and its immediate predecessor. Even Richard Viguerie admitted that “There's not a great deal 'new' about the New Right. Our views, our philosophy, our beliefs, are not that different, if at all, from the Old Right. It is our emphasis that is different at times.” Quoted in Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 85; on leadership, ideology, and strategy, 85-94.

⁶¹⁷ Himmelstein, “The New Right,” 25.

⁶¹⁸ Grann, “Robespierre of the Right,” 21; Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy*, 121-122.

⁶¹⁹ “The New Right's Strong Ambition Is Fueled by Huge Mail Campaign,” *New York Times*, December 4, 1977, 73; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 171; Viguerie, *The New Right*, 25.

“key issues of the day,” Weyrich also created something of an umbrella organization, Coalitions for America.⁶²⁰

While some of the conservative organizations, such as the Heritage Foundation, were initially financed by a handful of wealthy businessmen, to fund the varying groups that would come to comprise the New Right coalition, and later, in association, the Religious Right, conservatives turned to Richard Viguerie, the pioneer of direct mail advertising/fundraising. Viguerie had acquired, while retiring George Wallace’s 1968 presidential campaign debt, a list of conservative contributors. From that he utilized advances in computer technology, which eventually allowed for the saving of millions of donors’ information, identified those individuals most receptive to the relevant “fund-raising appeal,” and targeted those selected with personalized requests for small contributions. By the mid-1970s, Viguerie was the sought-after veteran of many political campaigns, having raised millions of dollars for conservative candidates. More than just a tool for soliciting funds, “the systematic use of such technology” allowed Viguerie to develop, maintain, and mobilize “a political constituency.”⁶²¹

Weyrich was attempting to reach a constituency of his own. He was Catholic, but the young activist understood the political potential within the evangelical and fundamentalist community and had been energetically working to engage and mobilize these potential voters on issues such as school prayer and Bible reading to the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion. His appeals fell on deaf ears. As he later made clear, “I was trying to get those people interested in those issues and I utterly failed.” Indeed, those happenings only served to convince Christians of the need to entrench themselves in their own subculture. Protestant conservatives were, however, outraged by the IRS’ tax policy and the revocation of Bob Jones University’s exemption. “What changed their mind,” Weyrich argued, was the government’s

⁶²⁰ Viguerie, *The New Right*, 25; Himmelstein, “The New Right,” 25; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 169.

⁶²¹ Dr. William R. Goodman Jr., and Dr. James J.H. Price, *Jerry Falwell: an unauthorized biography* (Lynchburg, Virginia: Paris and Associates, Inc., 1981), 31; Marjorie Hyer, “Viguerie Sets a Deadline for the New Right,” *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1980, B8; Himmelstein, “The New Right,” 29; “Fund Raiser Becomes New Kind of Power Broker,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1975, 16; Viguerie, *The New Right*, 90-96; “The New Right's Strong Ambition Is Fueled by Huge Mail Campaign,” *New York Times*, December 4, 1977, 73.

“intervention against the Christian schools, trying to deny them tax-exempt status on the basis of so-called de facto segregation.”⁶²²

Of course, the court decisions, as well as the subsequent enforcement of the Civil Rights provisions and the action against Bob Jones University, had occurred during the Nixon and Ford administrations, but Weyrich was able to transfer evangelical and fundamentalist hostility against the IRS’ efforts onto the recently elected president, Jimmy Carter.⁶²³ He was assisted by the actions of the IRS, which, in 1978, made suspect, schools whose minority demographics did not mirror those of their community, and sought to, essentially, place the onus of proving compliance with antidiscrimination laws on the schools themselves. Christian schools took this to mean that they were “guilty until proven innocent.” The measures were not fully implemented, but the damage had been done. Republicans in the House and Senate accused the administration of “treacherous intervention” and “social engineering.” On the religious front evangelicals and fundamentalists were outraged - none more so than Bob Jones Jr. and Bob Jones III. Jerry Falwell, who was being drawn further into the public-political discourse, commented that “In some states it is easier to open a massage parlor than to open the doors of a Christian school.”⁶²⁴

Behind the scenes, Weyrich worked to mobilize these agitated evangelicals. Howard Phillips had already recruited Ed McAteer, a Southern Baptist and conservative political activist with strong ties to the evangelical and fundamentalist community, to work at the Conservative Caucus. In late 1979, McAteer, after consultation with New Right activists, found Religious Roundtable, a right-wing political caucus that sought to recruit fundamentalists into politics and promote conservative causes, bringing in the

⁶²² Balmer, “Fundamentalism, the First Amendment, and the Rise of the Religious Right,” 898-899; Paul Weyrich, “Comments,” in *No Longer Exiles*, 25-26; also see Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 173; and Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 13-14.

⁶²³ Balmer, “Fundamentalism, the First Amendment, and the Rise of the Religious Right,” 898-899; Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 13-14; also see Weyrich, “Comments,” in *No Longer Exiles*, 25-26.

⁶²⁴ Charles R. Babcock, “School Tax Status: Old Issue Was Heated Up by Courts in 1978,” *The Washington Post*, January 25, 1982, A4; Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 109-110; Viguerie, *The New Right*, 124; Balmer, *Redeemer*, 104-106; for an examination of the IRS regulations, both those proposed and those implemented, see Drake, “Tax Status of Private Segregated Schools,” 486-497.

Baptist preacher James Robison as its spokesman.⁶²⁵ In addition to McAteer, Weyrich reached out to Reverend Robert J. Billings, an evangelical and former public school principle turned conservative activist, who founded, in 1977, Christian School Action (CSA) to monitor potential government intervention into Christian private schools. Weyrich helped persuade Billings to broaden the organization's scope to include lobbying, and in 1978, Christian School Action became National Christian Action Coalition (NCAC) - envisioned "as a vehicle" for harnessing and directing "evangelical discontent."⁶²⁶ Its political action committee, Christian Voter's Victory Fund, began rating members of Congress according to their position on a number of controversial "family issues." What was referred to as the "Family Issues Voting Index," became the standard for other Religious Right groups, including Moral Majority.⁶²⁷

Billings arranged a meeting in which Weyrich was able to persuade a group of influential pastors, who were enthusiastic but doubted their constituents would tolerate "mixing politics and theology," to finance a national poll which ultimately demonstrated that evangelicals shared the leadership's interest in political action and were willing to finance the effort.⁶²⁸ Evangelicals saw themselves as victims, defending their institutions from government overreach, in their conflict with the IRS, and Weyrich sought to foster and capitalize on that sentiment. Framing the tax exemption issue in the context of religious freedom, rather than that of civil rights, Weyrich used the defense of "evangelicals' right to

⁶²⁵ Himmelstein, "The New Right," 26; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 191-192; Hutcheson, *God in the White House*, 160; Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, 384; Matthew C. Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1989), 73 (Phyllis Schlafly also participated in the meeting that resulted in the founding of the Religious Roundtable); on Ed McAteer, also see Dudley Clendinen, "Christian New Right's Rush to Power: Test of Strength Lies Ahead ...," *New York Times*, August 18, 1980, B7.

⁶²⁶ Paul M. Weyrich, "Long live the religious right," *Human Events* 58, no. 1 (Jan 7, 2002): 12; Jeffrey K. Hadden, and Charles Swann, *Prime Time Preachers* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1981), 135; Balmer, *Redeemer*, 105; on Robert Billings, also see Dudley Clendinen, "Christian New Right's Rush to Power: Test of Strength Lies Ahead ...," B7.

⁶²⁷ Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 71; on Billings tenure in the Reagan administration as the 'special assistant' to Education Secretary Terrel Bell, see 72-73.

⁶²⁸ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 171-172; Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 117; Smillie, *Falwell Inc.*, 98; Falwell was among this group of pastors, and contributed \$10 000 of the \$30 000 cost to conduct the poll.

isolation” as a way to draw them out of their subculture and into the political process.⁶²⁹ The irony could not have been lost on the conservative activist.

Nor could Jimmy Carter have missed the sad irony of his part in the unfolding of events. After playing such a significant role in politicizing many of these evangelicals and fundamentalists, turning them into “a national political force,” Carter then alienated this constituency. As if the tax issue was not enough, the president proved to be an advocate for equal rights for women and homosexuals but failed to support efforts to reinstate compulsory school prayer and overturn *Roe v. Wade*. In the eyes of his conservative detractors, Carter’s foreign policy was no better. Conservative Christians had not approved of Nixon’s pursuit of arms control with the Soviet Union, nor did they welcome Carters efforts, and they viewed the relinquishment of the Panama Canal as giving away a critical piece of United States property and endangering the nation’s national security. In short, his approach to world affairs “smacked of misplaced idealism at best and unholy accommodation with godless Communism at worst.”⁶³⁰

Feeling betrayed, disaffected Christians defected to the Republican Party, which welcomed them with open arms. And while Carter did not initiate the IRS lawsuit, his administration’s policies here provided Weyrich the opportunity to recruit many of these estranged individuals. Of course, for Weyrich it was never just about the Bob Jones case, but rather building a movement. As such, after having successfully assembled a coalition of conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists, the next step was to expand their activism. Weyrich, Phillips, and Viguerie helped them develop, or in most cases refine, modern techniques of direct-mail fundraising, media manipulation, and computerized grassroots political

⁶²⁹ Balmer, *Redeemer*, 105-106.

⁶³⁰ John Dart, “50 Christians Agree to Raise Reagan Funds,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1979, B3; Viguerie, *The New Right*, 123-125; Dudley Clendinen, “Rev. Falwell Inspires Evangelical Vote: Counter to Democratic Platform,” B22; Roland Evans and Robert Novak, “Belted in the Bible Belt,” *The Washington Post*, July 4, 1980, A15; Steven R. Weisman, “Appeals Backing G.O.P Said to Portray Views as Contrary to Bible,” *New York Times*, November 1, 1980, 1, 9; Flint and Porter, “Jimmy Carter: The Re-emergence of Faith-Based Politics and the Abortion Issue,” 35, 46; Falwell, Listen, America!, 100; also see Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 169; Jerry Falwell, for his part, “considered Carter an illegitimate Baptist.” See Smillie, Falwell Inc., 84; James Robison suggested that Carter's military policy was a “blatant compromise with Communism.” Quoted in Kenneth Briggs, “Evangelicals Turning to Politics Fear Moral Slide Imperils Nation,” *New York Times*, August 19, 1980, D17.

organization, so as to exploit their existing media platforms (including the pulpit, television, radio, and print) to the fullest extent, as well as connect them with conservative groups, such as Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, and politicians, including Senator Jesse Helms.⁶³¹

While Weyrich's efforts were critical in kick-starting evangelical and fundamentalist activism in the late 1970s, and he, along with other New Right leaders, remained active advisers in the formative years, the right-wing preachers and Christian activists they helped awaken would go on to shape the movement and the message. Chief among them were a handful of key individuals - the most prominent of the Religious Right leadership - and organizations. Much as Southern California had been at the forefront of the grassroots conservative movement, the region would play a key role in the emerging coalition of religious activists. Christian Voice, the first and one of the most influential of the new groups, was founded in October 1978 (and officially launched in January 1979) by two California pastors, Robert Grant and Richard Zone.⁶³² Insisting "that America, the last stronghold of the Christian faith," was under "attack from Satan's forces," Grant lamented that "Everywhere we turn, Christian values are assaulted and are in retreat. As Christians, we are not going to take it any more (sic)." Essentially, an amalgamation of a number of preexisting single-issue organizations, including pro-family, anti-pornography, and anti-gay groups, Christian Voice's board of directors boasted a number of conservative United States Congressmen and even a few senators, including Utah's Orrin Hatch.⁶³³

Further south, in San Diego, Tim LaHaye, fundamentalist pastor of Scott Memorial Baptist Church and graduate of Bob Jones University, had long been involved in conservative causes, with early

⁶³¹ Roland Evans and Robert Novak, "Belted in the Bible Belt," *The Washington Post*, July 4, 1980, A15; Dudley Clendinen, "Rev. Falwell Inspires Evangelical Vote: Counter to Democratic Platform," B22; Flint and Porter, "Jimmy Carter: The Re-emergence of Faith-Based Politics and the Abortion Issue," 35; Balmer, *Religion in 20th Century America*, 93-94; Reichley, "Religion and the Future of American Politics," 25-26; Michael Lienesch, "Right-Wing Religion: Christian Conservatism as a Political Movement," *Political Science Quarterly* 97, no. 3 (Autumn, 1982): 409; Himmelstein, "The New Right," 26.

⁶³² Hadden, and Swann, *Prime Time Preachers*, 139.

⁶³³ James L. Guth, "The New Christian Right," in *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimization*, eds. Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow (Aldine Publishing, 1983), 31-32; Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 28-29; Russel Chandler, "Lobby Seeks 'Born-Again' Vote," *Los Angeles Times*, August 5, 1979, A3; Goodman and Price, *Jerry Falwell*, 34-36; Viguerie, *The New Right*, 129; Joel Kotkin, "Ready on the Right: Christian Soldiers Are on the March," *The Washington Post*, August 25, 1979, A10.

connections to the John Birch Society, particularly during the '64 Goldwater campaign. In the early 1970s, LaHaye developed ties to the California Christians Active Politically (CCAP), a group that sought to help elect Christians to political office. The Baptist pastor founded Christian Heritage College (established in San Diego in 1970) and was integral in the founding of the Institute for Creation Research, which would become the “epicenter of the evangelical quest to mainstream creationism.”⁶³⁴ LaHaye also authored a number of books in the 1970s on family, marriage, and homosexuality, in addition to founding Family Life Seminars, with his wife Beverly. Believing that the sanctity of the institution was being undermined by “contemporary political culture,” their efforts were centred on helping to rebuild troubled unions, “enrich” successful ones, and “prepare young people for marriage” - all while leading them “to Jesus Christ.”⁶³⁵

On the other side of the country, the emerging coalition had turned their sights on one of the most prominent televangelists in the United States.⁶³⁶ After a great deal of leg-work on the part of McAteer, a group including Billings, Weyrich, Phillips, and Viguierie traveled to Lynchburg, Virginia in May 1979 to court the pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church, one of the largest churches in the United States. Prior to the mid-1970s, Reverend Jerry Falwell, like most fundamentalists, had held to the traditional view that politics was unbecoming of a preacher. He had refrained from involvement in such activity and chastised those who did not, particularly where the civil rights movement was concerned. “Preachers are not called

⁶³⁴ Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, 231, 234, 344; Philip J. Hilts, “Creation vs. Evolution: Battle Resumes in Public Schools,” *The Washington Post*, September 13, 1980, A2; Institute for Creation Research, <http://www.icr.org/article/tim-lahaye-institute-for-creation-research/0>; Jeremy Weber, “Died: Tim LaHaye, Author Who 'Left Behind' a Long Legacy,” *Christianity Today*, July 25, 2016, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2016/july/tim-lahaye-dies-left-behind-coauthor-stroke.html>.

⁶³⁵ Robert D. McFadden, “Tim LaHaye Dies at 90: Fundamentalist Leader’s Grisly Novels Sold Millions,” *New York Times*, July 25, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/26/books/tim-lahaye-a-christian-fundamentalist-leader-dies-at-90.html>; Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, 351; For LaHaye’s early writings, see, for example, Tim LaHaye, *The Act of Marriage: The Beauty of Sexual Love* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1976); and *The Unhappy Gays: What Everyone Should Know About Homosexuality* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale Press, 1978); LaHaye would later go on to author a popular Christian-based, apocalyptic themed series of books. See Michael Standaert, *Skipping Towards Armageddon: The Politics and Propaganda of the Left Behind Novels and the LaHaye Empire*, (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Soft Skull Press, 2006).

⁶³⁶ For a brief review of the history of religious broadcasting, significantly televangelism, in the United States through to the 1980s, see Jeffrey K. Hadden, “The Rise and Fall of American Televangelism,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 527, *Religion in the Nineties* (May, 1993): 113-130.

to be politicians, but soul-winners,” he lectured. In his 1965 sermon, “Ministers and Marches,” he proclaimed that “Believing the Bible as I do, I would find it impossible to stop preaching the pure saving gospel of Jesus Christ, and (sic) begin doing anything else - including fighting communism or participating in civil rights reforms.” Having established his church in 1956 at the age of 23, the young pastor spent the next twenty-five years building a family and his ministry (including his popular radio, later television, program *Old Time Gospel Hour* and Liberty College, founded in 1971), relatively sheltered from the emerging cultural revolution - his “world ... still centered in Lynchburg” and “the Bible Belt culture of the South.”⁶³⁷

Falwell’s view on political activism evolved during the early 1970s, when he began to appreciate, what he and other conservative Christians saw as, the nation’s cultural decline. In response he ventured outside the comfort and security of his insular world to confront the enemy - the forces of liberalism and secular humanism. The preacher, for example, threw his support behind Phyllis Schlafly’s crusade against the ERA and the campaign to deny gays civil rights. He was particularly active, along with Tim LaHaye, in the fight to pass a California Proposition, which would allow for the “firing of homosexual teachers.” In 1976, he unapologetically criticized President Carter on *Old Time Gospel Hour*, though he insisted he was not being political, but rather “speaking on a moral issue.” While he may have been reticent about

⁶³⁷ Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 93, 77; Steve Bruce, “Modernity and Fundamentalism: The New Christian Right in America,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 41, no. 4 (Dec., 1990): 478; Megan Rosenfeld, “The New Moral America and the War of the Religicos,” *Washington Post*, August 24, 1980, H1, H4; Jerome L. Himmelstein, “The New Right,” 26; Falwell on “preachers and politicians” quoted in Dinesh D’Souza, *Falwell, Before the Millennium: A Critical Biography* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1984), 81; Falwell’s “Ministers and Marches” sermon quoted in Robert Scheer, “Rev. Jerry Falwell: The Prophet of ‘Worldly Methods: Falwell,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1981, 17; Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 15, 17; John Dart, “‘New Face’ Emerging in Protestant Fundamentalism,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 1979, A31; “Merger of 2 Churches Announced,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 1973, D7; Russel Chandler, “Spreading the Good News From Electronic Pulpits,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 26, 1975, 25; Myra MacPherson, “Falwell: The Genesis and Gospel of the Reverend of the Right,” *The Washington Post*, September 26, 1984, D9; Walt Harrington, “What Hath Falwell Wrought?,” *The Washington Post*, July 24, 1988, 26, 42; George Vecsey, “Bible Colleges Go Forth and Multiply,” *New York Times*, April 22, 1979, EDUC25; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 191-192; Falwell, among other prominent church leaders such as Rex Humbard, faced financial difficulties in the mid-late 70s. While Falwell recovered, others fared less well. See Russel Chandler, “Superchurches of Radio, TV in Financial Bind,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1974, OC1, 24; Sandra G. Boodman, “A Silver Anniversary And a Search for Gold: Empire That Falwell Built ...,” *The Washington Post*, June 28, 1981, A1, A10; and Myra MacPherson, “The Rise of the Falwell Empire,” *The Washington Post*, September 26, 1984, D9.

“jump(ing) into politics,” writes Michael Sean Winters, “he was wading into an estuary where politics and religion mixed.”⁶³⁸ Along with such issues as the ERA, gay rights, and rising divorce rates, Falwell viewed the elimination of prayer and Bible reading from the public schools as deeply alarming. Though, initially, he had not vocally opposed *Roe v. Wade*, he later contended that he had never supported the decision and was never comfortable with it.⁶³⁹ It seems the issue of tax exemption was the last straw for the Baptist preacher.

By the mid 1970s, more and more evangelicals and fundamentalists shared Falwell’s anxieties - convinced “that their entire way of life, which they tended to identify as the American way of life,” was under attack. Much as their forebears had blamed modernism for the shifting social and cultural norms during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, conservative Christians blamed the forces of humanism, or what some were beginning to term “secular humanism,” for the rise in divorce rates, abortions, the number “of children born out of wedlock,” and crime, as well as the prevalence of drugs and pornography. Secular humanists, they were sure, had infiltrated and taken over institutions of higher learning, the media, the federal government, and the federal courts. They had done so, in large part, by co-opting the political process to influence national politics. Evangelicals and fundamentalists recognized this and understood that if they were to “displace secular humanism,” they must do likewise.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁸ Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 118-119; Doyle McManus, “Prop. 6 Will 'Draw a Moral Line'--Briggs,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 31, 1978, B16; “4 Religious Leaders Urge Rejection of Proposition 6,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 1978, C6; Russel Chandler and John Dart, “Many Church Leaders Oppose Prop. 6...,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1978, C1; “Criticism of Carter Off One Show But Will Remain for Another,” *New York Times*, October 15, 1976, 36; Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 95.

⁶³⁹ Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 116-117. Jerry Falwell, *If I Should Die Before I Wake* (Nashville, Tennessee: T. Nelson, 1986), 31–32.

⁶⁴⁰ Reichley, “Religion and the Future of American Politics,” 25; LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind*, 9, 53-54, 97; Russell Chandler, “Humanism Under Heavy Attack From Ministers of New Right,” *The Washington Post*, August 21, 1981, B14; Francis Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop, a noted physician and later Surgeon General in the Reagan administration, posed and answered this question: “Why has our society changed? The answer is clear: The consensus of our society no longer rests on a Judeo-Christian base, but rather on a humanistic one,” placing “man rather than God at the center of all things.” See Francis Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race* (Old Tappan: New Jersey, 1979), 20; Tim LaHaye wrote that “Today's wave of crime and violence in our streets, promiscuity, divorce, shattered dreams, and broken hearts can be laid at the door of secular humanism.” See LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind*, 26.

One of the first to appreciate this, and write about it, was Francis Schaeffer. Explaining the “breakdown” of Western civilization, he argued that, at the root, the source of contemporary societal ills could be traced back to the introduction of an “Aristotelian emphasis on individual things” by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. This “set the stage for the humanistic elements of the Renaissance and the basic problems they created.” Schaeffer urged Christians to abandon their separatist tendencies and engage in the world, including politics. Implying it was a duty, he wrote that “as Christians we are not only to *know* the right world view, the world view that tells us the truth of what *is*, but consciously to *act* upon that world view so as to influence society in all its parts and facets across the whole spectrum of life...” Suggesting that Christians would be the first victims of an authoritarian government, which he regarded as the inevitable manifestation of humanism, Schaeffer warned that evangelicals represented the last hope of saving Western culture and, thus, society from collapse.⁶⁴¹

Inspired by the works of Francis Schaeffer, Tim LaHaye had not only incorporated lectures on secular humanism into his seminars by the late 1970s, he wrote a book centred on the subject and helped popularize the term. *The Battle for the Mind* (1979), though much more explicit than *How Should We Then Live?*, was intended to draw Christian conservatives’ attention to the perils of humanism, which was, according to LaHaye, a “destructive world view” comprised of five fundamental principles, or beliefs: atheism, “the foundation stone of all humanistic thought”; evolution; amorality; autonomous man; and a socialist one-world vision.⁶⁴² Along with numerous references, the book’s dedication reveals Schaeffer’s influence on LaHaye’s work: “... to Dr. Francis Schaeffer, the renowned philosopher-prophet of the twentieth century. Although we have never met personally, I have admired him from a distance and greatly respect the enormous contribution his books, movies, seminars, and other teachings have made in

⁶⁴¹ Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?: The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revel, 1976), 144, 52, 256 (original emphasis); PBS, “God in America,” Interview with Frank Schaeffer, October 23, 2009; PBS, “God in America,” Interview with Randall Balmer, May 10, 2010.

⁶⁴² LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind*, 59-60, 60-64, 68-72, 72-80.

the current awakening of our people to the dangers of humanism. I hope his warnings and those in this book are not too late.”⁶⁴³

Not only did Schaeffer help articulate the contemporary situation and encourage political activism, he also promoted, and provided a rationale for, an ecumenical approach to political issues. Citing biblical references, he reasoned that alliances between different sects, even religions, was perfectly acceptable in the pursuit of political or social change “that was good for humanity and pleasing to God.” Provided, of course, that “there was no compromise of theological integrity.”⁶⁴⁴ LaHaye took this message to heart, shedding the traditional separatism associated with hardline fundamentalists and embracing a more inclusive approach - though in the case of LaHaye, it was largely contained to the Protestant religion. In this vein, he abandoned his antipathy towards neo-Pentecostals (also referred to as the charismatic movement), viewed as apostates by many Baptists, and helped to build a new spiritual union between the two denominations. Uncompromising fundamentalists, significantly Bob Jones who assailed the charismatics for speaking in “tongues” and charged the movement with being “of the devil,” condemned LaHaye in the harshest terms.⁶⁴⁵ Nevertheless, this newfound ecumenism was echoed by a number of other Baptists and Pentecostals, particularly women, many of them wives of prominent evangelical leaders. The most significant of these activists was Beverly LaHaye. She had, in Darren Dochuk’s words, “spent the early part of the 1970s becoming evangelicalism’s own Phyllis Schlafly,” espousing similar family values and anti-feminist rhetoric, before she founded Concerned Women for America in 1979. Beverly LaHaye, while perhaps the most visible, was not alone. Indeed, it was this group of women who “spearheaded the grassroots evangelical movement in California.”⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴³ LaHaye, dedication to *The Battle for the Mind*, no page number provided.

⁶⁴⁴ PBS, “God in America,” Interview with Frank Schaeffer; Quotes in Jerry Falwell, *Strength for the Journey: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 361-362; also see Jerry Falwell, *Falwell: An Autobiography* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty House Publishers, 1997), 407.

⁶⁴⁵ Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, 350-351; on the charismatic movement, see Balmer and Winner, *Protestantism in America*, 78-79.

⁶⁴⁶ Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, 351-352.

The LaHayes were not the only ones taking note of Francis Schaeffer's teachings. Jerry Falwell, too, embraced the theologian's philosophies. Crediting the influence of Schaeffer's writings in coming to a decision, Falwell wrote that eventually "I had settled in my own heart that it was possible to be involved in political and social causes ... without violating the Bible that I believe and love."⁶⁴⁷ Weyrich's report, which convinced him of the strong evangelical support from those who shared his outlook, allowed Falwell to abandon any lingering doubts about mixing religion and politics. This was the televangelist's mindset by the late Spring of 1979, pushed over the edge by the IRS' intervention. But if the issue of tax exemption was ostensibly what brought the two interests together, it was not the subject of focus during the May meeting between the Baptist preacher and the political activists. In developing their agenda, New Right conservatives had settled, almost casually it seems, on an issue that had, largely, been of little real concern to the majority of evangelicals and fundamentalists in the past: abortion.⁶⁴⁸ Weyrich and Phillips viewed abortion as an effective wedge issue with which to draw Catholic support away from the Democrats in the upcoming 1980 elections. When they pitched the idea to Falwell, he was receptive to both the issue and the religious collaboration.⁶⁴⁹ His exposure to Francis Schaeffer had predisposed Falwell to both political activism and the abortion issue specifically, as well as ecumenical outreach.⁶⁵⁰

About a month after their meeting, Falwell, with the assistance of Weyrich and company, established a political action group in June 1979. Moral Majority, a term coined by Weyrich (though it had earlier been used by others, including Harold O.J. Brown in 1969), was intended to be non-denominational, comprised of "Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Mormons, Fundamentalists..." Its leadership, though, was predominantly evangelical and fundamentalist in nature, including Tim LaHaye and D. James Kennedy, pastor of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.⁶⁵¹ Many hardline

⁶⁴⁷ PBS, "God in America," Interview with Frank Schaeffer; Falwell, *Strength for the Journey*, 361-362.

⁶⁴⁸ Balmer, *Religion in 20th Century America*, 93-94; also see Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 16.

⁶⁴⁹ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 200; Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 117.

⁶⁵⁰ Jerry Falwell, *Strength for the Journey*, 361-362; PBS, "God in America," Interview with Frank Schaeffer; Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 119.

⁶⁵¹ Reichley, "Religion and Political Realignment," 30; Jerry Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: The Resurgence of Conservative Christianity* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1981), 186-187, 188;

fundamentalists were not as open-minded as Falwell and his associates. Much as he had attacked LaHaye for working with neo-Pentecostals, Bob Jones, Jr. railed against Falwell's approach, particularly his alignment with Catholics, which Bob Jones III charged would help bring about the ecumenical "church of Antichrist."⁶⁵² Falwell justified his actions by echoing Schaeffer's rationale. In the foreword to Richard Viguerie's book, *The New Right*, Falwell wrote: "In the last several years, Americans have stood by and watched as godless, spineless leaders have brought our nation floundering to the brink of death. ... Conservative Americans must now take the helm and guide America back to a position of stability and greatness."⁶⁵³

Moral Majority's mission was "to give a voice to the millions of decent, law abiding, God-fearing Americans who want to do something about the moral decline of our country." In determining the organization's agenda, abortion was the most prominent issue (along with a strong national defense to ward off communism), but only one of a number of societal ills it sought to address, along with, amongst other things, welfare spending, pornography, gay rights, feminism, divorce, and secular humanism, the last of which they viewed as the source of all the other problems.⁶⁵⁴ As Richard Neuhaus has pointed out, "if your goal is to 'turn the country around,' you can hardly limit your concern to one or even a dozen issues."⁶⁵⁵ Moral Majority's platform, designed to address an "accessible" morality rather than religious

John Dart, "'New Face' Emerging in Protestant Fundamentalism," *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 1979, A31
Dudley Clendinen, "Rev. Falwell Inspires Evangelical Vote," *New York Times*, August 20, 1980, B22.

⁶⁵² Williams, *God's Own Party*, 173-174; Falwell, *Strength for the Journey*, 362; Megan Rosenfeld, "The New Moral America and the War of the Religicos," *Washington Post*, August 24, 1980, H1, H5 (The Jones' were even more outraged that Falwell had the thrice married Elizabeth Taylor, who was married to Senator Mark Warner with whom Falwell was friendly, on his program).

⁶⁵³ Jerry Falwell, introduction to *The New Right*, by Richard Viguerie, no page number provided; Falwell wrote much the same thing in his 1980 book *Listen, America!*: "...we must admit the sad fact that we, the American people, have allowed a vocal minority of ungodly men and women to bring America to the brink of death." See Jerry Falwell, author's note in *Listen, America!* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980), xi.

⁶⁵⁴ The Moral Majority, Inc., "Fighting For a Moral America in This Decade of Destiny, undated, quoted in Goodman and Price, *Jerry Falwell*, 25; Smillie, *Falwell Inc.*, 100; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 200; Judy Mann, "Match," *The Washington Post*, September 16, 1981, C1, C5; Charles Krauthammer, "Secular Humanism on Trial," *The Washington Post*, October 10, 1986, A27; on Moral Majority's platform, also see Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, 188-191; Megan Rosenfeld, "The New Moral America and the War of the Religicos: Fundamentalists," H4.

⁶⁵⁵ Richard J. Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984), 49.

dogma, consisted of four broad positions - “pro-life, pro-traditional family, pro-moral, and pro-American.”⁶⁵⁶ This was a deliberate attempt to appeal to individuals and organizations already associated with various single-issue interests, but also to attract non-evangelical Protestants who might not share Falwell’s Baptist-specific beliefs, as well as conservative Catholics, Jews, and Mormons.⁶⁵⁷

The central principles which connected all the issues addressed in Moral Majority’s agenda, and that of most other Religious Right organizations, were morality and family. Falwell argued that one did not have to be an evangelical or fundamentalist, or even particularly religious, to be troubled by the numerous signs of the nation’s moral decay. It was within this context of morality that the Religious Right would frame their actions. Francis Schaeffer’s son, Frank, later wrote “The new religious right was all about religiously motivated ‘morality,’ which,” he admitted, was “used for nakedly political aggression.”⁶⁵⁸ Strict fundamentalists like Bob Jones Jr., though he over-estimated Falwell’s personal ambition, expressed much the same sentiment at the time. “My own personal opinion,” Jones conveyed in the summer of 1980, “is that Falwell thinks he can be president of the United States in 1984, and he is building himself a political party.”⁶⁵⁹

Regardless of the intent, the moral, rather than biblical, approach fit well with the issue that would soon come to define the movement. Like the ERA, the issue of abortion “evoked broader themes,” centred on morality, that were quite compatible with traditional conservatism, particularly views on freedom and constraint. Studies demonstrate that Americans who opposed abortion were also inclined to

⁶⁵⁶ Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 124; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 201; Falwell, *Strength for the Journey*, 363; Reverend Ed Dobson, a close aide of Falwell's who later left the movement, drafted Moral Majority's platform. See PBS: “God in America,” Interview with Ed Dobson, October 15, 2009. www.pbs.org/godinamerica/interviews/ed-dobson.html#falwell.

⁶⁵⁷ Williams, *God's Own Party*, 175; Winters, *God's Right Hand*, 124; John Dart, “‘New Face’ Emerging in Protestant Fundamentalism,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 1979, A31; Marjorie Hyer, “Evangelical Christians Meet to Develop Strategy for 1980s,” *The Washington Post*, Jan 30, 1981, C14.

⁶⁵⁸ Frank Schaeffer, *Crazy for God: How I Grew Up as One of the Elected, Helped Found the Religious Right, and Lived to Take All (or Almost All) of it Back* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2007), 298; also see Lienesch “Right-Wing Religion,” 412.

⁶⁵⁹ Bob Jones quoted in Rosenfeld, “The New Moral America and the War of the Religicos,” H5; Falwell denied this charge, arguing that Moral Majority was “not a political party and do not intend to become one.” See Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, 191.

take unfavourable positions on “premarital, extramarital, and homosexual sex,” sex education, and the liberalization of laws regulating divorce and drugs. All these things, sociologist Jerome Himmelstein points out, represent excessive freedom from the “constraints imposed by traditional roles and norms, too much emphasis on individual self-determination and self-fulfillment, and too much play for personal drives and whims.”⁶⁶⁰

The moral, rather than biblical, approach also allowed the Religious Right to circumvent the reality that the Bible said very little about abortion. The subject had always been, primarily, a Catholic issue, with most Protestants favouring a pro-choice position or limited restrictions. And while many evangelicals and fundamentalists disagreed with the practice, they saw it as no worse than any number of other social problems. There was little to no guidance on the subject as far as Scripture was concerned, and most evangelicals and fundamentalists viewed it as an issue that didn’t affect their world directly - none of them would ever have an abortion - unlike government intervention into their subculture. Moreover, they were, by tradition, suspicious of Catholic causes.⁶⁶¹ Francis Schaeffer had, himself, held to this anti-Catholic sentiment prior to the mid-70s, declaring, despite his strong opposition to abortion, that he did not “want to be identified with some Catholic issue.” His son helped him to overcome his prejudices, for the most part, for pragmatic reasons, but Schaeffer, like Falwell, never completely felt at ease with the alliances he deemed necessary to advance their cause.⁶⁶²

While Schaeffer genuinely sought to end abortion, which he viewed as a violation of human rights, his son, Frank, acknowledged that for most, including himself, “the real issue was not abortion,” regardless of the rhetoric. “The real issue,” he contended, “was winning the cultural war by finding a place you could draw a line in the sand against what was the new left. ...”⁶⁶³ Falwell, too, viewed the battle in broader terms, as a fight against modernity, particularly feminism and the sexual revolution. To

⁶⁶⁰ Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 105.

⁶⁶¹ For a discussion of Protestant-Catholic relations, including their views on abortion, see chapter #4.

⁶⁶² Frank Schaeffer, *Crazy for God*, 265-267, quote on 266; PBS, “God in America,” Interview with Frank Schaeffer; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 174.

⁶⁶³ PBS, “God in America,” Interview with Frank Schaeffer.

achieve this goal, they sought to evangelize the nation through voting into power sympathetic politicians and taking control of the government. “What’s happening to America is that the wicked are bearing rule,” Falwell preached in a sermon. “We have to lead the nation back,” he continued, “to the moral stance that made America great ... [we] need to wield influence on those who govern us.”⁶⁶⁴ Tim LaHaye mirrored this message when he bluntly wrote: “We must remove all humanists from public office and replace them with pro-moral political leaders.”⁶⁶⁵

With this sentiment, the loose coalition of organizations (significantly, Moral Majority, Christian Voice, and Religious Roundtable) and individuals directed their efforts towards electing like-minded politicians to office in the upcoming elections. Though Religious Right-affiliated groups like Moral Majority purported to be purely political, not religious, in nature, they clearly pushed a religious-based (or more accurately, a Christian-based) agenda. And while they assumed a position of non-partisanship, they were clearly working on behalf of, if perhaps not always in coordination with, the Republican Party and conservative candidates. Falwell urged pastors to get their congregations registered - only about half of evangelicals had done so. He even went as far as encouraging them to endorse candidates from the pulpit, which they did.⁶⁶⁶ While addressing a gathering of his peers, Falwell preached: “What can you do from

⁶⁶⁴ Falwell quoted in Eileen Ogintz, “Evangelists seek political clout,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 13, 1980, 5; also see Haynes Johnson, “American Portraits 1980: The Summing Up: One Nation, Troubled and Divisible,” *Washington Post*, November 3, 1980, D1, D2, D3.

⁶⁶⁵ LaHaye, *The Battle for the Mind*, 9.

⁶⁶⁶ Falwell, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, 191; George Vecsey, “Militant Television Preachers Try to Weld Fundamentalist Christians' ...,” *New York Times*, January 21, 1980, A21; Joel Kotkin, “Ready on the Right,” *The Washington Post*, August 25, 1979, A10; Roland Evans and Robert Novak, “Belted in the Bible Belt,” *The Washington Post*, July 4, 1980, A15; Dudley Clendinen, “Rev. Falwell Inspires Evangelical Vote,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1980, B22; Kathy Sawyer “Linking Religion and Politics: Conventioneers Exhorted to Support Godly Candidates,” *The Washington Post*, August 24, 1980, A12; Steven V. Roberts, “Evangelicals Press Political Activities: Fundamentalists in Sun Belt ...,” *New York Times*, September 29, 1980, 67. Scholars have suggested that “the religious justifications for their (the Religious Right) political convictions are an overlay onto preexisting ideological commitments.” See, Ronald E. Hopson and Donald R. Smith. “Changing Fortunes: An Analysis of Christian Right Ascendance within American Political Discourse,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 1 (March 1999): 4.

the pulpit? You can register people to vote. You can explain the issues to them. And you can endorse candidates, right there in church on Sunday morning.”⁶⁶⁷

The emerging coalition quickly gained strength over the course of 1979 and into 1980. A clear sign of their growing influence occurred on April 29, 1980, when evangelicals descended on Washington. Though smaller than the organizers had anticipated, “Washington for Jesus” drew an estimated 200 000 individuals to the capital. The event, and the movement generally, was criticized by Catholics, Jews, and the mainline Protestant churches for, among other things, politicizing religion and “seek(ing) to Christianize the government.” Indeed, the organizers’ profession of non-partisanship was exposed as disingenuous. Not only were the speeches, and general air of the gathering, heavily conservative in nature, a handful of influential preachers discreetly met with Republican politicians prior to the event. “Washington for Jesus,” intended to mobilize a grassroots Christian movement, was attended by nearly all the leading evangelical and fundamentalist preachers (with a few exceptions, including Falwell and Billy Graham). As for their message, the speech that perhaps best encapsulated the view held by many conservative Christians that day was given by Dr. William R. Bright, the rally’s co-chair and founder of Campus Crusade for Christ International. Bright lamented that “we’ve turned from God and God is chastening us.” After listing a number of the nation’s failings - crime, drugs, divorce, racial unrest... - he exclaimed that “God is saying to us, Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!”⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁷ Vecsey, “Militant Television Preachers Try to Weld Fundamentalist Christians’ ...,” A21.

⁶⁶⁸ Jeffrey K., Hadden, and Anson D. Shupe, *Televangelism: Power and Politics on God's Frontier* (New York: Henry Holdt, 1988), 22-23; Marley, *Pat Robertson*, 63-64; Marjorie Hyer, “Church Coalition Opposes ‘Christianizing’ Rally,” *Washington Post*, April 26, 1980, B2; “Campaign Report: Religious Leaders Denounce Evangelists of ‘New Right,’” *New York Times*, October 7, 1980, D21; Paul W. Valentine and Marjorie Hyer, “Vast and Joyous Crowd: 200,000 on the Mall Pray for America,” *Washington Post*, April 30, 1980, A1; Two scholars have suggested that there could have been as many as 500,000 participants spread out over the day. See Hadden and Shupe, *Televangelism*, 26; Audiotape, Bill Bright’s address on the Mall, Washington, DC, April 29, 1980, quoted in Hadden and Shupe, *Televangelism*, 22-23 (Bright founded Campus Crusade for Christ at UCLA in 1951 with the intent of evangelizing the world. By the late 1980s, it had expanded its presence to 150 countries, 25); Billy Graham, wary of political involvement after getting burned by his association with Nixon, avoided “Washington For Jesus.” Falwell was missing for probably two reasons. First, he was busy with Moral Majority, less than a year old at the time. Perhaps just as importantly were the rally’s denominational connections. Two of the three key organizer’s, Pat Robertson and John Giminez, were associated with the charismatic movement, which Falwell, like most fundamentalists, looked upon with a great deal of suspicion.

Along with Bright and the charismatic pastor John Gimenez, who initiated the idea, the other individual most responsible for organizing “Washington for Jesus” was Pat Robertson, a Southern Baptist with charismatic proclivities, and the privileged son of Virginia senator Willis Robertson. By the late 1970s, he was one of the most established televangelists, having built a media empire, Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), symbolized by his popular television program, *The 700 Club*.⁶⁶⁹ Along the way, Robertson had been integral in helping to launch the careers of televangelist Jim Bakker and his wife, Tammy Faye, best known for their show, PTL Club (Praise The Lord), and theme park, Heritage U.S.A.⁶⁷⁰

Robertson was one of the many conservative Christians who had been drawn into the political sphere in support of Jimmy Carter in 1976. His activism intensified through the late 70s, during which he hosted conservative politicians on his television program and, in 1978, endorsed a fellow charismatic for state office. The Virginia preacher was also closely associated with Christian Voice, which he had helped finance. The California-based group was heavily reliant on the prominent televangelist and his media network, as well as access to over one hundred affiliated stations on which Christian Voice solicited memberships and donations.⁶⁷¹ Robertson had also played a key role in helping to launch a campaign, in early 1980, to have school prayer enshrined into the constitution. With more than 80 percent of evangelicals supporting a prayer amendment, compared to 54 percent of non-evangelicals, the campaign received strong support from a number of leading pastors, including Falwell.⁶⁷² Despite this common cause, and a shared agenda generally, there remained some distance between Falwell and a number of the most prominent leaders within the broad “evangelical” umbrella, significantly Pentecostals/charismatics.

⁶⁶⁹ Randall Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2004), 585; Marley, *Pat Robertson*, 1-3, 33, 36; Karlyn Barker, “Christian Broadcaster Dedicates University in Va.,” *The Washington Post*, October 2, 1980, C20.

⁶⁷⁰ Marley, *Pat Robertson*, 26-28, 33-35; on Bakker, also see Jeff Prugh and Russel Chandler, “TV ERA: Old-Time Religion in the Big Time,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1979, A1, 10-13.

⁶⁷¹ Marley, *Pat Robertson*, 52, 63; Barker, “Christian Broadcaster Dedicates University in Va.,” C20; James L. Guth, “The New Christian Right,” in *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimization*, eds. Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow (Aldine Publishing, 1983), 31-32.

⁶⁷² Williams, *God's Own Party*, 181; E.J. Dionne Jr., “Poll Finds Evangelicals Aren't United Voting Bloc,” *New York Times*, September 7, 1980, 34.

The Virginia pastor, along with most Baptists and various other evangelicals and fundamentalists, never could quite get past his suspicion of charismatic practices, particularly their approach to the “gifts of faith” - significantly speaking in tongues and faith-healing.⁶⁷³

Charismatics were not the only group with which Moral Majority had difficulties cultivating ties. Weyrich had argued that “even members of mainline churches and Roman Catholics supported Falwell’s initiative.”⁶⁷⁴ That may have been true, but their numbers were quite small. The reality, despite his ecumenical intentions, was that the Lynchburg preacher was never very successful in drawing many non-Baptists, let alone Catholics, Jews, or Mormons, to Moral Majority. As Steve Bruce has pointed out, many Protestant Christians had difficulties reconciling what they heard in church on Sunday, that Catholics and Jews were not “saved” and the Mormons were a dangerous cult, with the idea that through the rest of the week they were to “work with” these groups “in defence of” their “shared Judaeo-Christian heritage.”⁶⁷⁵ These tensions were evident among the leadership, including Falwell, who let slip various anti-Semitic remarks at different times. Ultimately, Moral Majority, with its almost exclusively Baptist leadership, never reached the constituency that Falwell envisioned. Much of the public viewed him as radical, and even within the Baptist Church, which comprised the vast majority of Moral Majority’s membership, Falwell and his organization were viewed with suspicion. In 1980, Falwell’s television program, despite his highly inflated claims, counted less than 1.5 million viewers, according to the independent ratings organization Arbitron, and his *Moral Majority Report* counted less than one-third that number in subscriptions. Nevertheless, if Weyrich was responsible for initiating evangelical mobilization,

⁶⁷³ Michael Johnston, “The ‘New Christian Right’ in American Politics,” *Political Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (April-June 1982): 181-189; Williams, *God’s Own Party*, 178; Dudley Clendinen, “Christian New Right’s Rush to Power: Test of Strength Lies Ahead ...,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1980, B7; Dan Morgan, “Evangelicals a Force Divided: Political Involvement, Sophistication ...,” *The Washington Post*, March 8, 1988, A9.

⁶⁷⁴ Weyrich, “Long live the religious right,” 12.

⁶⁷⁵ Matthew Avery Sutton, “Reagan, Religion, and the Culture Wars of the 1980s,” in *A Companion to Ronald Reagan*, ed. Andrew L. Johns (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 208; Bruce, “Modernity and Fundamentalism,” 483.

it was Falwell and Moral Majority that did more to translate that energy into the broad, loose alliance that would become the Religious Right.⁶⁷⁶

This emerging coalition was by no means representative of all Protestant Christians, or even evangelicals and fundamentalists. Mainline churches, represented by the National Council of Churches (NCC), vociferously opposed the movement. Fervent fundamentalists, such as the Jones family, verbally crucified Falwell and those of his ilk for their ecumenism, among other sins. Neither did they gain a great deal of public support from the once dominant moderate, but still conservative, wing of the evangelical movement. Billy Graham, the individual most responsible for revitalizing and shaping conservative Christianity in the post-war years, remained distant from the far right and their political activism for a couple of reasons. While he, and the National Association of Evangelicals, could find shared values in some, even much, of their agenda, Moral Majority and others were a little too extreme for the more moderate Graham. Equally important, the preacher had experienced firsthand the fallout from having involved himself too deeply in politics in the wake of Nixon's Watergate scandal and he warned the Religious Right leadership of the dangers of "being seduced by success."⁶⁷⁷ Furthest to the left, and in

⁶⁷⁶ Goodman and Price, *Jerry Falwell*, 1-14 (on Falwell's "Jewish indiscretions"); Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 120-121; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 177-179; Reichley, "Religion and Political Realignment," 30; Rosenfeld, "The New Moral America and the War of the Religicos," H4; Lienesch, "Right-Wing Religion," 404; Clendinen, "Rev. Falwell Inspires Evangelical Vote," B22; Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 78; While Falwell boasted he had audiences of twenty-five million or more, Arbitron ratings put the total viewership for religious broadcasting at only 20 500 000, of which 1 455 720 were Falwell's. This made *The Old Time Gospel Hour* the 6th highest ranked religious program. For some perspective, the top five shows, lead by Oral Roberts and Rex Humbard, had a combined audience of nearly 11 million, about half of all viewership. See Hadden and Swann, *Prime Time Preachers*, 47, 50, 51; and Hadden and Shupe, *Televangelism*, 147; For an excellent exploration of religious broadcasting and viewership numbers, demographics, etc., see Hadden, and Swann, *Prime Time Preachers*, 47-67; Paul Weyrich contended that the founding of Moral Majority marked the birth of the Religious Right. See Weyrich, "Long live the religious right," 12.

⁶⁷⁷ "Campaign Report: Religious Leaders Denounce Evangelists of 'New Right,'" *New York Times*, October 7, 1980, D21; "How Some of the Evangelicals Feel About Moral Majority," *The Washington Post*, February 15, 1981, M2; "National Council of Churches Elects Methodist Activist as Head," *The Washington Post*, Nov 6, 1981, B12; Curtis J. Sitomer, "Rev. William Sloane Coffin's crusade carries on at Riverside," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Nov 2, 1983, 1, back page; Rosenfeld, "The New Moral America and the War of the Religicos," H4, H5; Robert Scheer, "Rev. Jerry Falwell: The Prophet of 'Worldly Methods,'" *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1981, 17; Myra MacPherson, "Falwell: The Genesis and Gospel of the Reverend of the Right," *The Washington Post*, September 26, 1984, D9; Myra MacPherson, "Falwell: Big-Time Politics From the Pulpit of Old-Time Religion: Falwell," *The Washington Post*, September 27, 1984, D14; Billy Graham quoted in Marjorie Hyer, "Evangelical Christians Meet to Develop Strategy for 1980s," *The Washington Post*, Jan 30, 1981, C14; Referencing Moral Majority, Billy Graham

direct opposition to the Religious Right, was what David Swartz referred to as the “moral minority.” An outgrowth of the postwar neo-evangelical movement, this more progressive-minded evangelical left, reminiscent of the Social Gospel, was perhaps best represented by the Sojourners, a Christian justice social organization with a magazine by the same name, and its tireless young founder Jim Wallis. The Sojourners, “one of a network of over 300 similarly minded groups across the country,” advocated on behalf of the poor and sought to abolish nuclear weapons.⁶⁷⁸

These groups, though, were overshadowed by the emerging right-wing coalition, which was quickly beginning to dominate the headlines and the public-political discourse.⁶⁷⁹ Just a few months prior to the 1980 elections, the nascent movement’s leadership appeared in force at a National Affairs Briefing sponsored by Ed McAteer’s Religious Roundtable, a purportedly non-partisan gathering. The two-day August event in Dallas, Texas, “a fusion of Bible-thumping revivalist oratory with hardline New Right politics,” was intended “to launch a major voter registration drive.” Among the roughly 15 000 in attendance were Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Bill Bright (the charismatic California talk show host and founder of High Adventure Ministries), John Giminez, and Tim LaHaye, as well as several conservative Republican politicians including the former governor of Texas, John Connally, who defected from the Democrats to the GOP in 1973, and North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, a strong proponent of anti-abortion legislation. Protestant Christians dominated the gathering, but the presence of others, significantly the Catholic Phyllis Schlafly, demonstrated that the movement did have some appeal to conservatives outside the evangelical fold. Speaker after speaker condemned the “perverts, radicals, leftists, communists, liberals and humanists” who had taken control of the United States, while admonishing Christians for having allowed it to happen by shunning the ballot box. James Robison, the

suggested that “It would unfortunate if people got the impression that all evangelists belong to that group. The majority do not. I do not wish to be identified with them.” Indeed, Graham lamented that “It would disturb me if there was a wedding between religious fundamentalists and the political right. The hard right has no interest in religion except to manipulate it.” See Marguerite Michaels, “Billy Graham: America is Not God’s Only Kingdom,” *Parade*, February 1, 1981, 6.

⁶⁷⁸ David R. Swartz, *Moral Minority: The Evangelical Left in an Age of Conservatism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 15, 50; Swartz provides an excellent exploration of the new evangelical left.

⁶⁷⁹ “Editorial Comment: New Right Tops 1980 Religion News,” *Christian Century* (December 31, 1980): 1283.

Roundtable's spokesman, encapsulated the gathering's tone when he preached that "Not voting is a sin against all mighty God!"⁶⁸⁰

Among the politicians who spoke at the Affairs Briefing, was the Republican presidential nominee, Ronald Reagan. In fact, Robison considered him "the key to the event's success."⁶⁸¹ The former California governor praised the Bible, asserting "that all the complex and horrendous questions confronting us at home and worldwide have their answer in that single book," and credited the evangelical activists for initiating "a new vitality in American politics." Acknowledging that the non-partisan crowd could not endorse him, he conveyed his support for them by stating: "I want you to know I endorse you and what you are doing" (a line Robison had suggested he use). Attacking big government, Reagan argued that "the First Amendment was written not to protect the people and their laws from religious values, but to protect those values from government tyranny. But over the last two or three decades," he continued, "the Federal Government seems to have forgotten both 'that old time religion' and that old time Constitution."⁶⁸²

Notwithstanding his past as a Hollywood actor, the former governor's conservative bona fides were unquestionable, and he had, during the 1960s and 1970s, established a relationship with evangelicals, significantly Bill Bright, George Otis (minister and radio host), and the head of California Christians Active Politically, Christian singer Pat Boone.⁶⁸³ Despite these connections, Reagan's personal religious

⁶⁸⁰ Kathy Sawyer "Linking Religion and Politics: Conventioneers Exhorted to Support Godly Candidates," A12; "Religious Leaders Planning Voter Drive," *The Washington Post*, July 18, 1980, A28; John Herbers, "Ultraconservative Evangelicals A Surging New Force in Politics," *New York Times*, August 17, 1980, 1, 52; Kenneth Briggs, "Evangelicals Hear Plea: Politics ...," *New York Times*, August 24, 1980, 33; Howell Raines, "Reagan Backs Evangelicals In Their Political Activities: Candidate ...," *New York Times*, August 23, 1980, 8; On Jesse Helms, see Bill Peterson, "Worries for New Right: Group Thwarted on Social Policy, Badly Split Over Abortion Tactics," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 16, 1982, A4.

⁶⁸¹ Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 215.

⁶⁸² Howell Raines, "Reagan Backs Evangelicals in Their Political Activities," 8; on the National Affairs Briefing, also see Richard Bergholz, "Reagan Tries to Cement His Ties with TV Evangelicals," *Los Angeles Times*, August 23, 1980, A1, 27.

⁶⁸³ Pierard, "Reagan and the Evangelicals," 1183; Daniel K. Williams, "Reagan's Religious Right: The Unlikely Alliance between Southern Evangelicals and a California Conservative," in *Ronald Reagan and the 1980s: Perceptions, Policies, Legacies*, ed. Cheryl Hudson and Gareth Davies (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 137; "Born Again' Politics," 9; also see Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt*, 259-261, 357; and Gary Scott Smith,

credentials were suspect and he was not the favoured candidate in 1980 among evangelicals and fundamentalists - the twice married former Hollywood actor and irregular churchgoer, who had conceived a child before marriage and signed liberal abortion legislation as California governor, did not appear to embody the model of devout Christianity. Many, including Falwell, looked more to Illinois congressman Philip Crane or John Connally. But the Reagan campaign actively courted Christian conservatives, and over the course of the 1980 primaries the former governor began to pick up more and more support. He spoke before church leaders and their congregants, even visiting Bob Jones University in January 1980.⁶⁸⁴

Much as he had in '76, during the '80 campaign Reagan professed his religious credentials. He identified as "born again," suggested his faith was that of "an evangelical religion," and ran on a pro-family agenda that mirrored very closely that of the emerging religious coalition. He talked about "the erosion of the American family." He opposed extending equal rights to women and homosexuals, as well as "explicit sex education" and abortion, which he believed "is taking a human life." He charged the federal government with "harassing" Christian private schools, and "increasingly" attempting "to inject itself between parent and child." Reagan favoured a hard-line anti-communist policy, supported school prayer, and cast doubt on the evolutionary theory, suggesting that the biblical account of creation ought to be taught alongside any "scientific theory."⁶⁸⁵

Faith and the presidency: from George Washington to George W. Bush (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 327-328 (Otis had prophesied, in 1976, that Reagan would become president, provided he remained a faithful Christian).

⁶⁸⁴ Reichley, "Religion and the Future of American Politics," 26; "Rebels of the Right," *The New Republic* (February 24, 1982): 10; Reichley, "Religion and Political Realignment," 30; Pierard, "Reagan and the Evangelicals," 1184; Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 75-76, 77; The first Religious Right associated organization to endorse the Reagan campaign was Christian Voice, which founded Christians for Reagan, a political action group (PAC). See Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 29; also see Richard M. Harley, "Evangelical Vote and the Presidency," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jun 25, 1980, 12.

⁶⁸⁵ David E. Rosenbaum, "Conservatives Embrace Reagan on Social Issues: 'Potential' Vote Power ...," *New York Times*, April 21, 1980, B12; Kathy Sawyer and Robert G. Kaiser, "Evangelicals Flock to GOP Standard Feeling They Have Friend in Reagan," *The Washington Post*, July 16, 1980, A15; Sawyer "Linking Religion and Politics," A12; Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 11, 76, 107; Philip J. Hiltz, "Creation vs. Evolution: Battle Resumes in Public Schools," *The Washington Post*, September 13, 1980, A2; Bergholz, "Reagan Tries to Cement His Ties With TV Evangelicals," 27; Reagan was not what evangelicals and fundamentalists considered born again. On one of the many occasions that Reagan was asked about this, he replied with: "I know what many of those who use that term mean by it, but in my own situation in the church I was raised in, the Christian Church, there you were baptized

These positions endeared him to many conservative Christians, and when Reagan's nomination seemed certain, right-wing evangelical and fundamentalist leaders abandoned their reservations and quickly offered their endorsements. The day after Reagan's nomination, Jerry Falwell pledged his support, suggesting that the former governor would get their votes "even if he has the devil running with him, and we'll pray he outlives him,"⁶⁸⁶ In a nod to Falwell, the GOP nominee brought Bob Billings, Moral Majority's executive director, on board to handle the campaign's religious outreach. By the time Reagan appeared at the National Affairs Briefing in late August, much of the foundation on which to build a relationship between the conservative politician and the emerging Religious Right leadership had been laid. Reagan met with Falwell, James Robison, and other key individuals several times throughout the campaign. In October, only weeks before the election, he visited Liberty Baptist College and spoke, at Falwell's request, at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Lynchburg, Virginia.⁶⁸⁷

Much as the conservative politician sought out the Religious Right's support, Falwell, Robison, Robertson, Schaeffer, and others looked to Reagan to fulfill their agenda. They believed that he was on their side - and so did many of their congregants. A study undertaken by political scientists demonstrated that 77 percent of those who identified as strong fundamentalists "believed that Reagan would work for the interests of their group."⁶⁸⁸ Those interests appeared vital. Just days before the election, David

and you, yourself, decided that you were, as the Bible says . . . born again. In the context of the Bible, yes, by being baptized, you were (born again)." See John Dart, "'Enlightened' Church: Reagan Pastor Has Independent View," *Los Angeles Times*, October 18, 1980, A34.

⁶⁸⁶ George Skelton, "The Times Poll: Reagan Gains With Some Evangelicals," *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 1980, B4; Rosenbaum, "Conservatives Embrace Reagan on Social Issues...", B12; Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 119; Dudley Clendinen, "Rev. Falwell Inspires Evangelical Vote: Counter to Democratic Platform," B22; Sawyer and Kaiser, "Evangelicals Flock to GOP Standard Feeling They Have Friend in Reagan," A15.

⁶⁸⁷ Goodman and Price, *Jerry Falwell*, 29; Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 11, 74-77; Smillie, *Falwell Inc.*, 127; Dudley Clendinen, "'Christian New Right's' Rush to Power: Test of Strength Lies Ahead . . .," *New York Times*, August 18, 1980, B7; "Evangelicals Claim Reagan Made Job Vow," *The Washington Post*, September 28, 1980, A2; Richard Bergholz, "Reagan Tells Broadcasters He'll Press for Laws Granting Voluntary School Prayers," *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1980, A19; Denis Collins, "TV Evangelist Snags Reagan, But Not Everyone Down Home," *The Washington Post*, October 4, 1980, A1, A6.

⁶⁸⁸ Arthur H. Miller and Martin P. Wattenberg, "Politics from the Pulpit: Religiosity and the 1980 Elections," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 312-313.

Rhodenhizer, pastor of Calvary Road Baptist Church in northern Virginia, warned that “We could very well be on the verge of losing this republic.”⁶⁸⁹

Pastor Rhodenizer spoke for many conservatives, not just evangelicals or fundamentalists, at the close of the 1970s. The preceding decade or so had wrought dramatic change to the United States, leaving a socio-cultural landscape that few on the right recognized. During the first twenty-odd years of the post-war period, conservatives had coalesced around their anti-communism and distaste for liberalism, manifest in primarily economic ways. The mid-late-'60s brought new threats to the nation - threats from within. From the standpoint of conservative Christians, traditional norms were being violated and American values were under attack from the evil forces of secular humanism. Religion, it seemed, had been all but abolished from public schools, only to be replaced by sex education, and pornography was widely available to the public. Despite Phyllis Schlafly's successful efforts to hold off passage of the ERA, Americans were becoming more comfortable with the idea of women's liberation, including divorce and single parenthood. Gays had been harshly marginalized, absent from the public discourse a decade earlier, but now they marched in the streets and were represented within the Democratic Party. Whereas abortion had been long criminalized and relegated to the shadows, it was now legal, with widespread public support and government funding.⁶⁹⁰ By the late 1970s, a national poll showed that a majority of Christians held conservative positions - “82 percent of Baptists, 77 percent of Methodists, 75 percent of Lutherans, 72 percent of Presbyterians and 70 percent of Catholics - on each of these issues.”⁶⁹¹

While evangelicals and fundamentalists were troubled by all these happenings, none of these issues were able to arouse them in any significant numbers. It is true that some, including Tim LaHaye, Robert Billings, and even, to some extent, Jerry Falwell, had, if not set aside their separatist philosophy, at least straddled the religious-political line, if only for certain causes. This was, though, merely a trickle when

⁶⁸⁹ Alison O'Neill, “At Calvary Road, Reagan,” *The Washington Post*, November 3, 1980, D1.

⁶⁹⁰ Kenneth Briggs, “Evangelicals Turning to Politics Fear Moral Slide Imperils Nation,” D17; Hammond, “Evangelical Politics: Generalizations and Implications,” 191.

⁶⁹¹ Morgan, “Evangelicals a Force Divided,” A9.

compared to their communities as a whole. Most right-wing Christians remained faithful to their tradition of separation from politics and safe within the isolation of their subcultures, not yet willing to enter the secular sphere of politics. All this changed when a small group of New Right activists seized upon an issue that threatened the autonomy of those subcultures, by way of the IRS' revocation of their educational institutions' tax-exempt status, to mobilize a group of fundamentalist, and to a lesser extent evangelical, preachers. These activists, embraced an even older evangelical position, abandoned after the loss of the culture wars in the mid-1920s, the 19th century notion "that the church should infuse the political order with Christian values," even while they betrayed its spirit.⁶⁹² Soon known as the Religious Right (also called the New Religious Right, Christian Right, or New Christian Right), this loose coalition, led by Jerry Falwell and Moral Majority, took up the battle against the "perverts, radicals, leftists, communists, liberals and humanists" who, they were sure, had infiltrated every facet of the country.⁶⁹³ Falwell wrote that "America is at a crossroads as a nation; she is facing a fateful 'Decade of Destiny' - the 1980s."⁶⁹⁴ The Baptist preacher and a large number of conservative Christians looked for a savior.

They looked to Ronald Reagan.

⁶⁹² Himmelstein, *To the Right*, 118.

⁶⁹³ Raines, "Reagan Backs Evangelicals in Their Political Activities," 8.

⁶⁹⁴ Falwell, *Listen, America!*, 7.

Chapter #6

Pastor to the Nation: Ronald Reagan and the Religious Right

“We do not have a separate social agenda, a separate economic agenda, and a separate foreign policy agenda. We have one agenda. Just as surely as we seek to put our financial house in order and rebuild our nation's defenses, so too we seek to protect the unborn, to end manipulation of school children by utopian planners and permit the acknowledgment of a Supreme Being in our classroom.”

Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Conservative Political Action Conference Dinner" (1981)

The 1980 election saw the injection of religion into politics on a level not seen since John F. Kennedy's bid for the White House in 1960. While Ronald Reagan was not an evangelical like Jimmy Carter or the Independent John Anderson, all three presidential candidates identified as “born-again” Christians and readily touted their religious credentials when addressing social issues in an appeal to the increasingly influential Christian conservative constituency. Jerry Falwell and Moral Majority had been a visible presence at the Republican Convention and Religious Right organizations representing roughly ten million members were highly active throughout the election, particularly through their voter-drives. Joining Falwell and his group in their efforts to defeat liberal candidates and elect conservative Republicans to office were Pat Robertson, Tim LaHaye, James Dobson, and numerous others.⁶⁹⁵

In what could only be described as a “conservative sweep,” the Republican Party regained control of the Senate for the first time in over two decades (picking up twelve seats) and made substantial gains in the House (picking up thirty-three seats), turning out several prominent liberals, many of whom had been

⁶⁹⁵ Bruce Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition: The Reagan Campaigns and White Evangelicals* (New York: P. Lang, 1994), 29; Randall Balmer, *Religion in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 100-101.

targeted by the Religious Right, and electing some strong conservatives in their place.⁶⁹⁶ More importantly, where Barry Goldwater had failed, Ronald Reagan prevailed, defeating the more moderate Jimmy Carter - and in decisive fashion, taking 44 states (including the entire South, save for Carter's home state of Georgia) and roughly 51% of the popular vote to Carter's 41% (Anderson took about 7%).⁶⁹⁷ If the results of the election did not signal conservatism's triumph, it certainly marked a shift away from the liberalism that had dominated the mid-late twentieth century toward a more modern conservative consensus. Reagan's two terms in office would go on to help reshape the country's political and socio-cultural landscape, even if it failed in dismantling the liberal order, so much so that writers would refer to this new zeitgeist as the "Reagan era," or the "age of Reagan."⁶⁹⁸

One of the most important elements of this shift was the fusion of conservative religion and politics. Jimmy Carter may have "successfully reawakened" a simmering "faith-based politics" in the mid-1970s, as Andrew R. Flint and Joy Porter have argued, but it was Reagan who legitimized that presence in the public-political discourse.⁶⁹⁹ As the journalist Haynes Johnson later observed: "it was through the conjunction of the televangelists and the presidency of Ronald Reagan, that religion and politics

⁶⁹⁶ Marshall Ingwerson, "Post-election Roundup," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 10, 1980, 2; Donald T. Critchlow, *The Conservative Ascendancy: How the GOP Right Made Political History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2007), 181-182; Matthew C. Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1989), 49.

⁶⁹⁷ Jeffrey D. Howison, *The 1980 Presidential Election: Ronald Reagan and the Shaping of the American Conservative Movement* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 110-111; Stephen D. Johnson and Joseph B. Tamney, "The Christian Right and the 1980 Presidential Election," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21, no. 2 (June 1982): 125.

⁶⁹⁸ On Reagan's influence, see, for example: Steven F. Hayward, *The Age of Reagan: the Fall of the Old Liberal Order, 1964-1980* (Roseville, CA: Forum, 2001); John Ehrman, *The Eighties: America in the Age of Reagan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Michael Schaller, *Right Turn: American Life in the Reagan-Bush Era, 1980-1992* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Robert Collins, *Transforming America: Politics and Culture During the Reagan Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974-2008* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008); Will Bunch, *Tear Down This Myth: How the Reagan Legacy Has Distorted Our Politics and Haunts Our Future* (New York: Free Press 2009); and David Sirota, *Back to Our Future: How the 1980s Explain the World We Live in Now – Our Culture, Our Politics, Our Everything* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2011).

⁶⁹⁹ Andrew R. Flint and Joy Porter, "Jimmy Carter: The Re-emergence of Faith-Based Politics and the Abortion Rights Issue," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (March 2005): 28.

combined into a new and disturbing phenomenon in American life.”⁷⁰⁰ Indeed, while the economy most heavily influenced the majority of American voters, Donald Critchlow, among others, has persuasively argued that “key social issues,” particularly abortion and school prayer, “played an integral role in Reagan’s election and the rightward shift in American politics.”⁷⁰¹

Evangelicals and fundamentalists, while not responsible for Reagan’s victory, had nonetheless become an important Republican constituency. Sixty-seven percent of evangelicals supported Reagan in 1980, an increase of roughly sixteen percent over that of Gerald Ford in 1976.⁷⁰² Jerry Falwell called Reagan’s 1980 election “the greatest day for the cause of conservatism and American morality in my adult life.”⁷⁰³ Dr. James Dobson, a well-known Los Angeles psychologist and evangelical author of a series of books and seminars on marriage and family, proclaimed that “Had we not been Baptists we would have danced in the streets.”⁷⁰⁴ Dobson, who Falwell later referred to as the movement’s “rising star,” would go on to become one of the Religious Right’s most prominent leaders.⁷⁰⁵ Four years later, when Reagan was re-elected in a landslide, winning 49 states, evangelical support increased to 76%.⁷⁰⁶ The Lynchburg pastor expressed satisfaction that the president “had been faithful to the conservative agenda,” while Pat Robertson suggested that he was “probably the most evangelical president we have had since the founding fathers.”⁷⁰⁷ Christian conservatives put a great deal of faith in Ronald Reagan.

⁷⁰⁰ Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History: America in the Reagan Years* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 203, also see 197-198.

⁷⁰¹ D. T. Critchlow, “Mobilizing Women: The ‘Social Issues,’” in W. E. Brownlee and H. D. Graham, ed., *The Reagan Presidency: Pragmatic Conservatism and Its Legacies* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 293.

⁷⁰² Corwin Smidt, “Evangelicals and the 1984 Election: Continuity or Change,” *American Politics Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1987): 431.

⁷⁰³ Jerry Falwell quoted in “The Moral Majority Claims Big Victory,” *The Washington Post*, Nov 6, 1980, C3.

⁷⁰⁴ James Dobson quoted in Flint and Porter, “Jimmy Carter: The Re-emergence of Faith-Based Politics and the Abortion Rights Issue,” 47.

⁷⁰⁵ Jerry Falwell quoted in Laura Sessions Stepp, “Falwell Says Moral Majority to Be Dissolved,” *The Washington Post*, June 12, 1989, A11. On James Dobson, also see Dale Buss, *Family Man: The Biography of Dr. James Dobson* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2005).

⁷⁰⁶ Smidt, “Evangelicals and the 1984 Election: Continuity or Change,” 431 (Roughly 62% of non-evangelicals voted for Reagan in 1980, and 61% in 1984).

⁷⁰⁷ Jerry Falwell, *Jerry Falwell: An Autobiography* (Lynchburg, VA: Liberty House Publishers, 1997), 405; Pat Robertson quoted in Gary Scott Smith, *Faith and the presidency: from George Washington to George W. Bush* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 337.

They believed that he would give them back their country from the left-wing forces that had undermined its conservative values. They expected great things from the president. What did they receive?

While the prevailing view among scholars is that Reagan did very little for the Religious Right, other than provide symbolic rhetoric, the president, in fact, did a great deal for Christian conservatives. He rewarded their support by advancing the movement and its social agenda (also referred to as the “moral agenda”) in several ways. The administration appointed a number of individuals, if only a handful of evangelicals, sympathetic to the moral agenda, who served as valuable allies to the Religious Right. Included in this group were, for example, Gary Bauer (Policy Analysis and Department of Education), William Bennett (Secretary of Education), Bob Billings (Assistant Secretary of Education for Nonpublic Schools), Morton Blackwell (Special Assistant to the President for, among other things, Religious Outreach), Stephen H. Galebach (Office of Policy Development), Dee Jepsen (Office of Public Liaison: Special Assistant to the President for Women), C. Everett Koop (Surgeon General), Carolyn Sundseth (Office of Public Liaison), James Watt (Secretary of the Interior), and Faith Whittlesey (Office of Public Liaison: Assistant to the President for Public Liaison and Director of the Office of Public Liaison, among other positions).⁷⁰⁸ The White House also named influential Religious and New Right leaders to various administration-related committees. For example, the director of the National Pro-Family Coalition, Conaught (Connie) Marshner - a Catholic pro-family activist, much like Phyllis Schlafly, associated with several conservative groups - was chosen to head the Family Policy Advisory Board, while James Dobson sat on the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁸ See for example, Lynn Rosellini, “How Conservatives View U.S. Posts,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1982, A16; Charles R. Babcock, “Bob Billings: Christian Right’s Inside Man,” *The Washington Post*, March 25, 1982, A29; “James Watt & the Puritan Ethic,” *The Washington Post*, May 24, 1981, L5; James Conaway, “James Watt, In the Right with the Lord,” *The Washington Post*, April 27, 1983, B1. For a more detailed description of the position/s these individuals held in the administration, see <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/document-collection/white-house-staff-and-office-inventories>.

⁷⁰⁹Article, Jim Castelli, “Panel Urges Reagan to Name Family Policy Czar,” *Washington Star*, November 22, 1980, folder “Carl A. Anderson (1 of 2),” box Series I, PSI (3 of 9) - Pro-Life (4 of 6) no. 21, Morton Blackwell Files, RRL; Letter, James Dobson to Patrick Buchanan, March 18, 1986, and letter, James Dobson to “Dear Friends and Colleagues,” March 18, 1986, ID# 414017, folder “PU Publications, 412000 - 416236,” box PU 405098-42599 no. 24, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography: Comments on Pornographic

In terms of policy, the administration relentlessly opposed federal spending on abortion, both domestically and abroad, and passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (E.R.A.), while supporting measures that promoted school prayer and the family, restricted homosexuals' civil rights, and banned pornography. Christian conservatives were also among the strongest champions of limited government (when it suited them), free enterprise (particularly small business), and anticommunism, the latter of which suggested support for a strong and sometimes interventionist military.⁷¹⁰ Evangelicals and fundamentalists, such as Jerry Falwell, defended these positions by fusing religion, capitalism, nationalism, and national security. "The free-enterprise system is clearly outlined in the Book of Proverbs," Falwell wrote. Arguing that "ownership of property" and "competition in business" were "biblical," he suggested that "Ambitious and successful business management is clearly outlined as part of God's plan for His people."⁷¹¹ Having linked capitalism with scripture, Falwell invoked biblical prophecy and warned that the Soviets' single aim was "to destroy capitalistic society" and "the American way of life." "Disarmament," he declared, was "suicide."⁷¹² Given these attitudes, Falwell and the

Materials in Category 111, James Dobson, PH.D., undated, ID# 414017, folder "PU Publications, 412000 - 416236," box PU 405098-42599 no. 24, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library; Letter, James Dobson to Ronald Reagan, May 27, 1987, ID# 493348, folder "PU Publications (492000-493499, box PU 478000-493499 no. 28, WHORM: Subject File, RRL. On the Pornography Commission, also see Jonathan Yardley, "The Porn Commission's Hidden Agenda," *The Washington Post*, July 14, 1986, C2. For a brief overview of Connie Marshner and her early activism, see William C. Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*. (New York: Broadway Books, 1996), 174-177, 180-184, 187; and Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 135-136, 170.

⁷¹⁰ Eric Robert Crouse. *The Cross and Reaganomics: Conservative Christians Defending Ronald Reagan* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), 67, 129-130, 132-133; A major report commissioned by the Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company revealed that the strongest supporters of American military dominance were those with the strongest religious beliefs. See Richard J. Cattani, "Moral issues foremost with American voters," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 31, 1981, 8.

⁷¹¹ Jerry Falwell, *Listen, America!* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980), 9-13, quotes on 13. (With some irony, Falwell later chastises those whose priorities have been corrupted through the manifestations of the capitalist system, arguing "It is no wonder that we see materialism on every hand today. People are living and dying for money." See 63-64.). On fundamentalists' position regarding the military, also see "The Secular Humanistic World View Versus the Christian World View and The Biblical Perspectives on Military Preparedness: a speech by Francis A. Schaeffer," June 22, 1982, folder "Dr. Francis Schaeffer," box OA Morton Blackwell Files, Series III: Religion Liaison, Religious Correspondence (6 of 8) – Jimmy Swaggert Ministries no. 4., RRL.

⁷¹² Robert Scheer, "Rev. Jerry Falwell: The Prophet of 'Worldly Methods,'" *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1981, 17; quotes taken from Falwell, *Listen, America!*, 10, 11. On the relationship between evangelicals and capitalism, also see Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009).

Religious Right were ardent supporters of Reagan's economic and early foreign policies, significantly his harsh rhetoric when it came to the Soviet Union and détente.⁷¹³

On the judicial front the administration took extraordinary steps by intervening in several Supreme Court cases in support of Christian conservative issues, significantly tax credits and abortion. More importantly, Reagan began to seed the federal courts with conservatives, naming more judges, including three Supreme Court justices (the ultra-conservative Antonin Scalia and the less ideological, but still consistently conservative Sandra Day O'Connor and Anthony Kennedy), to the bench than any previous president, beginning a shift toward a more right-wing majority in the judiciary.⁷¹⁴ Paul Weyrich, an early Reagan supporter who later became one of his harshest critics on the right, ultimately acknowledged that the president “addressed the problems flowing from judicial activism by shifting the judiciary toward restraint.”⁷¹⁵ In Congress the administration provided support in the form of proposed legislation, through the exertion of pressure on members of the House and Senate, and by pushing the social agenda in Reagan's public speeches.

⁷¹³ Michael S. Winters, *God's Right Hand: How Jerry Falwell Made God a Republican and Baptized the American Right* (New York: Harper One, 2012), 162-163; also see Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001, c1991), 241-242.

⁷¹⁴ Warren Richey, “Questionnaire to nominee for federal judgeship sparks debate,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 8, 1985, 3, 4; Curtis J. Sitomer, “Reagan’s judicial legacy will linger long” *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 16, 1985, 23, 24; Charlotte Saikowski, “Reagan’s policy stamp,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 19, 1986, 1; Linda Greenhouse, “The Year the Court Turned Right,” *New York Times*, July 7, 1989, A1, A10; Also see, Matthew Avery Sutton, “Reagan, Religion, and the Culture Wars of the 1980s,” in *A Companion to Ronald Reagan*, ed. Andrew L. Johns (Oxford: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2015), 214-215; Richard Reeves, *President Reagan: The Triumph of Imagination* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 460; William E. Pemberton, *Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan* (Armonk, N.Y.: ME Sharpe, Inc., 1997), 147-148; Hugh Heclo, “The Mixed Legacies of Ronald Reagan,” in *The Enduring Reagan*, ed. Charles W. Dunn (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 27.

⁷¹⁵ Paul Weyrich, “The Cultural Right’s Hot New Agenda,” *The Washington Post*, May 4, 1988, C4. New Right leaders, like Weyrich Richard Viguerie, and Howard Phillips were initially supportive of Reagan, but unlike most Religious Right leaders (Pat Robertson being an exception), they could also be more critical of the administration, particularly by his second term. Weyrich, for his part, became completely disillusioned with Reagan by the end of his presidency. Also see, for example, Paul M. Weyrich, “Reagan’s Illusory Revolution,” *The Washington Post*, August 30, 1987, C1, C2; On Viguerie’s and Phillips disappointment, see Richard Viguerie, “What Reagan Revolution?,” *The Washington Post*, August 21, 1988, C2; and Lloyd Grove, “The Graying of Richard Viguerie: As the New Right Totters, the Direct-Mail Wizard Casts About for...,” *The Washington Post*, June 29, 1989, D1, D4; Reagan references their disappointment in his diary entries. See for example, Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries* vol. I, ed. Douglas Brinkley (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 113, 149; and Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries* vol. II, ed. Douglas Brinkley (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 776, 867.

Tony Dolan, one of Reagan's chief speechwriters, argued that "in our form of government where we do not have a parliamentary majority ... you have to mobilize public opinion to make the government work in the direction the president wants and Ronald Reagan - or any president for that matter - does that through his speeches."⁷¹⁶ In his exploration of agendas and public policy, John Kingdon has suggested that presidential speeches are an effective method for acclimatizing the general public to an idea, and perhaps none is as important than the State of the Union. Relatively speaking, very few issues are raised in the annual address to the nation, and various interests "all vie for a place in the message." To be among them speaks to their importance in terms of the national agenda.⁷¹⁷ That the president raised school prayer and tuition tax credits in 1983 and called for an end to abortion in 1984, while including these three issues in every subsequent State of the Union, was of considerable significance.⁷¹⁸

Most importantly, while Reagan was never able to popularize the movement, its leadership, or even much of its "moral agenda," with the majority of the American people, he succeeded in mainstreaming the Religious Right and their social issues in politics and the public discourse.⁷¹⁹ In the process, the president made his most significant contribution to their cause by bestowing upon these activists a valuable asset sought by every interest group – credibility.⁷²⁰ Reagan welcomed Religious Right influence in the Republican Party, actively supported its leadership and their objectives, provided unparalleled access to the White House while shutting out mainline churches, and laced his speeches, addresses, and

⁷¹⁶ Quoted in David Mervin, "The Bully Pulpit, II," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 1, *The Bully Pulpit and the Reagan Presidency* (Winter, 1995), 20

⁷¹⁷ John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, (New York: Longdon, 2003), 135, 188.

⁷¹⁸ Ronald Reagan, "Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union (Jan. 25, 1983), *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1984*, vol. 1 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1985), 106-107; Ronald Reagan, "Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union (Jan. 25, 1984)," <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/12584e>.

⁷¹⁹ Polls showed a large majority of Americans held unfavourable views of Religious Right groups like Moral Majority and their leadership. See, for example, Timothy Harper, "Poll Backs Separation of Church and State," *The Washington Post*, August 21, 1981, B14; "Moral Majority (Survey #187-G), January 24," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1982*, ed. Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1983), 22, 23; Thomas B. Edsall, "'Moral Majority' Name Changed to Boost Image," *The Washington Post*, January 4, 1986, A3; "Television Evangelists and Ministers (Survey #274-G), May 14," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1987*, ed. Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1988), 106, 108, 110, 109, 112-114.

⁷²⁰ One scholar has suggested that Reagan's role in mainstreaming the Religious Right "was of central importance to the burgeoning" movement. See Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 51.

remarks to the media with (largely Christian) religious rhetoric. Jerry Falwell acknowledged the strides made under Reagan when he remarked: “We were on the outside looking in a few years ago and by necessity had to knock the door down. ... Today we are sitting down at the table talking. We're on the inside today.”⁷²¹ One writer suggested that not only were Christian conservatives at the table, “they were seated in the center of the hall, and they set the agenda.”⁷²² Indeed, two scholars concluded that Reagan’s “embrace of the New Christian Right has, in effect, rewritten the book on who is ‘The Establishment.’”⁷²³

For half a century, conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists (and the issues they championed) had been “considered on the margins of American society” - renounced by some politicians as religious extremists. But by the mid-late 1980s the Religious Right had become a nationally known, “politically effective” and experienced force which exerted “significant influence,” largely through the Republican Party.⁷²⁴ Political scientist Bruce Nesmith has pointedly noted that during and since the Reagan administrations “religious-related issues have prominently occupied all three branches of the federal government and many state governments as well.”⁷²⁵ Many writers, including conservative political activist/consultant F. Clifton White, sociologist Jerome Himmelstein, and retired Admiral and Naval Chaplain Dr. Richard G. Hutcheson have argued that the religious dimension is “inherent” in the type of contemporary conservatism as expressed in the Reagan presidency.⁷²⁶ Reagan seemed to suggest as much in a speech at the 1981 Conservative Political Action Conference Dinner: “We do not have a separate

⁷²¹ Jerry Falwell quoted in Myra MacPherson, “Falwell: The Genesis and Gospel of the Reverend of the Right,” *The Washington Post*, September 26, 1984, D9.

⁷²² Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History*, 210.

⁷²³ Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson D. Shupe, *Televangelism: Power and Politics on God’s Frontier* (New York: Henry Holdt, 1988), 35-36.

⁷²⁴ Ronald E. Hopson and Donald R. Smith, “Changing Fortunes: An Analysis of Christian Right Ascendance within American Political Discourse,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38, no. 1 (March 1999): 2.

⁷²⁵ Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 137; also see Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011), 405. On the Religious Right’s influence on state politics, also see Kimberly H. Conger, *The Christian Right in Republican State Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁷²⁶ F. Clifton White and William J. Gill, *Why Reagan Won: a Narrative History of the Conservative Movement 1964-1981* (Chicago, IL.: Regnery Gateway, 1981), 30; Jerome Himmelstein, “The New Right,” in *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation*, eds. Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow (Hawthorne, N.Y.: Aldine Publishing Co., 1983), 15-30; Richard G. Hutcheson, *God in the White House: How Religion has Changed the Modern Presidency* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 173-175.

social agenda, a separate economic agenda, and a separate foreign policy agenda. We have one agenda. Just as surely as we seek to put our financial house in order and rebuild our nation's defenses, so too we seek to protect the unborn, to end manipulation of school children by utopian planners and permit the acknowledgment of a Supreme Being in our classroom."⁷²⁷

Indeed, the Religious Right's agenda has been incorporated into the modern conservative movement, and by extension, the Republican Party. Religious and secular issues germane to the right - particularly abortion, school prayer, tax relief for Christian schools and their patrons, neo-liberal economics, limited government, and an aggressive foreign policy centred on anti-communism - were woven together through the post-World War II period and solidified through the 1980s.⁷²⁸ These issues were summed up in moral terms that resonated with the American public, significantly "traditional values" and "family values" (first introduced by individuals like Phyllis Schlafly), which Reagan helped inject into the American political lexicon and which those on the right continue to lay sole claim to.⁷²⁹ And while previous presidents had expressed religious sentiments and evoked biblical references, no recent one had done so on the level that Reagan did - at times sounding more like a preacher than a president.⁷³⁰ He "spoke the language of evangelicalism fluently," observes Matthew Avery Sutton.⁷³¹ This was no accident. As Reagan wrote in a

⁷²⁷ Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Conservative Political Action Conference Dinner, March 20, 1981," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 278-279

⁷²⁸ Both the 1980 and 1984 GOP platforms called for an end to abortion, stressed the family and traditional values, supported voluntary prayer in schools, tuition tax credits, conservative economic policies, and an aggressive foreign policy. See Republican Party Platform of 1980, July 15, 1980, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1980; and Republican Party Platform of 1984, August 20, 1984, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1984.

⁷²⁹ Reagan championed "traditional values" and made the family, which he referred to as "the cornerstone of American society," a central focus of his domestic policy, reflecting the 1980 and 1984 Republican Party Platforms, which mention family 40 and 44 times respectively. See Republican Party platforms for 1980 and 1984; Quote from President's Proclamation: Family Reunion Month (1984), June 14, 1984, folder "PJR/Family Reunion Month and National Family Week Proclamations (OA11412)," box OA 11412 no. 4, Peter. J. Rusthoven Files, RRL.

⁷³⁰ Indeed, in his February 6, 1986 diary entry, Reagan noted that "Billy Graham called me a Pastor to the Nation," following the president's speech at the National Prayer Breakfast. See Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries* vol. II, ed. Douglas Brinkley, 569.

⁷³¹ Sutton, "Reagan, Religion, and the Culture Wars of the 1980s," 209.

letter to one Christian leader: “Teddy Roosevelt once called the presidency a bully pulpit. I intend to use it to the best of my ability to serve the Lord.”⁷³²

Research has demonstrated that Christian conservative rhetoric has integrated with political discourse, and subsequently suggested that the movement’s success should not be measured solely by whether its “religious” policies are legislated into law, but rather “by the extent to which their ideas and meanings are absorbed within the larger culture and begin to define the ‘mainstream.’”⁷³³ The mainstream acceptance, if not always endorsement, of the Religious Right’s agenda and the normalization of the rhetoric that surrounds it has been, perhaps, their most enduring accomplishment. Reagan’s role in helping to achieve this was not insignificant. As Kevin Coe and David Domke have persuasively argued, “Ronald Reagan’s presidency was a watershed moment for religious discourse in American politics.”⁷³⁴

Reagan made such weighty statements as: “since the beginning of civilization millions and millions of laws have been written. ... And yet, taken all together, all those millions and millions of laws have not improved on the Ten Commandments one bit.” And when he declared that “Within the covers of that single Book are all the answers to all the problems that face us today,” the president sounded a lot like Jerry Falwell, who wrote that “The answer to every one of our nation's dilemmas is a spiritual one.”⁷³⁵ In what became known as the “Evil Empire” speech, the president warned that “secularism” is challenging the Godly foundation on which “our very civilization is based.” “Freedom prospers,” he said, “when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged.” Reagan further declared, “There is sin and evil in the world, and we're enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our

⁷³² Letter, Ronald Reagan to Greg Brezina (Communicating Christian Concepts, Inc), October 25, 1982, box RM Religious Matters 000001 - 250000, no. 1, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁷³³ Hopson and Smith, “Changing Fortunes,” 10.

⁷³⁴ Kevin Coe and David Domke, “Petitioners or Prophets? Presidential Discourse, God, and the Ascendancy of Religious Conservatives,” *Journal of Communication* 56 (2006): 321.

⁷³⁵ “Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters, January 30, 1984,” <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/13084b>; Falwell, *Listen, America!*, 81.

might.”⁷³⁶ Framing his policies in what journalist Bill Peterson observed were “almost moralistic and religious terms,” one prominent American historian, Henry Steele Commager, suggested that “no other presidential speech has ever so flagrantly allied the government with religion.”⁷³⁷ Reagan decreed 1983 the “Year of the Bible,” proclaimed a National Sanctity of Human Life Day in every year of his second term, introduced the phrase “God bless America” into the presidential lexicon, and, when compared to Franklin D. Roosevelt through the evangelical Jimmy Carter, more than doubled the number of references to “God” per presidential address.⁷³⁸ Reagan also displayed, what scholars have termed “prophetic” posturing, implying “a knowledge of God's wishes, desires or intentions,” in 47% of his speeches, compared to 0% for previous Democratic presidents and 5% for pre-Reagan Republicans.⁷³⁹

Reagan and Christian conservatives did not always share the same understanding of the Christian religion and God, but on the surface, they seemed to speak the same language regarding moral, social, and cultural expectations. Gary Wills has suggested that “Reagan's immersion in church life and discipline throughout his entire youth and early manhood give him an ease and familiarity in dealing with modern evangelicals.” As he points out, “They are speaking to, and he is speaking from, his roots when they use language partly descended from the 1801 revival in Cane Ridge, Kentucky,” a seminal event in the history of the Christian Church.⁷⁴⁰ The point is, as one journalist articulated, “Whether or not the

⁷³⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida (March 8, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 360, 361, 362.

⁷³⁷ Bill Peterson, “Reagan’s Use of Moral Language to Explain Policies Draws Fire,” *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1983, A15.

⁷³⁸ Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5018 - Year of the Bible, 1983 (Feb. 3, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 179; Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5292 - National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 1985 (Jan. 14, 1985),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1985*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986), 39; Frederick Stecker, *The Podium, the Pulpit, and the Republicans: How Presidential Candidates use Religious Language in American Political Debate* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), 49; Kevin Coe and David Domke, *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 61 (Note: While it seems commonplace today, prior to 1980, “God bless America” had been used only once in a major national address by Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal); Coe and Domke, “Petitioners or Prophets?,” 317-318.

⁷³⁹ Coe and Domke, “Petitioners or Prophets?,” 315, 316, 320.

⁷⁴⁰ Gary Wills, “Nelle's Boy: Ronald Reagan and the Disciples of Christ,” *The Christian Century* 103, no. 34 (November 12, 1986): 1006.

president sincerely believes his statements is irrelevant.” His comments, the writer continued, “can be seen as nothing short of politicizing the Gospel.”⁷⁴¹ Matthew Moen, setting intention aside, suggested that “the president came to embody fundamentalist Christianity in a real, personal sense.”⁷⁴² Indeed, Reagan was referred to by some as “the most evangelical president since the Founding Fathers.”⁷⁴³ Ultimately, Reagan fostered, largely through rhetoric, an environment conducive to those values promoted by the likes of Jerry Falwell, Phyllis Schlafly, and Pat Robertson. As Falwell remarked, “while many would not align themselves with Moral Majority or any group, they are voting at the polls, doing what we’d have hoped.”⁷⁴⁴

Reagan was steadfast in his defense of evangelicals’ right to participate in politics.⁷⁴⁵ As he made clear on one occasion: “The truth is politics and morality are inseparable. And as morality’s foundation is religion, religion and politics are necessarily related. We need religion as a guide. We need it because we are imperfect, and our government needs the church, because only those humble enough to admit they’re sinners can bring to democracy the tolerance it requires in order to survive.”⁷⁴⁶ But Americans had mixed feelings about the intermingling of religion and politics. They were split down the middle as to whether “churches and members of the clergy should express their views on current social questions,” but 66 percent opposed their involvement in politics and 71 percent opposed “political activity based on religious conviction.”⁷⁴⁷ Many of these citizens expressed concern over Christian conservatives’ political activism, some levelling charges against evangelical leaders and Reagan for transgressing the line between church

⁷⁴¹ William P. McKenzie, “Politics and Scripture,” *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1984, A13.

⁷⁴² Moen, *The Christian Right*, 54.

⁷⁴³ Kathy Sawyer, “Christian Right Takes Its Place at Center Stage,” *The Washington Post*, December 25, 1984, A14.

⁷⁴⁴ Jerry Falwell quoted in Samuel G. Freedman, “Back in the Spotlight, Falwell Retains Long-Held Goals for God and Country,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1987, A18.

⁷⁴⁵ Howell Raines, “Reagan Backs Evangelicals in Their Political Activities,” *The New York Times*, Aug 23, 1980, 8

⁷⁴⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at an Ecumenical prayer Breakfast in Dallas, Texas, August 23, 1984,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 1167. On another occasion, Reagan assured a group of religious broadcasters that he did “not agree with those who accuse you of trying to impose your views on others.” See Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters, Feb. 9, 1982,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, vol. I, 158.

⁷⁴⁷ Data taken from an Associated Press-NBC News poll, cited in Timothy Harper, “Poll Backs Separation of Church and State,” *The Washington Post*, August 21, 1981, B14.

and state.⁷⁴⁸ Congressional candidate Howard O. Campbell wrote Reagan conveying his deep concern that the president appeared to be “heartily endorsing the concept that the United States is or should be a Christian nation.”⁷⁴⁹ One member of the American Jewish Committee warned that the Religious Right “may succeed in legitimating and legalizing the notion that the Constitution and the political process may be used to institutionalize Christianity.”⁷⁵⁰ The executive director of the American Jewish Congress, after arguing that the Religious Right had “placed themselves at the very heart of the conservative movement in America,” charged Reagan with sanctioning the take-over of the Republican Party.⁷⁵¹ Even strict fundamentalists spoke out. Bob Jones Jr. railed against Falwell’s involvement in politics, calling it ““spiritual fornication,”” while labelling the Lynchburg pastor “the most dangerous man in America.”⁷⁵²

The most highly publicized of these battles was waged by television producer and liberal activist Norman Lear and his organization People For the American Way (PFAW), who engaged with the Religious Right, particularly Falwell and Moral Majority, over religion's role in politics and society as well as single issue campaigns such as those against television programming.⁷⁵³ Reagan's ties to Falwell

⁷⁴⁸ See for example, Letter, Jeff T. Burke to Ronald Reagan, August 22, 1984, ID# 245864, and letter, Ambassador Robert Yost (retired) to Reagan, August 27, 1984, ID# 245818, folder “Religious Matters” (235001-250000),” box RM Religious Matters 000001 - 250000, no. 1, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; Bill Peterson, “Reagan’s Use of Moral Language to Explain Policies Draws Fire,” *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1983, A15; Marjorie Hyer, “Reagan’s Declaration On Bible Spurs Suit,” *The Washington Post*, Nov 26, 1983, D14; William P. McKenzie, “Politics and Scripture,” A13; Joseph Kraft, “Elmer Gantry Time,” *The Washington Post*, September 6, 1984, A21; Charlotte Saikowski, “Reagan softens rhetoric, not stance, on matters religious,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Sep 7, 1984, 3, 4; Steven R. Weisman, “Reagan Fails to Allay Worry at Jewish Parley,” *The New York Times*, Sep 7, 1984, A14; Godfrey Sperling Jr., “Church-state: no longer a burning issue?,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec 4, 1984, 34.

⁷⁴⁹ Letter, Howard O. Campbell (Candidate for Congress-6th District, Indiana) to Ronald Reagan, undated, ID# 247183, folder “RM Religious Matters (235001 – 250000),” box RM Religious Matters 000001 - 250000, no. 1, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁷⁵⁰ Marjorie Hyer, “AJC Speakers Fearful of Efforts to Institutionalize Christianity,” *The Washington Post*, May 22, 1981, C2.

⁷⁵¹ Rabbi Henry Siegman quoted in Marjorie Hyer, “Jewish Leader Attacks Reagan-Falwell Link,” *The Washington Post*, Oct 31, 1984, A6.

⁷⁵² Bob Jones quoted in “Christian Soldiers March to Different Drummers,” *The Washington Post*, December 27, 1984, A12; also see Walt Harrington, “What Hath Falwell Wrought?,” *The Washington Post*, July 24, 1988, 26.

⁷⁵³ See for example, “Falwell Commercials Aimed to Counter Lear,” *The Washington Post*, July 25, 1981, B4; “TV Ads Attack Moral Majority, Other Groups For Intolerance,” *The Washington Post*, October 9, 1982, B6; William Bole, “Lear Group Distributes TV Spots Responding to Attacks By Falwell,” *The Washington Post*, August 10, 1985, D10; Howard Kurtz, “Norman Lear’s Crusade Widens,” *The Washington Post*, Feb 3, 1986, A3. On Falwell’s war on television programming, see, for example, Tom Shales, “Sex on TV,” *The Washington Post*, December 7,

and his moral agenda prompted Lear to initiate correspondence with the president. The television producer questioned Reagan's support for the Religious Right and their "Christian Nation Movement," while expressing concern that he was blurring the line between church and state by his "assumption of a governmental role of Evangelist-in-Chief."⁷⁵⁴ Others suggested that evangelicals held undue sway over the White House, with one journalist writing that "Falwell himself has been transformed into a leader in the Reagan administration."⁷⁵⁵

In 1983, one incident, in which Falwell gave the clear impression that he was receiving National Security briefings, drew a particularly strong response from the public. Several letters made their way to the White House, many through their representatives in Congress. One concerned citizen expressed "shock," calling the administration's actions "outrageous" and accusing it of lawlessness.⁷⁵⁶ Administration correspondence reveals that no such consultations had taken place, although Falwell had been "briefed informally on defense and arms control issues."⁷⁵⁷ Another episode involved administration assistance for one of Falwell's trips to Central America.⁷⁵⁸ While the suggestion by Lear and others that Reagan had over-stepped his bounds by too closely aligning himself with the Religious Right and its agenda are not without merit, scholars have shown many of the charges leveled at the time to be largely

1980, H1, H5; Joel Swerdlow, "The Great American Crusade in Televisionland" *The Washington Post*, June 7, 1981, K1, K5; Tom Shales, "Television Boycott Dropped," *The Washington Post*, June 30, 1981, C1, C9.

⁷⁵⁴ Letter, Norman Lear to Ronald Reagan, May 7, 1984, and letter, Norman Lear to Ronald Reagan, June 15, 1984, ID #229746, folder "RM 030 Religions (200000 - End)," box RM 020 (335000) - RM 031 (339999) no. 6, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁷⁵⁵ Bill Peterson, "Reagan's Use of Moral Language to Explain Policies Draws Fire," *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1983, A15; Bill Peterson, "Poll of Evangelicals Finds Glenn Matching Reagan," *The Washington Post*, October 14, 1983, A2; Quote in Myra MacPherson, "Falwell: The Genesis and Gospel of the Reverend of the Right," *The Washington Post*, September 26, 1984, D9.

⁷⁵⁶ Donald T. Francis to Congressman Stan Parris, June 3, 1983, ID# 173168, box MC 003 Briefings-Conferences 171600-175106 no. 22, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library; also see, for example, letter, Riley and Linda Joslyn Bishop to Senator Nancy Kassebaum, August 22, 1982 (given the date of the incident and Kassebaum's subsequent correspondence with the White House on the matter, this is likely a typo, and should be August 22, 1983), ID# 162437, box MC 003 Briefings-Conferences 156527-165255 no. 20, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library. For reference, see letter, Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum to Ken Duberstein, September 13, 1983, ID# 162437, RRL.

⁷⁵⁷ Memo, Paul Thompson and Sven Kraemer to Robert Kimmit (Executive Secretary, NSA), November 22, 1983, and letter, Robert Kimmitt to Congressman Stan Parris, November 22, 1983, ID# 173168, box MC 003 Briefings-Conferences 171600-175106 no. 22, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁷⁵⁸ See, for example, letter, Reverend Dr. M.J. Timbs to Ronald Reagan, September 8, 1983, ID# 178347, box FO008 (094673-185372), WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

unfounded. Falwell and others were not directing government policy from the offices of Moral Majority or Christian Voice.

Still, while some aspects of the relationship were exaggerated, Religious Right leaders, particularly Jerry Falwell, were clearly not without influence, perhaps most visibly showcased at the 1984 Republican Convention. Eclipsing their presence in 1980, fundamentalists and evangelicals dominated the event, which began with a prayer by James Robison and closed with a benediction performed by Falwell. In between, the discussion revolved around the moral agenda, significantly abortion and school prayer. And when Reagan was inaugurated for the second time, Falwell was in attendance, standing next to the vice-president.⁷⁵⁹

Religious Right leadership enjoyed friendly relationships with members of the administration, including many meetings and interviews, some with the president and other high-ranking officials.⁷⁶⁰ Reagan, for example, appeared on Pat Robertson's *The 700 Club* television program three times during his presidency.⁷⁶¹ There was also a great deal of correspondence between these two groups, discussing everything from social issues and foreign policy to administration and committee appointments and

⁷⁵⁹ Dudley Clendinen, "TV Evangelists Assume Larger Convention Role," *New York Times*, August 19, 1984, 32; Sutton, "Reagan, Religion, and the Culture Wars of the 1980s," 212; Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History*, 209; Falwell, *Falwell*, 404.

⁷⁶⁰ See for example, Interview, Cal Thomas with George H.W. Bush, in *Moral Majority Report*, August 18, 1981, folder "Family Protection Act (4 of 5)," box Series I, Fairness II, (3 of 7) no. 9, Morton Blackwell Files, RRL; letter, James Dobson to James Baker (WH Chief of Staff), March 1, 1984 (expressing thanks for an interview), and letter, James Baker to James Dobson March 6, 1984, folder "Jim Dobson/Focus on the Family (3) OA 11694," box OA no. 6, Bruce Chapman Files, RRL (Baker addressed family values and the abortion issue in his reply to Dobson); Letter, Peb Jackson (vice -president, Focus on the Family) to Jim Cicconi (Special Assistant to the President), April 2, 1984, box RM Religious Matters RM031 340000 – RM039 End no. 7, WHORM: Subject File, RRL (expressing thanks for a meeting). Francis Schaeffer attended a private White House viewing of his son's film, *The Second American Revolution*, about the country's Judeo-Christian heritage. See White House memo, September 27, 1982, folder "Dr. Francis Schaeffer," box OA Morton Blackwell Files, Series III: Religion Liaison, Religious Correspondence (6 of 8) – Jimmy Swaggert Ministries no. 4, RRL. On meeting with Phyllis Schlafly, see, for example, Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, vol. I, ed. Douglas Brinkley, 208.

⁷⁶¹ David John Marley, "Ronald Reagan and the Splintering of the Christian Right," *Journal of Church and State* 48 (2006): 861. Robertson would begin to sour on his relationship with the president and the administration during Reagan's first term and, as a result, did not campaign for him in 1984. See Marley, 862-865.

appearances at events.⁷⁶² The administration treated inquiries and requests from Religious Right leaders seriously, responding courteously, if not always promptly. Most correspondence tended to express mutual support for each others' efforts toward advancing their shared agenda, as did letters between Reagan and those such as Falwell, Dobson, and LaHaye, which were, with few exceptions, overwhelmingly positive in nature. Falwell, who Reagan referred to as "a good friend," enjoyed the closest friendship with the president of any major Religious Right figure and their correspondence, including congratulations for personal and professional accomplishments and notes of gratitude for gifts received, bears this out.⁷⁶³ Several members of the administration, including Vice-President George Bush, made the journey to speak at Liberty College.⁷⁶⁴ When Interior Secretary James Watt appeared at the school in May 1983, the third cabinet member to do so in a matter of months, he endorsed the moral agenda and proclaimed Reverend Falwell "tremendously well-respected by the president."⁷⁶⁵ Every Republican presidential candidate

⁷⁶² See, for example, Mailgram, Jerry Falwell and Ron Godwin to Ronald Reagan, March 10, 1981, ID# 012137, and letter, E. Pendleton James (Assistant to the President for Presidential Personnel) to Jerry Falwell and Ronald Godwin, March 18, 1981, ID# 012137 folder "FG122 (Environmental Protection Agency) (008600-015999)," box FG – Federal Government FG122, Environmental Protection Agency Begin-071662 (3 of 11), no. 42; Letter, Jerry Falwell to Ronald Reagan, February 27, 1987, ID# 463699, and letter, Robert H. Tuttle (Director of Presidential Personnel) to Jerry Falwell, April 3, 1987, folder "FG128 (Federal Communications Division)," box FG – Federal Government FG128, Federal Communications Commission 459000-509999, no. 61, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; Letter, Lowell Davey (President, Bible Broadcasting Network) to Gary Bauer (Assistant to the President for Policy Development), March 7, 1982, ID# 566466, folder, "MC003 – Briefings-Conferences 566285 – 571299," box MC003 – Briefings-Conferences 561533 – 576441 no. 65, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; Letter, James C. Dobson to Dee Jepson (Special Assistant to the President), February 23, 1983, box RM Religious Matters RM031 340000 – RM039 End no. 7, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; Letter, Bob Partlow (Executive Director, Freedom Council) to Carolyn Sundseth (Associate Director Office of Public Liaison) and other related correspondence, folder "OA 13325, Freedom Council," box OA 13324-13326, Carolyn Sundseth Files, Series II no. 2, RRL.

⁷⁶³ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, vol. I, ed. Douglas Brinkley, 206; On accomplishments, see, for example, Letter, Ronald Reagan to Jerry Falwell, April 2, 1982, ID# 069808, ME0001 069684-073979 no. 18, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; Letter, Ronald Reagan to Jerry Falwell, February 1, 1984, ID# 201560, box ME002 (143918), ME002 (204057) WHORM: Subject File, RRL; and letter, Ronald Reagan to Jerry Falwell, December 14, 1987, ID# 529332, box ME001 529000-529799 no. 188, WHORM: Subject File, RRL. On gifts, see, for example, Letter, Ronald Reagan to Jerry Falwell, September 4, 1981, box GI002 (040251), GI002 (117314); Letter, Ronald Reagan to Jerry Falwell, April 27, 1983, ID# 141919, box GI002 (119361), GI002 (158877); Letter, Ronald Reagan to Jerry Falwell, March 7, 1986, and letter, Jerry and Macel Falwell to Ronald Reagan, January 24, 1986, box GI002 (251674), GI002 (395582), WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁷⁶⁴ Some of the cabinet members to speak at Liberty College included Vice President George Bush, Education Secretary William Bennett, and Attorney General Edwin Meese. See, respectively, Mary Battiata, "Bush Visits Falwell, Wins Praise, Support," *The Washington Post*, April 14, 1983, B6; Juan Williams, "Bush's Ties Taking on a More Conservative Hue," *The Washington Post*, May 15, 1983 A1, A6, A7; D'Vera Cohn, "Big Reagan Man on Campus," *The Washington Post*, April 24, 1986, C1, C5; and R.H. Melton, "Meese Sees Religious Freedom War," *The Washington Post*, May 5, 1987, B5.

⁷⁶⁵ James Watt quoted in Estes Thompson, "A Call from Watt," *The Washington Post*, May 10, 1983, B1, B6.

following Reagan would feel the need to court the evangelical vote, which included an obligatory stop at Liberty College (later Liberty University).

Falwell and Moral Majority played up their relationship with the president and other administration officials, which helped raise their public profile and standing within the movement. Other evangelical leaders, such as Jimmy Swaggart and James Dobson, took advantage of their access to the White House and did likewise.⁷⁶⁶ The links between the Reagan administration and Christian conservative leaders as well as the broader battle between the Religious Right and its detractors were thoroughly covered by the press, which kept the movement and its priority issues in the headlines and in the public-political discourse throughout the 1980s and beyond.⁷⁶⁷ Indeed, Jerry Falwell appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1985.⁷⁶⁸ But members of the Religious Right had difficulty understanding that these “inroads into the nation's systematic agenda” (i.e. political credibility, fundraising, and publicity - television, newspapers, magazine covers, etc.) did not necessarily manifest in legislative success. To be fair, this was, according to Christian Voice’s Gary Jarmin, a failing of “virtually all of the conservative lobby groups.”⁷⁶⁹ Despite their progress, the moral agenda faced serious obstacles, including the courts, opposition interest groups, and public opinion, not to mention disagreement within the movement itself.

⁷⁶⁶ See for example, Newsletter, “Brother Swaggart Visits President to Discuss New Bill on Voluntary Prayer in School,” *Update: Jimmy Swaggart Ministries* (September, 1983), and newsletter cover, *The Evangelist: The Voice of the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries*, October 1983, 15, no. 10, folder “RM 020 Prayers - Prayer Periods (180001-186999),” box RM 020 (2 of 3) no. 4, WHORM: Subject File, RRL (the cover of the newsletter pictures Reverend Jimmy Swaggart and Reagan shaking hands following a meeting on school prayer); Newsletter, *Focus on the Family: With Dr. James Dobson* (November 1985), folder “Interview - James Dobson with President 09/10/1985,” box OA 17967 no. 18, Carl Anderson Files, RRL (the cover of the newsletter features James Dobson interviewing Reagan with the caption: “Inside the White House: Exclusive Interview with President Reagan”).

⁷⁶⁷ See for example, Marjorie Hyer, “Jewish Leader Attacks Reagan-Falwell Link,” *The Washington Post*, Oct 31, 1984, A6; Curtis J. Sitomer, “Rev. William Sloane Coffin’s crusade carries on at Riverside,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Nov 2, 1983, back page; Myra MacPherson, “Falwell: The Genesis and Gospel of the Reverend of the Right,” *The Washington Post*, September 26, 1984, D9.

⁷⁶⁸ D. G. Hart. *From Billy Graham to Sarah Palin: Evangelicals and the Betrayal of American Conservatism* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2011), 121.

⁷⁶⁹ Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 155. Some members of the Religious Right, even many perhaps, anticipated their agenda would be enacted almost immediately, and were disappointed when that did not occur. To be sure, these were unrealistic expectations. It can often take a decade or more before an idea becomes an agenda issue, let alone manifests in any kind of policy or legislation. By these metrics, the Religious Right’s achievements, both in moving the public-political discourse and the legislative agenda in the Congress during the eight years of the Reagan administration ought to be considered anything but a failure. See Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 57; and Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 135.

Because politicians were influenced by all these factors, particularly their constituents, resistance could also be found in Congress.

The president can set policy, employ the bully pulpit to help shape the public discourse, and influence the legislative process, but he cannot make laws. Unfortunately for the Religious Right, most of the Congress, reflecting the general population, was not all that receptive to movement issues. With a Democratic majority in the House, which they maintained throughout Reagan's presidency, a liberal Speaker in Thomas "Tip" O'Neil (D-MA), and a party apparatus which ensured others of like-mind controlled committee chairmanships, New Right representatives, lead by individuals like Newt Gingrich (R-GA) and Bob Walker (R-PA), faced an uphill battle.⁷⁷⁰ Despite Republican success in retaking and holding the Senate until 1986, the moral agenda faced stiff resistance there as well - and not just from the Democrats. Connecticut's Lowell Weicker, one of few liberals left in the Republican Party, was an ardent opponent of the Religious Right's "social initiative" who used the filibuster to great effect.⁷⁷¹ Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) was also no friend of Falwell and the Religious Right, condemning the movement for using "religion as a basis for being for or against a political issue." Uninterested in banning abortion and preventing ratification of the ERA, Goldwater separated himself from social warriors like fellow Republican senators Jeremiah Denton (R-AL) and Jesse Helms (R-NC), who were still outnumbered by economic conservatives and moderates.⁷⁷²

⁷⁷⁰ Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 56-58, 111, 120.

⁷⁷¹ Richard L. Strout, "Emotion makes an end run around the courts," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 3, 1981, 23; Julia Malone, "Curbing court power: efforts seem stymied," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 20, 1981, 1, 15; Julia Malone, "Social legislation push by conservatives runs out of gas," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Aug 20, 1982, 5; T.R. Reid, "Senate Defeats Amendment for Prayer in Schools," *The Washington Post*, March 21, 1984, A1, A4; Julia Malone, "New Right agenda bogs down in Congress," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Sep 12, 1985, 1, back page. White House correspondence recognized Weicker's resistance to the administration's agenda. See, for example, memo, Gary Bauer to Edwin Harper, March 8, 1982, ID #079291, RRL.

⁷⁷² Fred Barbash, "Conservatives Feud in Wake of O'Connor Choice," *The Washington Post*, July 9, 1981, A1, A5; Godfrey Sperling Jr., "Goldwater takes issue with New Right politics," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 16, 1981, 3; Michael Isikoff, "D.C. Sexual Law Under Fire," *The Washington Post*, Oct 1, 1981, B1, B12; Francine Kiefer, "Barry Goldwater Remembered from Both Sides," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 1, 1998, 3; Jon Margolis, "The 2 faces of American conservatives," *Chicago Tribune*, July 12, 1981, 4; Warren Richey, "Reagan's conservative Supreme Court agenda causes stir in GOP," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Sep 6, 1985, NL6; "Helms

While the president supported the moral agenda broadly, much of it under the banner of the family, the three most prominent issues he promoted were school prayer, tax relief for Christian schools and those who attended them, and the abolishment of abortion. To the frustration of Religious Right leaders, the president, with some exceptions, said very little on these subjects during his first year in office, as the White House tackled a flailing economy. Nonetheless, the issues managed to rise to the surface of the public-political discourse. The nomination of Sandra Day O'Connor to the Supreme Court in early 1981 elevated the abortion debate. Religious and New Right leaders were initially disappointed with her nomination, but O'Connor turned out to be a generally consistent conservative vote on the court.⁷⁷³ The administration also took the unprecedented step of arguing for tuition tax credits in front of a Senate committee in June of that year, but no concerted effort toward achieving the movement's moral agenda was taken until early 1982 when the issue of tax exemption came to the fore. As early as the spring of 1976, Reagan, when asked whether he agreed with the federal government's efforts to desegregate private schools, responded "no." Elaborating on this, he reasoned that "People have a right to disagree, and I may look on disfavor myself on some people who would discriminate against anyone ... for whatever reason, whether religion or race or anything else. But I have to respect their right to be wrong."⁷⁷⁴ Reagan called for an end to the IRS non-discrimination policy during the 1980 campaign, and the Republican Party platform reflected this position: "We will halt the unconstitutional regulatory vendetta launched by Mr. Carter's IRS commissioner against independent schools."⁷⁷⁵

Preaches For Prayer at Falwell's Church," *The Washington Post*, January 31, 1983, B7; Julia Malone, "GOP taps moderate Dole for leader," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Nov 29, 1984, 1, back page.

⁷⁷³ Richard Viguerie, for example, spoke out against the O'Connor nomination and confirmation, though he eventually relented in his criticism for pragmatic reasons. Even then, Viguerie admitted that he was "very happy with this president." See Fred Barbash, "Conservatives Feud in Wake of O'Connor Choice," *The Washington Post*, July 9, 1981, A1, A5; and Clymer, "Right Wing Seeks a Shift by Reagan." Jerry Falwell, too, opposed O'Connor, calling her nomination a "mistake," even a "disaster," but later accepted the president's decision. See Bill Peterson, "Reagan Choice for Court Decried by Conservatives but Acclaimed by Liberals," *The Washington Post*, July 8, 1981, A7; and Julia Malone, "A closer look at nation's first woman high court nominee," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 8, 1981, 1.

⁷⁷⁴ Ronald Reagan quoted in George Skelton, "Reagan Opposes Force in Private School Integration," *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1976, B30.

⁷⁷⁵ 1980 Republican Party Platform, July 15, 1980, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25844>.

Despite these assertions, the Reagan administration assumed the defense of the ongoing lawsuit brought by Bob Jones University and the Goldsboro Christian schools. Behind the scenes, however, discussions were taking place with New Right and Religious Right leaders and their allies in Congress. In fact, a group of Senators were busy lobbying the government as early as the spring of 1981. While officials insisted that these efforts played no role in their policy approach to the issue of the IRS and tax exemption, the evidence suggests a close relationship between the two.⁷⁷⁶ Senator Trent Lott (R-Miss) wrote the White House in April 1981 requesting that the president “intervene” in the Bob Jones case. A summarized copy of this letter revealed Reagan's support for such measures with a handwritten note: “I think we should.”⁷⁷⁷ The following month, May 1981, Senators William Armstrong (R-CO), Jesse Helms (R-NC), and Strom Thurmond (R-SC) made a similar request. In their letter the Senators sought to arrange a meeting between the president and lawyers representing religious schools “for the purpose of asking for a thorough and objective review of this entire federal government policy.”⁷⁷⁸

Of interest was a legal analysis of the tax exemption issue, which the senators included in their correspondence. Commissioned by Robert Buzzard of the Center for Law and Religious Freedom, the report, drawn up by attorney William B. Ball, concluded that the IRS policy was unconstitutional, but advised that religious groups cannot hope to challenge this issue in the courts as “the burdens are far too great ... in terms of cost, delay, publicity and morale.” Instead Ball, recommended “two courses of action.” First, it called for the executive to “place ... restraints on the Service” and an “immediate revision of regulations, rulings and procedures which violate First Amendment liberties of religion.” In the interim, “a moratorium should be placed on all enforcement of present regulation illegally affecting

⁷⁷⁶ Barbash, “Tax Penalty on School Bias Ended,” A10; Schram and Babcock, “Reagan Advisers Missed School Case Sensitivity,” A1.

⁷⁷⁷ Memo, T. Kenneth Cribb, Jr., through Craig L. Fuller, to Edwin Meese III, December 18, 1981, 3, folder “Edwin Meese/Judiciary, re: Bob Jones Case,” box OA no.11, Counsel to the President Collection, Ronald Reagan Library.

⁷⁷⁸ Letter, Senators William Armstrong, Jesse Helms, and Strom Thurmond to Max L. Friedersdorf (Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs), May 22, 1981, 1, 2, ID# 026973, folder “RM000001-050000,” box RM000001-250000 no. 1, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

religious bodies.” Second, the report called for “an immediate change of position in ongoing litigations,” specifically referencing the Bob Jones case.⁷⁷⁹

White House office memos show the issue had the attention of high-ranking officials, significantly Edwin Meese (Counsel to the President), who played a key role in the whole affair.⁷⁸⁰ In August, the Under-Secretary of Education, William C. Clohan Jr., recommended that the Treasury Secretary, Don Regan, and the IRS Commissioner, Roscoe L. Egger, meet with the Senators and the attorneys representing Christian schools to discuss the issue. Clohan, suggested that it was within Secretary Regan's power to grant “the relief” they seek, “if ... he should have an opportunity to do so.”⁷⁸¹ Meanwhile, the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals delivered their decision in favour of the IRS. The issue, it seemed, was resolved. But in September the administration gave the case new life when it requested the Supreme Court take it under review. While this amounted to, essentially, appealing the previous court decision in its favour, the administration’s alleged rationale was that the department would have “greater authority to

⁷⁷⁹ Letter, William B. Ball to Lynn Robert Buzzard, April 15, 1981, 1, 14, ID# 026973, folder “Religious Matters 000001-030000,” RM000001-250000 no. 1, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; William B. Ball would later represent Bob Jones University in their case against the IRS before the Supreme Court. See Schram and Babcock, “Reagan Advisers Missed School Case Sensitivity,” A9.

⁷⁸⁰ Memo, T. Kenneth Cribb, Jr., through Craig L. Fuller, to Edwin Meese III, December 18, 1981, folder, Edwin Meese/Judiciary, re: Bob Jones Case, box 11, Counsel to the President, Office of Records, CFOA, RRL. Indeed, Meese and other officials, based on the memo noted above, were later questioned by a Senate Committee investigating whether administration officials had been influenced in their decision to revoke the non-discrimination policy. On the congressional hearings, see Legislation to Deny Tax Exemption to Racially Discriminatory Private Schools: Hearing Before Committee on Finance, United States Senate, Ninety-Seventh Congress, Second Session, February 1, 1982, folder “Edwin Meese/Judiciary Committee re: Bob Jones Case,” box 11, Counsel to the President, Office of Records Files, CFOA 466, RRL; and Administration’s Change in Federal Policy regarding the Tax Status of Racially Discriminatory Private Schools, Hearing Before the Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, Ninety-Seventh Congress, Second Session, February 4, 1982, folder “Edwin Meese/Judiciary Committee re: Bob Jones Case,” box 11, Counsel to the President, Office of Records Files, CFOA 466, RRL; On the White House view of the investigation, see Draft of February 1982 Testimony Before the Senate and House of Representatives, folder “Edwin Meese/Judiciary Committee re: Bob Jones Case,” box 11, Counsel to the President, Office of Records Files, RRL; Memo, Peter J. Rushtoven to Fred Fielding, March 6, 1984, folder “Edwin Meese/Judiciary Committee re: Bob Jones Case,” box 11, Counsel to the President, Office of Records Files, RRL; Letter, Fred Fielding to Strom Thurmond, March 6, 1984, folder “Edwin Meese/Judiciary Committee re: Bob Jones Case,” box 11, Counsel to the President, Office of Records Files, RRL.

⁷⁸¹ Memo, William C. Clohan Jr. to Gregory J. Newell, August 21, 1981 ID# 026973, folder “Religious Matters 000001-030000,” box RM 1, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

enforce the policy” if it were to be upheld at the highest judicial level.⁷⁸² Contact between the White House and tax exemption advocates continued. Two months later, in November, Don Regan indicated, in a letter to Senator Armstrong, the administration's interest in arranging a meeting.⁷⁸³ Communications intensified later that month when key New Right leaders (including Howard Phillips) met with James Baker (White House Chief of Staff) and Ed Meese on the 24th to press their social agenda, at which time the activists received assurances that the administration would take action in the new year.⁷⁸⁴ Finally, in December, a coalition of conservative groups appealed to the administration to, in the words of Connie Marshner, ““save Bob Jones.””⁷⁸⁵

On January 8, 1982, the administration responded to these pleas and eliminated the non-discrimination policy, arguing it allowed the Internal Revenue Service to exercise power not granted by Congress. Considering the Bob Jones lawsuit moot, the administration then filed a motion with the Supreme Court to “vacate” the case and “nullify” the 4th Circuit’s earlier ruling.⁷⁸⁶ Christian conservatives cheered, while opponents of the new policy promised to fight it.⁷⁸⁷ The attempt to push through tax exemptions would turn into a public relations nightmare and what one journalist described as “perhaps” the most “embarrassing” incident of Reagan's first year in office, though the whole affair would drag on for more than a year.⁷⁸⁸ Fundamentalists like Bob Jones III, who preached that opponents of his university's tax exemption “hate God,” might have maintained that the school's case, pending in the

⁷⁸² Charles R. Babcock, “Segregated School to Push for Tax-Exempt Status,” *The Washington Post*, February 19, 1982, A2; Fred Barbash, “Tax Penalty on School Bias Ended,” *The Washington Post*, January 9, 1982, A10.

⁷⁸³ Letter, Don Regan to William Armstrong, November 6, 1981, ID# 026973, folder “Religious Matters 000001-030000,” box RM 1, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; also see Memo, David E. Pickford to Sally Kelley, November 6, 1981, ID# 026973, folder “RE 000001-030000,” box RM 1, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁷⁸⁴ Fred Barbash and Bill Peterson, “Reagan Starts Action on Issues Supported by New Right Groups,” *Washington Post* May 8, 1982, A2

⁷⁸⁵ Schram and Babcock, “Reagan Advisers Missed School Case Sensitivity,” A1; Fred Barbash, “Tax Penalty on School Bias Ended,” A10.

⁷⁸⁶ Press release, Treasury News, Department of the Treasury, Appendix B, “Treasury Establishes New Tax-Exempt Policy,” January 8, 1982, p. 118-119, folder “David Whitman’s Draft on the Bob Jones Tax Exemption,” box 60, Michael Deaver Files, Series IV, Ronald Reagan Library; Fred Barbash, “Tax Penalty on School Bias Ended,” A1, A10.

⁷⁸⁷ Howell Raines, “President Shifts View on Tax Rule in Race Bias Cases,” *New York Times*, Jan 13, 1982, A11.

⁷⁸⁸ Lee Lescaze, “Reagan Submits Bill Denying Tax Breaks to Segregated Schools,” *The Washington Post*, January 19, 1982, A1.

Supreme Court, was rooted in religion, not discrimination or segregation, but a great many Americans did not see it that way.⁷⁸⁹ Nor did the courts, who “consistently recognized” tuition and textbook credits to private schools “as thinly masked attempts to avoid public school desegregation” and thus unconstitutional.⁷⁹⁰ To say the issue was racially charged would be a dramatic understatement. Most Democrats and moderate Republicans echoed civil rights groups and lawyers along with the largest private school association in denouncing the action. Perhaps most damning was a letter of protest signed by about fifty percent of the legal and administrative staff of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.⁷⁹¹

In an attempt to defuse the situation, the administration “partially reversed” the decision, promising to submit legislation to “prohibit tax exemptions for schools that discriminate against blacks.” The president declared his opposition “to racial discrimination in any form,” explaining that “the sole basis of the decision” was his opposition “to administrative agencies exercising powers that the Constitution assigns to the Congress.”⁷⁹² Nevertheless, the administration did not reverse its earlier decision to “no longer revoke or deny tax-exempt status” to institutions “on the grounds that they don't conform with certain fundamental public policies,” and announced the restoration of tax exemptions to “certain organizations which had previously been revoked,” significantly Bob Jones and Goldsboro Schools.⁷⁹³

⁷⁸⁹ Curtis J. Sitomer, “A crumbling wall between church and state?,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 2, 1982, 13; Bob Jones III, “The Issue is Religion, Not Race,” *The Washington Post*, January 24, 1982, D8.

⁷⁹⁰ Harvard Law Review Association, “The Judicial Role in Attacking Racial Discrimination in Tax-Exempt Private Schools,” *Harvard Law Review* 93, no. 2 (December 1979): 378, fn2.

⁷⁹¹ Schram and Babcock, “Reagan Advisers Missed School Case Sensitivity,” A1, A9; Howell Raines, “President Shifts View on Tax Rule in Race Bias Cases,” A11; Howell Raines, “Reagan Aides’ Slip Blamed for Dispute on Tax Exemptions,” *New York Times*, Jan 17, 1982, 20; James Nathan Miller, “Ronald Reagan and the Techniques of Deception,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1984): 62.

⁷⁹² Ronald Reagan, “Statement on Tax Exemption for Private, NonProfit Educational Institutions, January 12, 1982,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1982*, volume 1, January 1 to July 2 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 17; Lee Lescaze, “U.S. Shifts On School Exemptions,” *The Washington Post*, January 13, 1982, A1; Lee Lescaze, “Reagan Submits Bill Denying Tax Breaks To Segregated Schools,” *The Washington Post*, January 19, 1982, A1, A7; Press release, Treasury News, Department of the Treasury, Appendix C, “Statement by President Reagan,” January 12, 1982, p. 120, folder “David Whitman’s Draft on the Bob Jones Tax Exemption,” box 60, Michael Deaver Files, Series IV, RRL.

⁷⁹³ Press release, Treasury News, Department of the Treasury, Appendix B, “Treasury Establishes New Tax-Exempt Policy,” January 8, 1982, p. 118-119, folder “David Whitman’s Draft on the Bob Jones Tax Exemption,” box 60,

The following week, the White House submitted legislation, which permitted “preferential treatment based on religious affiliation,” but denied exemptions for schools with a “policy, program, preference or priority ... based upon race or a belief that requires discrimination on the basis of race.” The administration also directed the IRS to cease granting exemptions until legislation had been passed, though Bob Jones and Goldsboro Schools were to be excepted.⁷⁹⁴ After having endured strong condemnation from progressives and moderates, by the end of January, Reagan was facing criticism for his reversal from Bob Jones III and various New Right leaders.⁷⁹⁵ Paul Weyrich made clear to White House aides the importance of tax-exemption to the Religious Right, while Connie Marshner lamented that ““we're worse off than when we started.””⁷⁹⁶

It is unlikely that the bill would have made any progress in Congress, anyway. That body, wary of public opinion, showed little interest in the issue. Ultimately, it was the judiciary that put an end to the whole matter. First, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Washington D.C. ordered a temporary ban on exemptions to any school in violation of the non-discrimination policy, *without exception*.⁷⁹⁷ The Supreme Court delivered the final blow in May 1983 when it decided, by a vote of 8 to 1, in favour of the Reagan administration, which it should be noted had refused to furnish an attorney to argue its own case and instead provided support for the defendants.⁷⁹⁸

Michael Deaver Files, Series IV, RRL; Howell Raines, “President Shifts View on Tax Rule in Race Bias Cases,” A11; Lee Lescaze, “U.S. Shifts On School Exemptions,” A10.

⁷⁹⁴ Lee Lescaze, “Reagan Submits Bill Denying Tax Breaks to Segregated Schools,” A1, A7.

⁷⁹⁵ Bob Jones III, “The Issue is Religion, Not Race,” D8.

⁷⁹⁶ Charles Babcock, “Religious Right Decries Shift on Tax Exemptions,” *The Washington Post*, January 28, 1982, A4.

⁷⁹⁷ Charles R. Babcock, “Tax Exemptions Blocked; Dispute Returns to Courts,” *The Washington Post*, February 20, 1982, A8 (emphasis added).

⁷⁹⁸ For the Court’s opinion, written by Chief Justice Berger and the dissent written by Associate Justice Rehnquist, see Supreme Court of the United States Opinion, “Supreme Court of the United States, No. 81-3: Bob Jones University v. United States No. 81-1: Goldsboro Christian Schools Inc. v. United States,” May 24, 1983, and Supreme Court of the United States Dissent, “Supreme Court of the United States, No. 81-3: Bob Jones University v. United States No. 81-1: Goldsboro Christian Schools Inc. v. United States,” May 24, 1983, folder “SMC Bob Jones University v. the United States,” box OA11721, Sherrie Cooksey Files, RRL; also see “Tax-Exempt Hate, Undone,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1983, A26; Fred Barbash, “High Court Hears School Tax Dispute,” *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1982, A1.

While Reagan failed to eliminate the non-discrimination policy, the *raison d'être* of the Religious Right, it was not for lack of trying. Despite the haphazard, even amateurish way in which it went about doing so, it is important to acknowledge the earnest efforts put forth by the administration in its attempt to deliver on the issue of tax exemptions. It is also important to recognize the obstacles faced by the White House - internal and external opposition, an indifferent Congress, and finally, the courts. Despite some New Right leaders' criticism, evangelicals expressed satisfaction with Reagan's efforts. "We think the president has done exactly what he always promised he'd do," stated Moral Majority's Cal Thomas.⁷⁹⁹

If tax relief for Christian schools was out of reach, there was still hope for tuition tax credits, or alternatively a set amount of money in the form of a voucher, for parents with children in private (or parochial) schools. Not as contentious as exemptions, tax credits still proved controversial.⁸⁰⁰ And, much like the former, the latter was not a new issue. Support for tuition tax credits was first introduced into the GOP party platform in 1972.⁸⁰¹ Nixon endorsed congressional legislation in 1973, and in 1978 both the House and the Senate passed bills but could never reconcile them. Individual states also addressed the issue with measures of their own, which raised the question of constitutionality. In 1973, the Supreme Court ruled against state tax reimbursements for parochial schools in three separate cases. Over the next decade or so, the courts determined several state statutes to be unconstitutional.⁸⁰²

These court rulings did little to deter Reagan, whose rhetoric around school tax credits echoed his position on exemptions. "Separation of church and state does not mean we have to separate ourselves

⁷⁹⁹ Cal Thomas quoted in Fred Barbash and Bill Peterson, "Reagan Starts Action on Issues Supported by New Right Groups," *The Washington Post*, May 8, 1982, A2.

⁸⁰⁰ Charlotte Saikowski, "A Social Agenda: Mr. Reagan has used his high visibility to promote ...," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jan 19, 1984, 20.

⁸⁰¹ See Republican Party Platform, August 21, 1972, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25842>. Tuition tax credits remained a Republican Party objective, included in every party platform. George W. Bush signed the first federal legislation providing tax vouchers in January 2004. See "President Bush Signs Voucher Legislation," *Cape Outlook* no. 292 (February 2004), <https://www.capenet.org/pdf/Outlook292.pdf>

⁸⁰² Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 50; Richard L. Strout, "Conservatives may muzzle or 'reorient' high court," *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 10, 1981, 2.

from our religion,” he argued, while promoting the issue during the 1980 campaign.⁸⁰³ In June 1981, less than six months into his first term, Reagan signaled his support when his Secretary of Education, Terrel H. Bell, strongly advocated for school tax credits before a Senate hearing - the first time an administration had done so.⁸⁰⁴ Besides the issue of constitutionality, the proposition came with financial burdens. One bill proposed in the Senate in 1981 was estimated to cost the government about \$2.5 billion in lost revenue in the first year. As such, much of Congress was wary of any such legislation.⁸⁰⁵ The courts and finances were not the only obstacles. Opponents of the bill, including several religious groups and a combination of “teacher unions, labor unions, public school parent groups, and civil liberties groups,” cited a violation of church and state and argued that tuition tax credits were nothing less than a subsidy for the fortunate at the expense of those in need. There were fears, shared by members of Congress, that it would “undermine public education” and further enable “‘white flight’ out of the public schools.”⁸⁰⁶ Jerry Falwell countered that it would increase competition, leading to greater accountability. “Public schools in America,” he scoffed, “have been treated with the status of an established church.”⁸⁰⁷

While Falwell and his allies, benefitting from the president's support, managed to gain greater publicity than the opposition forces, a Gallup poll conducted in the late spring of 1981 found that only 32 percent of Americans favoured tuition tax credits, while 52 percent opposed them.⁸⁰⁸ Undeterred, Reagan proposed legislation in the spring of 1982, raising the issue in a radio address to the country in April, and

⁸⁰³Richard Bergholz, “Reagan Renews Call for Parochial-School Tax Credits,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 2, 1980, B20.

⁸⁰⁴Julia Malone, “Drive begins for tuition tax credit,” 3; Julia Malone, “Public schools’ poor image makes tuition credit look good,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 16, 1981, 1, 8; Dan Morgan, “Leader of Moral Majority Backs Private-School Aid,” *The Washington Post*, June 5, 1981, A12; Richard L. Strout, “Conservatives may muzzle or ‘reorient’ high court,” 2.

⁸⁰⁵Morgan, “Leader of Moral Majority Backs Private-School Aid,” A12; Julia Malone, “Drive begins for tuition tax credit,” 3.

⁸⁰⁶Charlotte Saikowski, “A Social Agenda,” 20; Julia Malone, “Drive begins for tuition tax credit, 3; Julia Malone, “Public schools’ poor image makes tuition credit look good,” 8.

⁸⁰⁷Dan Morgan, “Leader of Moral Majority Backs Private-School Aid,” A12; Charlotte Saikowski, “A Social Agenda,” 20.

⁸⁰⁸Julia Malone, “Public schools’ poor image makes tuition credit look good,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 16, 1981, 1.

a revised bill again in early 1983, but Congress failed to act on either.⁸⁰⁹ That same year, tax credit proponents received a boost when the Supreme Court found a similar law in Minnesota, that also affected public schools, to be constitutional. Yet, despite positive signals from the courts and strong support from a vocal minority of Senators and Representatives, Congress declined to act on tax credits during Reagan's tenure in office.⁸¹⁰ Public support for the measure, according to one October 1982 poll, had risen to fifty percent. But with the other half of the country opposed to tuition tax credits, and a heavy financial cost attached, Congress had good reason to avoid the controversial topic.⁸¹¹ Support for government subsidization of private and parochial schools, whether through tax credits or school vouchers, with rare exception, hovered between the low-mid 40s and 50% through most of Reagan's time in office.⁸¹² In terms of religion, despite the Religious Right's strong push for legislation, Protestants, as a collective, showed less support than Catholics on the central issue.⁸¹³

Reagan and the Religious Right had more success chipping away at the ban on school prayer. Christian conservatives had been fighting to bring religion back into the classroom since the Supreme

⁸⁰⁹ Ronald Reagan, "Letter to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate Transmitting Proposed Legislation on Federal Income Tax Credit for Nonpublic School Tuition, June 22, 1982," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1982*, volume 1, January 1 to July 2 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 804-805; Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Taxes, the Tuition Tax Credit, and Interest Rates, April 24, 1982," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1982*, volume 1, 512; Ronald Reagan, "Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Tuition Tax Credits, Feb. 16, 1983," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1983*, volume 1, January 1 to July 1 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 236-237.

⁸¹⁰ Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 81-82, 88; Charlotte Saikowski, "A Social Agenda," 20.

⁸¹¹ "Public Opinion Referendum, Survey 202-G: Proposition 7: Tuition Tax Credits, October 31," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1982*, ed., Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1983), 251.

⁸¹² "Voucher System in Education (Survey #217-G), September 18," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1983*, ed., Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1984), 178,179; "National Referendum (Survey #243-G), November 18," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1984*, ed., Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1985), 239, 240; "Aid to Parochial Schools (Special telephone survey), September 29," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1985*, ed., Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1986), 219-221; "Attitudes Toward Public Schools (Special survey), February 2," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1986*, ed., Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1987), 32; "Attitudes Toward Public Schools (special survey), November 1, in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1986*, ed., Dr. George H. Gallup, 231.

⁸¹³ A 1985 survey showed that 67% of Catholics, compared to 38% of Protestants, approved of a tax credit amendment. The same poll revealed that 51% of Catholics and 42% of Protestants were in favour of school vouchers. See "Aid to parochial Schools (Special telephone survey), September 29," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1985*, ed., Dr. George H. Gallup, 221.

Court's *Engel* (1962) and *Schempp* (1963) decisions had found prescribed school prayer and Bible reading unconstitutional. In the following years, countless pieces of legislation seeking to overturn or circumvent these rulings had been proposed in Congress. These efforts had all failed, despite polls consistently showing the majority of the population in favour of a constitutional amendment on school prayer.⁸¹⁴ Reagan was one of those Americans and, despite its inclusion in previous party platforms, the first president to call for school prayer since the 1962 ruling.⁸¹⁵ He made clear on a number of occasions: "I happen to believe that the court ruled wrongly with regards to prayer in schools."⁸¹⁶ Indeed, 70% of the country opposed the 1963 Supreme Court decision "that religious exercises in public schools are illegal."⁸¹⁷ Studies showed that a good many of those Americans, in places like North Carolina and Oklahoma, chose to disregard the courts. Suggesting that "God and President Reagan are on their side," one Louisiana Parish reported that over 50% of its schools "practice some kind of voluntary prayer program." One school board member remarked: "I feel like Reagan is cheering us on from the sidelines," and added, "He keeps making references to God on the TV. In fact, he's the most outspoken president, in reference to God, we've ever had."⁸¹⁸

The president would prove a strong critic of the court's decisions and a vocal advocate for a school prayer amendment throughout his tenure in the White House. Suggesting that "God should never have

⁸¹⁴ Dr. George H. Gallup, ed., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1980* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1981), 107.

⁸¹⁵ The 1972 GOP platform, for example, stated: "We reaffirm our view that voluntary prayer should be freely permitted in public places—particularly, by school children while attending public schools—providing that such prayers are not prepared or prescribed by the state or any of its political subdivisions and that no person's participation is coerced, thus preserving the traditional separation of church and state." See Republican Party Platform, August 21, 1972, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25842>; "The School Prayer Controversy: Pro and Con," *Congressional Digest* 63, no. 5 (May 1984): 135; Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 76.

⁸¹⁶ Ronald Reagan, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Working Luncheon with Out-of-Town Editors (October 16, 1981)," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1981*, vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), 958.

⁸¹⁷ Dr. George H. Gallup, ed., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1980* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1981), 107.

⁸¹⁸ T.R. Reid, "Push-and-Pull on School Prayer Comes to Senate," *The Washington Post*, March 4, 1984, A1, A7; Stephen Wermiel, "Church and State: High Court's Rulings Against School Prayer Are Often Violated," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 5, 1984, 1; Art Harris, "God Is Alive and Well in Rapides Parish," *The Washington Post*, February 17, 1982, A6.

been expelled from America's classrooms in the first place,” he raised the issue on dozens of occasions of every kind - everything from the Annual Meeting of the American Bar Association and a university convocation to high-profile speeches to the American people, including a 1982 radio address to the nation on Prayer and, most significantly, every State of the Union from 1983 on.⁸¹⁹ Central to the president's message was the historical role prayer had in shaping American society, which he suggested was rooted in a Judeo-Christian religious philosophy.⁸²⁰ “Prayer is the mainspring of the American spirit, a fundamental tenet of our people since before the Republic was founded,” Reagan declared while proclaiming a National Day of Prayer in 1983.⁸²¹ When giving the 1987 State of the Union, he stated: “Finally, let's stop suppressing the spiritual core of our national being. Our nation could not have been conceived without divine help. Why is it that we can build a nation with our prayers, but we can't use a schoolroom for voluntary prayer?”⁸²² And lamenting religion's disappearance from the classroom, the president suggested that school prayer would “help make us ‘one Nation under God’ again.”⁸²³

⁸¹⁹ Reagan quoted in Ronald Reagan, “Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union (Jan. 25, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 106-107; Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Meeting of the American Bar Association in Atlanta, Georgia (August 1, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 1114; Ronald Reagan, “Address at Commencement Exercises at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey (May 21, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 749; Ronald Reagan, “Radio Address to the Nation on Prayer (Sept. 18, 1982),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 1182-1183; also see, for example, Ronald Reagan, “Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union (Jan. 25, 1985),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1985*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986), 133.

⁸²⁰ For example, a policy paper on school prayer stressed that “The President’s proposed school prayer amendment is not a radical departure from our history *but rather a reaffirmation of the religious heritage of our nation*” (emphasis added). See Draft Issue Update on School Prayer, June 18, 1982, ID# 095813, folder “Prayer-Prayer Periods (088901-100000),” box RM020 no. 3A, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; In a speech to PTA members, Reagan remarked that “ours is a Judeo-Christian heritage.” See “President Reagan’s Remarks on School Prayer to P.T.A. 87th Annual Convention, June 15, 1983, ID# 208670, folder “Prayer-Prayer Periods,” box RM020 (3 of 3) no. 5, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library

⁸²¹ Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5017 - National Day of Prayer, 1983 (Jan. 27, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 129.

⁸²² Ronald Reagan, “Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union (January 27, 1987),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1987*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 59.

⁸²³ Ronald Reagan, “Radio Address to the Nation on Prayer (Sept. 18, 1982),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 1183.

In early March 1982, the Reagan administration took the first steps toward achieving that goal. Undersecretary of Education Gary Bauer wrote a memo urging the administration “make a major effort this year” to pass school prayer legislation. Bauer weighed the pros and cons of the two viable approaches, through an amendment or the Jurisdiction Authority Act. The latter, also known as “court stripping,” removed the court's jurisdiction over the related subject and was considered by many experts to be unconstitutional because it tampered with the separation of powers. Bauer recommended an amendment. While it required more votes in Congress, would take longer, and thus “some of our allies will contend we have selected an option doomed to fail,” court stripping was seen as too controversial. Bauer acknowledged that the House Judiciary Committee would pose a problem, and he stressed the need to get Jesse Helms and other supporters of court stripping legislation on board. The memo was forwarded on to Edwin Meese later that day.⁸²⁴ Over the next two months a series of memos were exchanged between administration officials concerning how a school prayer amendment should be phrased and when to roll it out to the public.⁸²⁵

On May 6, Reagan, referencing Scripture and appealing to “a Creator who alone has the power to bless America,” announced his proposal for a prayer amendment. The president devoted about a third of his speech to school prayer and closed with these words: “Together, let us take up the challenge to reawaken America's religious and moral heart, recognizing that a deep and abiding faith in God is the rock upon which this great Nation was founded.”⁸²⁶ Reaction was “sharply divided.” Invoking the First Amendment, most mainline Protestant churches and Jewish groups strongly opposed voluntary prayer.

⁸²⁴ Memo, Gary Bauer to Edwin Harper, March 8, 1982, and memo, Edwin Harper to Edwin Meese, March 8, 1982, ID# 079291, folder “RM 020 Prayers-Prayer Periods (065020) (1 of 2),” box RM020 000001-08300 no. 3, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; On “court-stripping,” see Curtis J. Sitomer, “A crumbling wall between Church and State?,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 2, 1982, 13; Malone, “New Right agenda bogs down in Congress,” back page. Julia Malone, “Congress v. court,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 26, 1981, 1.

⁸²⁵ See for example, memo, Gary Bauer to Edwin L. Harper, April 20, 1982, ID# 071719, folder “RM020 Prayers-Prayer Periods (065020) (1 of 2),” box RM020 000001-08300 no. 3, WHORM: Subject File, RRL; for further relevant correspondence, see the aforementioned WHORM: Subject File.

⁸²⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at a White House Ceremony in Observance of National Day of Prayer (May 6, 1982),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 573, 574.

The latter argued that there was nothing “voluntary” about it, and the former contended that “the religious training of children is the responsibility of the family and the church,” not the government.⁸²⁷ Even before the announcement was made, Jewish groups, including The Synagogue Council of America, had written the president to express their “profound distress” concerning any “change in the Constitution” to accommodate school prayer. The President of B'nai Brith Women lamented Reagan's complicity in efforts to “blur” the line between church and state.⁸²⁸

Keeping to their strict belief in the separation of church and state, one senior representative of the Southern Baptist Convention called it “despicable demagoguery for the president to play petty politics with prayer.”⁸²⁹ Yet, roughly one month after they had reaffirmed their opposition to school prayer, Southern Baptists abandoned one of their guiding tenets and voted (by a margin of 3 to 1) to support Reagan's voluntary prayer amendment, making them “the first major denominational organization” (roughly 13 million members) to do so.⁸³⁰ “We're on the record for *voluntary* school prayer,” stated the National Association of Evangelicals. Jerry Falwell praised Reagan and declared it to be “a bright day in America.” While admitting that “the purpose of the constitutional amendment is to circumvent” the judiciary, he declared that “the Supreme Court will no longer be able to deny children their opportunity to pray in school buildings paid for by their moms and dads.”⁸³¹

⁸²⁷ Howell Raines, “Reagan Endorses Voluntary Prayer,” *New York Times*, May 7, 1982, B10; Herbert H. Denton and Marjorie Hyer, “President to Ask Hill for Prayer Amendment,” *The Washington Post*, May 7, 1982, A1, A10;

⁸²⁸ Teletype message, Walter Wurzbarger (President, The Synagogue Council of America) to Ronald Reagan, May 4, 1982, ID# 076787, and letter, Dorothy Binstock (President of B'nai B'rith Women) to Ronald Reagan, May 4, 1982, ID# 070788, folder “RM020 Prayers-Prayer Periods (065020) (1 of 2),” box RM020 000001-08300 no. 3, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁸²⁹ Denton and Hyer, “President to Ask Hill for Prayer Amendment,” A10.

⁸³⁰ Article, Tom Wicker, “The Baptist Switch,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1982, and memo, Gary Bauer to Edwin L. Harper, June 22, 1982, ID# 072601, folder “RM020 Prayers-Prayer Periods (065020) (1 of 2),” box RM020 000001-08300 no. 3, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library; The Southern Baptist Convention reaffirmed this support a year later in a letter to Reagan. See letter, James T. Draper (President, SBC) to Ronald Reagan, July 19, 1983, box RM020 (2 of 3) no. 4, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁸³¹ Denton and Hyer, “President to Ask Hill for Prayer Amendment,” A10; Raines, “Reagan Endorses Voluntary Prayer,” B10. Perhaps Falwell missed the irony when he was later quoted explaining that, given the membership's religious diversity, “if we ever opened a Moral Majority meeting with prayer, silent or otherwise, we would disintegrate.” See “Chaplains and Children,” *The Washington Post*, January 28, 1984, A14.

Accompanying Reagan's public announcement was a private attempt to solicit support for the president's amendment and dissuade the Senate from considering any court stripping legislation. Attorney General William French advised that tampering with the separation of powers was "probably unconstitutional - and, in any case, certainly unwise."⁸³² One week later, May 17, Reagan transmitted a message to Congress proposing a school prayer amendment, in which he asserted that "the public expression through prayer of our faith in God is a fundamental part of our American heritage and a privilege that should not be excluded by law from any American school, public or private." The crux of the legislation was: "Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions. No person shall be required by the United States or by any state to participate in prayer."⁸³³ A poll in the fall indicated 73% of Americans favoured a constitutional amendment allowing prayer in public schools, while 27% were opposed.⁸³⁴

Hearings on the proposed amendment were held over the late-summer and early fall. Among those providing testimony in favour of the measure were Ed McAteer, Gary Jarmin, and Pat Robertson. Their presence demonstrated the movement's influence within the Republican Party.⁸³⁵ Reagan promoted the amendment, including a radio address to the nation and a candlelight ceremony for School Prayer, and *The Washington Post* printed a letter by Gary Bauer defending the practice. But the Senate showed little interest in the bill, with few members attending the hearings, and it was left to languish in the Judiciary Committee for the remainder of the 97th (1981-1982) Congress.⁸³⁶

⁸³² Curtis J. Sitomer, "Why Reagan grabbed the initiative on school prayer, *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 10, 1982, 2.

⁸³³ Ronald Reagan, "Message to the Congress Transmitting a Proposed Constitutional Amendment on Prayer in School (May 17, 1982)," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 647. The proposed amendment was labeled Senate Joint Resolution 199 (S.J. Res. 199).

⁸³⁴ "Public Opinion Referendum (Survey #202-G), October 31," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1982*, ed. Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1983), 252.

⁸³⁵ Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 102.

⁸³⁶ Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Prayer (Sept. 18, 1982), and Remarks at a Candle-Light Ceremony for Prayer in Schools (Sept. 25, 1982)," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 1182-1183, 1218-1219; Letter, Gary

Reagan kicked off 1983 with a flurry of religious messaging, renewing his drive for a prayer amendment with a radio address to the American people on domestic social issues, in which he reaffirmed his commitment to seeing its fruition: “We didn't get that amendment through the last Congress, but I'll continue to push for it in the next Congress.”⁸³⁷ Three days later, the president spoke to the nation in his State of the Union Address, in which he made passage of a school prayer amendment one of “four major education goals” (and the “passage of tuition tax credits,” another).⁸³⁸ Then, on January 27, Reagan proclaimed a National Day of Prayer. While he did not mention school prayer, he did speak about prayer's central role in American society, referring to it as “the mainspring of the American spirit, a fundamental tenet of our people since before the Republic was founded.”⁸³⁹ While the National Day of Prayer was a tradition, the president's next proclamation was not. On February 3, he pronounced 1983 the Year of the Bible, declaring that “of the many influences that have shaped the United States of America into a distinctive Nation and people, none may be said to be more fundamental and enduring than the Bible.”⁸⁴⁰

Reagan then took his message directly to Christian conservatives when he spoke at the National Association of Evangelicals Convention on March 8. In what became known as the “Evil Empire” speech, he raised the issue of school prayer, argued that “the evidence” of religion's integral importance to the national character “permeates our history and our government,” and suggested that “freedom prospers

Bauer, “Prayer Will Be Good For the Schools,” November 27, 1982, *The Washington Post*, ID# 113622, folder “Prayers-Prayer periods (104001-130000),” box RM020 box 3A, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁸³⁷ Ronald Reagan, “Radio Address to the Nation on Domestic Social issues (Jan. 22, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983, vol. I* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 94.

⁸³⁸ Ronald Reagan, “Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union (Jan. 25, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983, vol. I* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 106.

⁸³⁹ Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5017 - National Day of Prayer, 1983 (Jan. 27, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983, vol. I* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 129.

⁸⁴⁰ Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5018 - Year of the Bible, 1983 (Feb. 3, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983, vol. I* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 179.

when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged.”⁸⁴¹ That same day, Reagan resubmitted his prayer amendment, “calling on the Congress to act speedily.”⁸⁴² The president pushed his proposal, again, on March 12 while speaking to the nation on education. Calling for a return to traditional values, he suggested that they could “begin by welcoming God back in our schools and by setting an example for children by striving to abide by His Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule?”⁸⁴³

While the promotional campaign was in full swing, progress in the Senate proved slow going. The Judiciary Subcommittee was drafting its own amendment guaranteeing “silent prayer” and “equal access.” The White House applied pressure to the subcommittee, insisting on Reagan's proposal, but Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT), along with Strom Thurmond (R-SC) and Charles Grassley (R-IA), informed the administration that it did not have the votes to pass on the floor, or even out of the Judiciary Committee. The Senators recommended Hatch's amendment guaranteeing “silent prayer” and “equal access.” The White House, after consulting with a “broad range of school prayer advocates,” who, according to one administration official, “all thought that a silent prayer amendment would be worthless, and that equal access, while an excellent idea, can be achieved by statute,” determined to find a “strategy for achieving the President's school prayer objectives,” while also pushing for equal access.⁸⁴⁴ In the following weeks, Reagan personally intervened by writing Hatch, Thurmond, and Grassley, to thank them for their “leadership on behalf of the school prayer issue,” and solicit support for his amendment. The president reminded them that they all shared the same goal, but noted that school-prayer advocates, including religious leaders, “overwhelmingly prefer our proposed amendment over any suggested lesser

⁸⁴¹ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida (March 8, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 361.

⁸⁴² Ronald Reagan, “Message to the Congress Transmitting the Proposed Constitutional Amendment on Prayer in Schools (March 8, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 364-366.

⁸⁴³ Ronald Reagan, “Radio Address to the Nation on Education (March 12, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 391.

⁸⁴⁴ Memo, Stephen H. Galebach to Michael M. Uhlmann, May 23, 1983, ID #143869, and article, “Drafting Session on School Prayer Ends Abruptly,” *The Washington Post*, May 21, 1983, folder “Prayers-Prayer Periods (142000-150000),” box RM020 (2 of 3) no. 4, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

alternative.” Reagan added, “I think we must keep the faith with these supporters by bringing our amendment before the full Senate,” and closed with an appeal for committee action and a floor vote “as soon as possible after Labor Day.”⁸⁴⁵

Despite Reagan's understanding, a memo from Gary Jarmin to sympathetic members of the Senate Judiciary Committee made clear that school prayer advocates “are badly divided” over the approach to legislation. Indeed, “we seem to have reached an impasse (sic) on the language,” he reported, “and are dangerously close to having a fratricidal battle amongst each other.” Jarmin argued “that support for both the President's language and the silent prayer alternative is rapidly deteriorating,” and strongly suggested an alternative needed to be found.⁸⁴⁶ On July 12, Reagan invited religious leaders, including Fallwell and Robert Grant of Christian Voice, to the White House to discuss proposed modifications to the amendment's language. Grant later expressed his gratitude for the president's efforts and reaffirmed his “staunch” support.⁸⁴⁷ “I thank god that this nation is served by a god-fearing president,” wrote Pat Robertson, who initiated a grassroots letter writing campaign, aimed at the Senate, in support of the amendment.⁸⁴⁸ In August, Reagan suggested that school prayer was the “overwhelming desire of the American people,” while speaking at the American G.I. Forum.⁸⁴⁹ A Gallup survey confirmed this sentiment, revealing that 81% of the 82% of Americans who were familiar with the amendment were in favour of it on some level, though 80% of those polled still felt the home to be more important than

⁸⁴⁵ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Orrin Hatch, June 6, 1983, letter, Ronald Reagan to Strom Thurmond, May 27, 1983, and letter, Ronald Reagan to Charles Grassley, undated, ID# 144367, folder “Prayers-Prayer Periods (142000-150000),” box RM020 (2 of 3) no. 4, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁸⁴⁶ Memo, Gary Jarmin (Legislative Director of Christian Voice) to Pro School Prayer Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, et. al., June 15, 1983, folder “Prayers-Prayer Periods (130001-141999),” box RM020 (2 of 3) no. 4, WHORM: Subject File, RRL (Jarmin also included some alternative draft amendments for the Judiciary Committee's consideration.)

⁸⁴⁷ David Hoffman, “Reagan Promises a Push for Prayer Amendment,” *The Washington Post*, July 13, 1983, A13; Letter, Reverend Robert Grant (Christian Voice) to Faith Whittlesey (Assistant To The President For Public Liaison), July 22, 1983, ID# 153242, folder “Prayers-Prayer Periods (142000-150000),” box RM020 (2 of 3) no. 4, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁸⁴⁸ Letter, Pat Robertson to Ronald Reagan, September 9, 1983, ID# 162247, folder “Prayers-Prayer Periods (142000-150000),” box RM020 (2 of 3) no. 4, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁸⁴⁹ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the American G.I. Forum in El Paso, Texas (August 13, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 1163.

school or church “in the religious and spiritual development of a child.”⁸⁵⁰ Similar polls found that over 90 percent of evangelicals supported school prayer.⁸⁵¹

Reagan did not let up in his efforts, meeting with a group of female Christian religious leaders in October, which went over so well that Falwell and LaHaye requested the president hold a similar meeting with prominent leaders of the Religious Right to discuss the social agenda.⁸⁵² He used his 1984 State of the Union and a February radio address to lobby the nation for the amendment, as well as speeches to smaller groups, including church leaders at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention.⁸⁵³ In February, a number of administration staff, including Faith Whittlesey, Bob Sweet, and Carolyn Sundseth, spoke at Pat Robertson's Freedom Council's National Seminar, with Whittlesey reading a letter from the president to Robertson in support of the prayer amendment.⁸⁵⁴ And in early March, Reagan again met with women school prayer supporters, including Beverly LaHaye of Concerned Women for America, and spoke to the National Association of Evangelicals.⁸⁵⁵ He also wrote Republican House Leader Robert

⁸⁵⁰ “Prayer in Public Schools (Survey #218-G), September 8,” in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1983*, ed. Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1984), 172, 174.

⁸⁵¹ Bill Peterson, “Poll of Evangelicals Finds Glenn Matching Reagan,” *The Washington Post*, October 14, 1983, A2.

⁸⁵² Ronald Reagan, “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Women Leaders of Christian Religious Organizations (October 13, 1983)” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 1450; Letter, Jerry Falwell and Tim LaHaye to Ronald Reagan, December 26, 1983, folder “Prayers-Prayer Period (187310-200000),” box RM020 (2 of 3) no. 4, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁸⁵³ Ronald Reagan, “Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union (Jan. 25, 1984),” <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/12584e>; Ronald Reagan, “Saturday Radio Address (Feb. 25, 1984),” <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/22584a>; and Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters (Jan. 30, 1984),” <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/13084b>.

⁸⁵⁴ Letter, Robert Reilly to Faith Whittlesey, February 15, 1984, ID# 208633, folder “FG-006-01 (208400 - 208799),” box FG-006-01 (White House Office) 202630-208979 no. 67, WHORM Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library.

⁸⁵⁵ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Beverly LaHaye, March 19, 1984, ID# 212762, box RM020 (3 of 3) no. 5; Reagan mentioned the March 1 meeting in his diary. See Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, vol. I, ed. Douglas Brinkley, 323; Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Columbus, Ohio, March 6, 1984,” <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/30684c>; Juan Williams, “Reagan Calls for Prayer Bill, Renewal of Moral Attitudes,” *Washington Post*, March 7, 1984, A1, A7.

Michel, thanking him for his efforts to keep school prayer on the House agenda, the day the Senate opened debate on the issue.⁸⁵⁶

The Judiciary Committee, “unable to reach a consensus” on either the voluntary or silent prayer amendment, sent both Reagan's and Hatch's proposals to the Senate floor “without endorsing either.” Senate Majority Leader, Howard Baker, largely in deference to the president, selected Reagan's bill for a vote. Senator Weicker, who led the fight against the amendment, was backed by a coalition of civil liberties lobbies, Jewish groups, and several Protestant denominations, among them Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Methodists, who were united in their opposition. Supporters in the Senate, though, remained divided between vocal and silent prayer. The White House applied “strong pressure,” including numerous telephone calls on the part of the president, vice-president, and cabinet members, along with arranging a meeting with senators in an attempt to solicit support for the bill. Reagan also reached out to church leaders, who organized a lobbying campaign highlighted by an episode of Pat Robertson's *700 Club* devoted to the prayer amendment, in which viewers were urged to contact undecided senators, whose names and numbers were listed on the television screen. Letters and phone calls flooded Capitol Hill. Despite these efforts, after a little over two weeks of “sensationalized” debate, the measure was defeated by a vote of 56 in favour to 44 against, 11 votes short of the two-thirds required.⁸⁵⁷ Moen has suggested that the vote represented “the high-water mark” in terms of the Religious Right's Congressional

⁸⁵⁶ Letter, Ronald Reagan to Robert Michel, March 2, 1984, ID# 187328, box RM020 130001-207055 (2 of 3) no. 4, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁸⁵⁷ T.R. Reid, “Push-and-Pull On School Prayer Comes to Senate,” *The Washington Post*, March 4, 1984, A1, A7; Stephen Wermiel, “Church and State: High Court's Rulings Against School Prayer Are Often Violated,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 5, 1984, 1; T.R. Reid, “Senate Defeats Amendment for Prayer in Schools,” *The Washington Post*, March 21, 1984, A1, A4 (The vote broke down as such: 37 Republicans and 19 Democrats in favour of the amendment, and 26 Democrats and 18 Republicans, including Barry Goldwater, against.); Allen D. Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington: The Role of Religious Lobbies in the American Polity* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 165; Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 133-135 (Moen provides an in-depth exploration of the Religious Right's relationship with the U.S. Congress during Reagan's presidency); Letter, Ronald Reagan to Jim Bakker (of PTL Ministries), May 10, 1984, ID# 226462, box RM020 (3 of 3) no. 5, WHORM: Subject File, Ronald Reagan Library; Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, vol. I, ed. Douglas Brinkley, 329.

influence during Reagan's first term. A priority issue had been considered, voted on, and approved by a majority of the Senate. And, despite its failure, the vote opened the door to an equal access bill.⁸⁵⁸

Reagan expressed disappointment but thanked the public for their support, vowed to "continue our efforts to allow government to accommodate prayer and religious," and urged both Houses of Congress to "consider the equal access legislation."⁸⁵⁹ Religious Right activists, too, were upset with the outcome. Pat Robertson, comparing Christians to the Israelites, suggested that they were being "oppressed" by their "political leadership" who, he warned, could lose their votes in the upcoming election. Still, while school prayer advocates had suffered a setback, they were not prepared to give up the fight. Senator Jesse Helms pledged to bring forth a court stripping measure, but the less controversial alternative appeared to be a proposal that would provide religious groups equal access to school facilities. Introduced by Senators Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala.) and Mark O. Hatfield (R-Ore.), the concept of equal access, largely shaped by the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (BJCPA) and the Christian Legal Society (CLS), found a strong advocate in the president.⁸⁶⁰

Equal access enjoyed generally broad support within the religious community, though most Jewish organizations were against the legislation, particularly its application to elementary schools, as were the Lutheran and United Methodist churches. Many others, including the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the National Council of Churches (NCC), and a variety of individual churches, both Protestant and Catholic, supported the measure for high schools only. For Religious Right related organizations, equal access was initially seen as a poor substitute for vocal prayer, and so these groups were "initially ... hostile" to the concept. But by the Spring of 1984, Falwell and others had become strong advocates, mobilizing a large-scale grassroots campaign, having come to appreciate the opportunity to not only

⁸⁵⁸ Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 140.

⁸⁵⁹ Statement by the President, March 20, 1984, folder, "School Prayer, Equal Access, Presidential Letters (OA 12420)," box OA 12420-12421 no. 18, Robert R. Reilly Files, RRL.

⁸⁶⁰ T.R. Reid, "Prayer Backers Plan New Drive," *The Washington Post*, March 23, 1984, A2; Martin Tolchin, "Bill Would Let Religion Groups Meet in Schools," *New York Times*, June 28, 1984, A1; Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington*, 163, 169-170.

proselytize in the schools, but also the potential for “such diverse activities as guest lecturing and Bible study, which went beyond vocal prayer.” These same factors fueled opposition to the measure, especially among more liberal Democrats in Congress.⁸⁶¹

Still, there was broad bipartisan support in both the House and the Senate, even most liberal Republicans backed it. On June 27, the Senate voted decisively in favour of the measure (88 to 11), as part of a larger education bill. Sentiment was also with equal access in the House, where it passed with overwhelming support, 337 to 77, about one month later (July 25).⁸⁶² The final draft of the joint legislation dropped a provision, included in the House's earlier bill, that would have cut-off federal funding to schools/districts that failed to comply with the law.⁸⁶³ Equal access applied only to public secondary schools, and also allowed for student political and philosophical groups to access said facilities, though its intent - the protection of religious-related free speech - was clear. All activities were to be “student-initiated,” with no adult or school “sponsorship” or participation, other than as an observer.⁸⁶⁴

Despite the lopsided vote in favour of equal access, there was vocal opposition to the bill, which suggested that it was nothing more than an attempt to skirt the Supreme Court's *Engel* and *Schempp* rulings. Don Edwards, Democratic representative from California who had led the opposition in the House, suggested that it “was a backdoor school prayer bill and an opportunity for fringe groups to proselytize and harass school students.”⁸⁶⁵ Others argued it violated the separation of church and state.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶¹ T.R. Reid, “Bill Mandating ‘Equal Access’ Defeated in House,” *The Washington Post*, May 16, 1984, A5; Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 113-114, 126-127; A22; Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington*, 169 (James Dobson provided the “most effective pressure,” publicizing the issue on his evangelical radio program, “Focus on the Family.”).

⁸⁶² Martin Tolchin, Prayer Meetings in Public Schools Cleared by House,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1984, A1, A16; “Schoolhouse Free-for-All,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1984, A22; “Senate Votes,” *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, June 30, 1984, 1580; for a more in-depth exploration of the Equal Access issue and the legislation surrounding it, see Joan Del Fattore, *The Fourth R: Conflicts Over Religion in America’s School*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 199-216.

⁸⁶³ Del Fattore, *The Fourth R*, 184-185; Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington*, 174-175, 178-179, 181-185.

⁸⁶⁴ Martin Tolchin, “Bill Would Let Religion Groups Meet in Schools,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1984, A13; Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington*, 162-163; also see “Text of Key Provisions on Religious Meetings,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1984, A16.

⁸⁶⁵ Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington*, 169.

The legislation's chief sponsor, Senator Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala.) celebrated the bill's passage, exclaiming: "This is not a foot in the door, this is an epic change."⁸⁶⁷ Religious Right activists, having realized the benefits of equal access, were also pleased. Jerry Falwell had already admitted that they "could not win on school prayer, but equal access gets us what we want."⁸⁶⁸ Both Denton and Falwell were correct. Equal access provided Christian conservatives an open door to the nation's public schools. Religious Right groups would spend the following decades exploiting that access.⁸⁶⁹

One congressional and Moral Majority insider acknowledged that Washington was "a compromise puzzle palace ... we have to move in an incremental process ... and we can reverse the harm of the '62 and '63 Supreme Court decisions incrementally."⁸⁷⁰ Advocates could take heart in the polls, which continued to show that a majority of Americans supported school prayer, but they also suffered setbacks, most significantly court rulings which upheld the practice's unconstitutionality.⁸⁷¹ Fundamentalist preachers would continue to campaign for school prayer and supporters on the Hill kept it on the congressional agenda.⁸⁷² Reagan raised the amendment in his speeches and every following State of the Union Address, as did members of his administration, usually through the press. While an amendment eluded them, one

⁸⁶⁶ Martin Tolchin, "Bill Would Let Religion Groups Meet in Schools," A13; Martin Tolchin, "Prayer Meetings in Public Schools Cleared by House," A16.

⁸⁶⁷ "Schoolhouse Free-for-All," A22; Tolchin, "Bill Would Let Religion Groups Meet in Schools," A13.

⁸⁶⁸ Nadine Cohodas, "Two House Veterans Scrap on Issue of School Access," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* 42, no. 19 (May 12, 1984): 1104.

⁸⁶⁹ See Katherine Stewart, *The Good News Club: The Christian Right's Assault on America's Children* (New York: Public Affairs, 2012); also see Fritz Detwiler, *Standing on the Premises of God: The Christian Right's Fight to Redefine America's Public Schools* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

⁸⁷⁰ Quoted in Hertzke, *Representing God in Washington*, 177-178.

⁸⁷¹ A November survey revealed that 69% of the country favoured "prayer in public schools." See "National Referendum (Survey #243-G), November 18," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1984*, ed. Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1985), 236; Al Kamen, "Prayer Ban in Schools Reaffirmed," *The Washington Post*, June 5, 1985, A1, A14.

⁸⁷² Indeed, the very day after equal access passed, prayer advocates in the House managed to get a silent prayer rider attached to an education bill. It was largely symbolic, but that it was included in the bill, let alone even considered, spoke to the growing influence of the "moral agenda" coalition. See Steven V. Roberts, "House Rejects Punishing Schools That Either Ban or Require Prayer," *New York Times*, Jul 27, 1984, A1. Moral Majority lead a renewed campaign for school prayer legislation in the summer of 1985, backed by conservative politicians and the White House. See, for example, Kristen Burroughs, "Coalition vows hard drive for vocal prayer in schools," *Washington Times*, July 24, 1985; Mary Kay Quinlan, "Special Reports From the Capital: New push on for school-prayer amendment," *USA Today*, July 24, 1985, 4A; Carol Innerst, "Bennett aide backs prayer amendment," *Washington Times*, July 31, 1985, 5A; Keith B. Richburg, "Religion: Hill Conservatives, Students Lobby Congress for School Prayer," *Washington Times*, August 3, 1985.

journalist observed that “the importance attached to the school-prayer issue in 1984 reflects the remarkable success of conservatives - and the Reagan Administration - in bringing the cause back into the political and legal mainstream.”⁸⁷³

But it was the issue of abortion – more than any contentious school-related matters – that occupied a central place in Reagan’s thoughts and efforts, and he poured more energy into opposing it than any other president in American history. He strongly endorsed legislation to criminalize abortion, sought to restrict federal funds to assist in its practice, condemned it in dozens of public speeches and interviews, met numerous times with anti-abortion leaders, and even penned a eulogy for the burial of aborted fetuses.⁸⁷⁴ In what was perhaps his boldest statement on the subject, Reagan wrote an article, “The Conscience of the Nation” (1983), for *Human Life Review*, which was later published in a book by the same name.⁸⁷⁵ In the essay, the president challenged the constitutional basis of *Roe v. Wade*, compared the fight to end abortion to the abolition of slavery, endorsed proposed legislation in Congress, and referenced steps taken by his administration to curb the practice.⁸⁷⁶ Reagan suggested that while the medical and scientific communities “disagreed on many things,” they all agreed “that the unborn child is alive, is a distinct individual, or is a member of the human species.” There was, though, no consensus regarding the “value” of that life. This, Reagan lamented, was at the core of the problem. “Every legislator, every doctor, and every citizen,” he

⁸⁷³ “Religion Finds a Way to Go to School,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1984, E1. Passage of school prayer legislation has remained a goal of every Republican Party platform to this day.

⁸⁷⁴ On the eulogy, see Byron W. Daynes and Raymond Tatalovich, “Presidential Politics and Abortion, 1972-1988,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (Summer, 1992): 552; The first non-official group Reagan met with after he took office was a New Right-associated anti-abortion organization. See Nicholas Lemann, “Trying to turn a collective sentiment into a government,” *The Washington Post*, Feb 24, 1981, A4.

⁸⁷⁵ Ronald Reagan, “Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation,” *Human Life Review* 6, no. 1 (February 3, 1983): 1-6; Ronald Reagan, *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation*, (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1984). Also included in the book were essays by C. Everett Koop, “The Slide to Auschwitz,” and Malcolm Muggeridge, “The New Holocaust,” both of which had previously appeared in *Human Life Review* (Spring 1977 and Winter 1980 respectively).

⁸⁷⁶ Reagan, *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation*, 16, 19, 27, 22, 30-31, 23. Reagan also suggested that fetuses feel pain, making the same claim at the 1984 Religious Broadcasters Convention: “Medical science doctors confirm that when the lives of the unborn are snuffed out, they often feel pain - pain that is long and agonizing.” See Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters (Jan. 30, 1984),” <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/13084b>. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists responded to the president’s suggestion by stating that “We are unaware of any evidence of any kind that would substantiate a claim that pain is perceived by a fetus.” See Francis X. Clines, “Reagan Appeal on Abortion Is Made to Fundamentalists,” *New York Times*, Jan 31, 1984, A16; also see Ellen Goodman, “Back to Abortion,” *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1984, A13.

pleaded, “needs to recognize that the real issue is whether to affirm and protect the sanctity of all human life, or to embrace a social ethic where some human lives are valued and others are not.” The choice is “between the sanctity of life ethic and the ‘quality of life’ ethic.”⁸⁷⁷

Much as he did with school prayer, Reagan elevated the abortion issue in the public-political discourse and “established the pro-life agenda as a mainstay of Republican doctrine.”⁸⁷⁸ First introduced in 1976 at the insistence of Reagan supporters, the 1980 platform objected to the Supreme Court’s *Roe* decision, called for “a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children,” and advocated “Congressional efforts to restrict the use of taxpayers' dollars for abortion.”⁸⁷⁹ However, unlike school prayer, which a majority of the country favoured, a Gallup poll in the summer of 1980 showed only 18% of Americans wanted to criminalize abortion without exception. Fifty-three percent supported it under certain circumstances (for example, within a defined point during the gestation period, and/or in cases of rape, incest, or if the woman’s health and/or life was in danger), while 25% agreed with the practice under any circumstances (4% had no opinion). These figures were consistent with poll numbers in the post-*Roe* era throughout the 1980s.⁸⁸⁰ Reagan seemed to acknowledge that public opinion was not on their side when he remarked that his position on abortion “may not help me in

⁸⁷⁷ Reagan, *Abortion and the Conscience of the Nation*, 24, 25.

⁸⁷⁸ Daynes and Tatalovich, “Presidential Politics and Abortion, 1972-1988,” 551.

⁸⁷⁹ The 1976 Republican Party Platform stated: “The Republican Party favors a continuance of the public dialogue on abortion and supports the efforts of those who seek enactment of a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children.” See 1976 Republican Party Platform, August 18, 1976, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/1976-democratic-party-platform>; Republican Party Platform of 1980, July 15, 1980, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1980.

⁸⁸⁰ “Abortion” (Survey #159-G), August 28,” in Dr. George H. Gallup, ed., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1980* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1981), 171. Indeed, trends demonstrated these numbers to be generally consistent from 1975 through 1981. See “Abortion - Public Opinion Mired in the Middle Ground: An Analysis” (Special Survey), August 6, in Dr. George H. Gallup, ed., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1981* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1982), 171. In the final year of Reagan’s presidency, polls showed that public opinion remained unchanged. An October survey returned these results: 24% legal under any circumstances; 57% legal under certain circumstances; 17% illegal under all circumstances; 2% no opinion. See “Abortion (special telephone survey) October 23,” in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1988*, ed. Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1989), 206.

some polls...⁸⁸¹ Dismissing the polls entirely, Paul Weyrich argued that “What matters is the perception members of Congress have about your issue and their future.”⁸⁸²

Abortion was, undoubtedly, the most controversial of the Religious Right’s social agenda issues. While a majority of the country supported the practice, they did so provided certain restrictions were applied. As such, many of them took issue with some part of the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* ruling. For example, when asked whether they agreed with the court’s judgment, “that a woman may go to a doctor to end pregnancy at any time during the first three months of pregnancy,” 45% of Americans responded yes, while 46% answered no (9% had no opinion).⁸⁸³ More importantly, the minority who opposed the procedure completely were deeply committed to overturning *Roe v. Wade*, while those who advocated for unrestricted access were equally dedicated to its defence. Jerry Falwell ominously warned that if they failed to overturn the ruling “then America will not survive. If there is no victory, America will not deserve to survive.”⁸⁸⁴ Faye Wattleton, president of Planned Parenthood, called abortion “the most vicious and insidious example of single-issue politics today.”⁸⁸⁵ It is between these two groups that the battle over abortion rights continues to be fought.

⁸⁸¹ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Women Leaders of Christian Religious Organizations (October 13, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983, vol. II* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 1451.

⁸⁸² Paul Weyrich quoted in Leslie Bennetts, “Abortion Foes, at Conference, Plan Strategy of Political Activism” *New York Times*, January 21, 1980, A18.

⁸⁸³ “Abortion (Survey #173-G), May 31,” in Dr. George H. Gallup, ed., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1981* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1982), 112. 113 (The numbers for evangelicals were: 30% yes; 60% no; 10% no opinion). Another poll in July 1983, revealed similar results, though the number of Americans favouring access within the first three months was slightly higher: 50% yes; 43% no; 7% no opinion. See “Abortion (Survey #217-G) July 31,” in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1983*, ed. Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1984), 140. A 1986 survey the results were: 45% favor; 45% oppose; 10% no opinion. See “Abortion (Survey #261-G), February 20,” in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1986*, ed. Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1987), 49. While a 1986 Louis Harris poll found that 56 percent of Americans supported “the Supreme Court ruling giving a woman full abortion rights during the first three months of pregnancy.” See Julia Malone, “Graphic film raises intensity level of US abortion controversy,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Feb 14, 1985, 6

⁸⁸⁴ Jerry Falwell quoted in “‘Amoral’ Groups Threaten Nation, Falwell Declares,” *The Washington Post*, June 9, 1984, A5.

⁸⁸⁵ Epstein, “Abortion: An Issue That Won’t Go Away,” 44.

Much as with school prayer, anti-abortion advocates, while united by their shared objective, found themselves divided over the best vehicle to achieve that goal. By the close of the first anti-abortion campaign (late-nineteenth century), physicians had successfully fostered the view that life begins at conception. In the spring of 1981, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) proposed a Human Life bill which would codify that belief into law, and in the process designate fetuses legal persons. In doing so, it allowed for no exceptions in the cases of rape or incest, provisions that 81% of Americans favoured, and legally prohibited some contraceptives. Pro-choice advocates charged that the bill was a “back door” attempt to amend the Constitution. The measure stripped the court of power, and many experts, including some anti-abortion advocates, had serious doubts as to its constitutionality.⁸⁸⁶

Sharing those reservations was Senator Orrin Hatch, who offered an alternative proposal which would allow individual states to determine abortion's legal status. Both measures would basically nullify the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision. Helms' bill had the advantage of requiring a simple majority vote in Congress, while Hatch's amendment necessitated two-thirds support. But while Hatch's amendment would, theoretically, allow for states to legalize abortion if they so decided, the Human Life bill would outlaw the practice nationwide and tamper with the Constitution's separation of powers. These aspects of Helms' proposal did not sit well with legal scholars and many politicians. New Right and Religious Right groups favoured Hatch's amendment, demonstrating the latter's willingness to accept something less than absolute prohibition, as did the Reagan administration, which preferred to avoid court stripping legislation and had issues with the banning of contraceptives. Other more militant anti-abortion

⁸⁸⁶ Moen *The Christian Right and Congress*, 103-104; “Abortion - Public Opinion Mired in the Middle Ground: An Analysis (Special Survey), August 6,” in Dr. George H. Gallup, ed., *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1981* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1982), 170; Julia Malone, “To a packed gallery,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 24, 1981, 12; “Safeguard the courts,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 19, 1981, 24; Bill Peterson, “Worries for New Right,” *Washington Post*, February 16, 1982, A4.

organizations continued to back Helms' bill. Referring to Hatch's amendment as a "sellout," they argued that it fell seriously short of their objectives and was unlikely to pass.⁸⁸⁷

One of the most ardent of these groups was March for Life. Beginning in 1974, in the wake of the *Roe* ruling, anti-abortion activists, led by organizer Nellie Gray, had staged an annual March for Life rally in Washington D.C. In 1981, only days after being sworn in, Reagan agreed to meet with the event's leaders, but did not offer to address the participants. Feeling slighted, Gray and others declined the president's invitation.⁸⁸⁸ The following year, Reagan hosted anti-abortion leaders, while rebuffing pro-choice activists, and delivered a message to the rally through Health and Human Services Secretary Richard Schweiker.⁸⁸⁹ His 1983 meeting with the group, including Jerry Falwell, "produced excellent reactions" and public praise for the president from "all the major leaders" in attendance.⁸⁹⁰ In his message that year, Reagan called the Supreme Court decision "a tragedy," expressed his commitment "to the sanctity of all innocent human life," and promised to "support any appropriate legislative action that will restrict abortion."⁸⁹¹ One day after the march, he reaffirmed that promise in a Radio Address to the Nation on Domestic Social Issues, in which he referenced the marchers.⁸⁹² He met with anti-abortion leaders and addressed the march every subsequent year he remained president, from 1985 on speaking directly to the

⁸⁸⁷ Moen *The Christian Right and Congress*, 103-105; Bill Peterson, "Worries for New Right," *Washington Post*, February 16, 1982, A4. Bill Peterson, "In the Administration, a Pattern Develops on Conservatives' Agenda," *The Washington Post*, February 22, 1982, A2; Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 79; Paula Herbut, "Chicago Archbishop to Call for massive Protest Against Abortion," *The Washington Post*, January 15, 1983, C10. On the Reagan administration's views on Helms' bill, see Memo, Fred Fielding (Counsel to the President) to Richard Darman (Assistant to the President and Deputy to the Chief of Staff), October 31, 1984, and letter, Ronald Reagan to Jesse Helms, October 30, 1984, folder "'PJR/Human Life Bill,' Letter to Senator Helms, OA11413," box OA's 11411, 11412, 11413, Peter J. Rushtoven Files no. 4, RRL (Helms' Human Life Bill was authored by Washington Attorney Stephen H. Galebach, who later worked in the Reagan Administration at the Office of Policy Development).

⁸⁸⁸ Janet Cooke, "Abortion Foes Stage 8th Annual 'March for Life,'" *The Washington Post*, January 23, 1981, A7.

⁸⁸⁹ Judith Valente, "25,000 Foes of Abortion March Here," *The Washington Post*, January 23, 1982, B1, B7; Bill Peterson, "Reagan Backs Bill to Prohibit Abortion Funds," *The Washington Post*, Jan 22, 1983, A10.

⁸⁹⁰ Memo, Morton Blackwell to Red Cavaney, January 24, 1983, folder "Pro-Life I (2 of 4)," box Series I, PSI (3 of 9), Pro-Life (4 of 6), no. 21, Morton Blackwell Files, RRL.

⁸⁹¹ Address, Ronald Reagan to March for Life, January 21, 1983, folder "Pro-Life I (2 of 4)," box Series I, PSI (3 of 9), Pro-Life (4 of 6), no. 21, Morton Blackwell Files, Ronald Reagan Library.

⁸⁹² Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation on Domestic Social issues (Jan. 22, 1983)," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 95.

crowd via loudspeaker piped in from the White House. Reagan called them “truly dedicated people” who he was “pleased to support.”⁸⁹³ One movement leader called him “our hero” and exclaimed that “He did everything he humanly could to overturn this terrible law. I only hope he is followed by someone who has the courage to do the same thing.”⁸⁹⁴

Religious Right activists kept the abortion issue front and centre. Francis Schaeffer and C. Everett Koop’s anti-abortion book, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*, was developed into a graphic film which aired commercial-free on prime-time television in late December 1980 on Washington’s channel 7. While arguing that it amounted to little more than a propaganda piece, one journalist nevertheless suggested that it “score(d) a resounding 10 points on the emotional Richter scale.”⁸⁹⁵ In early 1982, Jerry Falwell made abortion the focus of an episode of *Old Time Gospel Hour*.⁸⁹⁶ Three years later, anti-abortion forces released a 30-minute film, *The Silent Scream*. The video, even more graphic than *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*, received wide distribution, particularly to members of Congress and the Supreme Court, and later appeared on television programs like *Old Time Gospel Hour*.⁸⁹⁷ Reagan, given a private showing at the White House, called the movie “most impressive” and questioned “how anyone could deny that the fetus is a living human being.”⁸⁹⁸

In late July 1982, the administration, for the first time, directly intervened in the “abortion controversy” before the Supreme Court. While not directly challenging *Roe v. Wade*, Solicitor General Rex E. Lee, in a “friend of the court” brief, argued that regulating abortions should fall to the state, while requesting the Justices uphold laws, in Missouri and Akron, Ohio, that restricted a woman’s access to the

⁸⁹³ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, vol. II, ed. Douglas Brinkley, 564.

⁸⁹⁴ Quoted in Karlyn Barker and Bill McAllister, “50,000 Protest Abortion on Ruling’s Anniversary,” *The Washington Post*, January 23, 1988, A13.

⁸⁹⁵ Judy Mann, “No Matter How Moving, Show Still Propaganda,” *The Washington Post*, January 2, 1981, D1.

⁸⁹⁶ Falwell wrote Reagan and other members of the administration about the television episode. See, for example, letter, Jerry Falwell to Ronald Reagan, January 25, 1982, ID# 057799, box PR 016-01 (057701-139000) no. 20, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁸⁹⁷ Julia Malone, “Graphic film raises intensity level of US abortion controversy,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Feb 14, 1985, 6.

⁸⁹⁸ Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, vol. I, ed. Douglas Brinkley, 419.

procedure. In what one senior administration official called “a matter of courtesy,” Paul Weyrich, who was still on reasonably good terms with the president, was directly contacted with the news, which was quickly shared by Jerry Falwell with whom Weyrich was holding a press briefing at the “Family Forum II.”⁸⁹⁹ Falwell praised the White House: “It’s good to have the federal government on the side of the unborn,” while four leading medical groups requested the Supreme Court overturn the Akron ordinance, which imposed “restrictions during the first trimester of pregnancy.”⁹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, in the Senate, Helms’ had conceded to pressure and revised his bill. Abandoning the statement that life begins at conception, it declared “that the Supreme Court erred in 1973 when it ruled that women have abortion rights.”⁹⁰¹ When he proposed it as an amendment to a debt ceiling bill in the fall of 1982, the measure faced debate and a lengthy filibuster. Reagan intervened, urging the Senate to end discussion and bring it to a vote. In a letter to key Senators, the president assured the recipients that he had no intention of hindering “any other anti-abortion measures,” but stressed the legislation’s importance as “the first clear-cut vote in this Congress on the humanity of the unborn.”⁹⁰² Helms’ amendment eventually got its vote, but lost by the slimmest of margins, 47 to 46. Hatch acknowledged that his constitutional amendment also lacked the necessary support for passage.⁹⁰³ As the 97th Congress was winding down, one anti-abortion leader expressed what everyone understood: “the chances of

⁸⁹⁹ Fred Barbash, “Court Asked to Allow States More Control Over Abortion,” *The Washington Post*, July 30, 1982, A1, A6.

⁹⁰⁰ Victor Cohn, “AMA Attacks Akron Abortion Rules,” *The Washington Post*, Aug 31, 1982, A13; Peterson, Barbash, and Russell, “After Roe v. Wade,” A12, A13.

⁹⁰¹ Julia Malone, “Social legislation push by conservatives runs out of gas,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Aug 20, 1982, 5.

⁹⁰² “Ronald Reagan, “Letter to Selected Members of the Senate on an Antiabortion Amendment to a Federal Debt Ceiling Bill (September 8, 1982),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1982*, vol. II (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 1104, 1105. Also see Memo, Morton Blackwell to Elizabeth Dole, August 20, 1982, folder “Pro-Life I (2 of 4),” box Series I, PSI (3 of 9), Pro-Life (4 of 6), no. 21, Morton Blackwell Files, RRL (Blackwell suggested that while there had previously been discord between two factions within the anti-abortion movement, and thus had requested the president not endorse any one proposal over another, they had now united behind Helms’ “initiative.” Blackwell paints a dire scene “if the president fails to take specific steps to obtain cloture in the Senate on Senator Packwood’s filibuster” - Christian conservatives will see this “failure” as a “betrayal.”).

⁹⁰³ Peterson, Barbash, and Russell, “After Roe v. Wade,” A12.

enacting any new pro-life legislation before the 97th Congress adjourns seem miniscule.” Nevertheless, he viewed these setbacks as merely “a delay but not a defeat.”⁹⁰⁴

Anti-abortion advocates, however, continued to face an uphill battle, suffering political, judicial, and legislative setbacks in Congress. The first of which came with the '82 midterm elections, when only one of the pro-choice senators targeted for defeat lost his seat and about “20 to 25 more members who favor abortion rights” were elected to the chamber.⁹⁰⁵ Helms and Hatch reintroduced abortion legislation in 1983, as did Representative Henry Hyde, who hoped to make permanent his “Hyde Amendment,” which restricted federal funds for abortion, limitations 56% of Americans opposed, through the passage of the “Respect for Life Act.”⁹⁰⁶ The bill would also restrict federal funds to hospitals that “withheld treatment, even at the request of parents, from handicapped children.” Most controversial was “a finding of Congress” (a statement of position without legal standing) that “scientific evidence demonstrates human life begins at conception,” a conclusion that was highly contentious within the medical and legal community. Reagan supported the legislation, endorsing it privately and publicly in several letters, comments, and speeches.⁹⁰⁷ “Not only does this bill strengthen and expand restrictions on abortions financed by tax dollars,” he observed, “it also makes clear the right of all children, including those who

⁹⁰⁴ Memo, Richard Doerflinger to Pro-Life and Respect Life Coordinators and State Catholic Conference Directors, September 17, 1982, folder “Pro-Life I (2 of 4),” box Series I, PSI (3 of 9), Pro-Life (4 of 6), no. 21, Morton Blackwell Files, RRL.

⁹⁰⁵ Article, Melinda Beck with Lucy Howard and Diane Camper, *Newsweek*, “The Issue That Won’t Go Away,” January 31, 1983, 31, folder “Pro-Life I (2 of 4),” box Series I, PSI (3 of 9), Pro-Life (4 of 6), no. 21, Morton Blackwell Files, RRL.

⁹⁰⁶ In a July 1980 decision that established that “the government has a legitimate interest in protecting potential life,” the Supreme Court voted 5 to 4 that “states are under no obligation to provide abortion funding for poor women.” The ruling determined the Hyde amendment, which bans federal funding of abortion other than when the woman’s life is in danger or in cases of rape or incest, “does not violate a woman’s constitutional rights.” See “Supreme Court rules against abortion funds,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 1, 1980, 6; and George B. Merry, “Court rulings, Reagan election infuse anti-abortionists with new drive,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec 15, 1980, 15; “Public Opinion Referendum (Survey #202-G): Proposition 15: Federal Financing of Abortion, October 31,” in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1982*, ed. Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1983), 252.

⁹⁰⁷ Peterson, Barbash, and Russell, “After Roe v. Wade,” A12; Bill Peterson, “Reagan Backs Bill to Prohibit Abortion Funds,” *The Washington Post*, Jan 22, 1983, A1.

are born handicapped, to food and appropriate medical treatment after birth, and it has the full support of this administration.”⁹⁰⁸

Then, on June 15, 1983, the Supreme Court, by a vote of 6 to 3, struck down the Akron, Ohio law, and a related one in Virginia, thereby confirming a woman’s right to an abortion during the second trimester, dealing a blow to the Reagan administration and its allies. Religious Right and New Right activists could take some comfort in the fact that Sandra Day O’Connor voted with the minority in support of states’ rights to regulate abortion.⁹⁰⁹ Reagan, “expressing profound disappointment,” urged Congress to “restore legal protections for the unborn whether by statute or constitutional amendment.”⁹¹⁰ The president’s appeal fell on deaf ears. Less than two weeks later, on June 28, the Senate voted against Hatch’s amendment, 49 to 50, falling 18 votes short of the 67 needed to pass. Helms’ bill never got a vote in the 98th (1983-1984) congress, falling to the filibuster, and Hyde’s amendment never made it out of committee.⁹¹¹ Anti-abortion advocates would continue to push for legislation banning the procedure and Reagan would continue to support those efforts through the second term of his presidency. In 1985, the president proclaimed a “Sanctity of Human Life Day” in which he declared: “If America is to remain what God, in His wisdom, intended for it to be - a refuge, a safe haven for those seeking human rights - then we must once again extend the most basic human right to the most vulnerable members of the human family.” In each of the following years of his presidency, Reagan dedicated a day in mid-January to the

⁹⁰⁸ “Ronald Reagan, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters, January 31, 1983,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 153.

⁹⁰⁹ Curtis J. Sitomer, “High court abortion ruling favors individual rights,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 16, 1983, 3.

⁹¹⁰ Ronald Reagan, “Statement on the United States Supreme Court Decision on Abortion (June 16, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), 876.

⁹¹¹ Julia Malone, “For senators, no way to duck decision on abortion,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 27, 1983, 6; Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 79; Ellen Goodman, “Back to Abortion,” *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1984, A13.

sanctity of human life.⁹¹² A few weeks later, in his State of the Union Address, Reagan told Americans that “the question of abortion grips our nation.” Suggesting it was “the taking of human life” and “must be stopped,” he called on “Congress to move this year on legislation to protect the unborn.”⁹¹³

In mid-July 1985, the Justice Department filed a “friend of the court” brief in two upcoming Supreme Court abortion cases, one from Pennsylvania and another from Illinois, launching what one journalist called “a head-on assault on the abortion issue.” Directly challenging the court by suggesting that the *Roe* decision was activist in nature, the brief, personally approved by the president, argued that “women do not have a constitutional right to abortion,” and that the procedure should be regulated by the states, not the federal government. The brief also argued, as Reagan had before, that “advances in medical technology have made it possible to sustain a fetus at a much earlier stage in its development,” though this was contradictory to the prevailing view within the medical community. In an effort to circumvent the legislative process, the Reagan administration was attempting to “enact conservative reforms” through the courts.⁹¹⁴ In response, and in what could only be described as a public rebuke, 68 members of the House along with 13 senators, among them 5 and 6 Republicans respectively including Barry Goldwater, responded by filing a “friend of the court” brief in opposition to the Justice Department.⁹¹⁵

While waiting for the courts, Reagan relied on rhetoric to press the cause. In the 1986 State of the Union, the president called abortion “a wound in our national conscience,” and committed himself to

⁹¹² Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5292 - National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 1985, Jan. 14, 1985,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1985*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986), 39.

⁹¹³ Ronald Reagan, “Address Before a Joint Senate of the Congress on the State of the Union, February 6, 1985,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1985*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986), 133.

⁹¹⁴ Warren Richey, “Reagan’s conservative Supreme Court agenda causes stir in GOP,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Sep 6, 1985, NL6; Warren Richey, “Reagan switches strategy on abortion challenge in court,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jul 17, 1985, 3; “News in brief: Meese insists that the state has right to regulate abortion,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 18, 1985, 2

⁹¹⁵ Richey, “Reagan’s conservative Supreme Court agenda causes stir in GOP,” NL6.

doing “what I can” to heal it.⁹¹⁶ Two days later, in a message to Congress, he argued that abortion “debases the underpinnings of our country,” and urged that body “to pass legislation prohibiting the use of all Federal funds to finance, promote, encourage or otherwise support abortion.”⁹¹⁷ In June, the Supreme Court weighed in on the abortion debate with a succession of rulings, and in the process delivered the administration a series of stinging blows. The justices ruled in one case “that federal authorities may not regulate parents’ decisions regarding infants born with severe birth defects” and in another, the Pennsylvania case, reaffirmed the basic principle of *Roe v. Wade* by a vote of 5 to 4.⁹¹⁸ Later that year, the Supreme Court voted 5 to 3 that it was unconstitutional for states to “cut off their payments to private groups because the groups offer abortions or abortion counseling.”⁹¹⁹

Around the same time, both the administration and the evangelical community found themselves embroiled in scandal. In November, what became known as the Iran-Contra Affair, involving the sale of arms to Iran and the funneling of funds to Nicaraguan rebels, broke to the public. Though Reagan was implicated, he managed to survive congressional investigations with his presidency intact.⁹²⁰ Still, the whole episode, coupled with the historic nuclear disarmament discussions with the Soviet Union, left Reagan with little time and dwindling political capital to expend. Compounding matters was a brewing dissension within the televangelical community - made worse when a few prominent televangelists, significantly Jim Bakker, who, while not a leading figure in the movement, was associated with the

⁹¹⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union (Feb. 4, 1986),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1986*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 128.

⁹¹⁷ Ronald Reagan, “Message to the Congress on America’s Agenda for the Future (Feb. 6, 1986),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1986*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 157.

⁹¹⁸ Curtis J. Sitomer, “Supreme Court reaffirms key abortion law,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 12, 1986, 1; “Roe: freedom and restraint,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 13, 1986, 17 (Anti-abortion advocates, while extremely disappointed with the Pennsylvania ruling, could take some consolation in the close vote of 5 to 4 and the fact that Justice O’Connor, again, voted with the minority in dissent. Moreover, Chief Justice Warren Burger, who had previously voted in favour of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, reversed his decision, also siding with the minority. Indeed, Burger made clear in an interview just prior to his retirement “that the time has come to re-examine the whole abortion issue.”).

⁹¹⁹ “News in Brief: State aid cuts to groups offering abortion nullified ...,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Nov 4, 1986, 2.

⁹²⁰ On the Iran-Contra Affair, see Theodore Draper, *A Very Thin Line: The Iran-Contra Affair* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1991).

Religious Right, found themselves enmeshed in scandals of their own, primarily financial and sexual in nature. Bakker's transgressions, which lead to the collapse of his ministry and an eventual prison sentence, were headline news for months.⁹²¹ These setbacks were exacerbated by the Democrats electoral sweep in the 1986 midterms, in which they increased their majority in the House and regained the Senate.

Despite Republicans' minority status, Reagan, rebuffed by the courts, turned his attention back to Congress. In mid-February he submitted legislation that called for enacting the Hyde amendment restrictions "on a permanent, governmentwide (sic) basis" and "cut off funding, under title 10, to private organizations that refer or perform abortions except when the mother's life is in danger."⁹²² While 66% of Americans disapproved of withholding federal financing from these groups, Religious Right leaders wrote to convey their support. James Dobson later called the decision "courageous" and passed on his gratitude for the administration's "respect for pro-family value's, particularly with regard to the sanctity of human lives"⁹²³ Falwell, too, expressed his appreciation in a telegram.⁹²⁴ Beyond his proposal, Reagan was highly critical of Senator Edward Kennedy's (D-Mass.) Family Planning Amendments Act of 1987 (S. 1366, also known as the "Grove City Bill"), which which would, among other things, allow medical

⁹²¹ Jacqueline Trescott, "The Televangelists Putting Their House in Order," *The Washington Post*, February 1, 1989, D1, D4; Mary McGrory, "The Cries of the Pursued," *The Washington Post*, June 21, 1987, B1, B5; Don Oldenburg, "The Fundamentals of Disillusionment," *The Washington Post*, May 12, 1987, D5; Dan Tracy, "Florida Track Owner 'Saves' Oral Roberts," *The Orlando Sentinel*, March 22, 1987, <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1987-03-22-8701220115-story.html>; Jeffrey A. Frank and Lloyd Groves "The Raging Battles of the Evangelicals," *The Washington Post*, March 25, 1987, A1, A14; "Lloyd Grove, "The Paper Trail and the Fallen Evangelicals," *The Washington Post*, March 26, 1987, C1; "Jim Bakker Resigns His TV Ministry," *The Washington Post*, March 20, 1987, C1; Lloyd Grove, "Scandal Shakes Bakkers' Empire," *The Washington Post*, March 21, 1987, A1, A8; "Unnamed Rival Accused Of Plot to Oust Bakker," *The Washington Post*, Mar 22, 1987, A7; Michael Isikoff and Art Harris, PTL Ministry Files Under Chapter 11," *The Washington Post*, June 13, 1987, A1, A12; Michael Isikoff and Art Harris, "Missing Millions," *The Washington Post*, June 21, 1987, B1, B2; Ruth Marcus, "Jim Bakker, Former Aides Are Indicted in PTL Case," *The Washington Post*, December 6, 1988, A1, A38; Art Harris, "Bakker Convicted On All 24 Fraud, Conspiracy Counts," *The Washington Post*, October 6, 1989, A1, A52.

⁹²² Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Conservative Political Action Conference Luncheon (Feb 20, 1987)," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1987, vol. I* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 167.

⁹²³ "Abortion (special telephone survey), October 23," in *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1988*, ed. Dr. George H. Gallup (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1989), 209; Letter, James Dobson to Ronald Reagan, July 30, 1987, ID# 508364, folder, "WE 003, Family Planning - Abortion (500000-508499)," box WE 003 493500 – 552319 no. 10, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁹²⁴ Telegram, Jerry Falwell to Reagan administration (undated, but received January 28, 1987) ID# 458357, box FA 407994 (2 of 2) – 485575 no. 21, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

practitioners/hospitals (including those with religious affiliations) to be charged if they refused to perform an abortion. Arguing that it failed to comply with regulations, the administration “recommend(ed) that the bill not be favorably considered.”⁹²⁵ The president also resisted any funds appropriated for the District of Columbia being used for abortion, except in cases where “the life of the mother would be physically endangered.”⁹²⁶

Reagan continued to push for legislation and speak out against what he regarded as the evils of abortion, but his bill never made any headway, nor did the dozen or so other abortion-related pieces of legislation put forth in the 100th (1987-1988) congress. Nevertheless, just days before his presidency ended, Reagan made clear his conviction in a speech to the Knights of Malta (a Catholic group): “When *Roe* versus *Wade* goes - as I have faith it must - the way of Dred Scott and ‘separate but equal,’ a new debate will rise in the statehouses of our land. And the voice that I believe must be heard and, in the end shall be heard over all the others is the voice of life.”⁹²⁷ Despite Reagan’s support, vocal and otherwise, the campaign to outlaw abortion fell victim to resistance from a combination of the same forces - public opinion, organized opposition, Congress, and the courts - that doomed school prayer and tax relief for Christian schools and their patrons. But to judge Reagan’s contributions or Religious Right success purely in terms of the passage of legislation, would be a mistake, though even here there was progress.

⁹²⁵ Letter, Dr. Otis R. Bowen (Secretary of Health and Human Services) to Senator Edward Kennedy (Chairman, Committee on Labor and Human Resources), October 21, 1987, ID# 508364, and Memo and Draft Position of S. 1366, Alan Kranowitz to Joseph White, April 19, 1988, ID #580944, folder, “WE 003, Family Planning - Abortion (580570 - 582563), box WE 003 552320 – 584499 no. 11, WHORM: Subject File, RRL.

⁹²⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Message to the Congress Transmitting the Fiscal Year 1988 District of Columbia Budget (April 27, 1987),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1987, vol. I* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), 420; Ronald Reagan, “Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate Transmitting the District of Columbia Budget (April 29, 1988),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1988, vol. I* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 534.

⁹²⁷ See, for example, Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5761 - National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 1988 (January 14, 1988),” and “1988 Legislative and Administrative Message: A Union of Individuals (January 25, 1988),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1988, vol. I* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), 43, 120; “Remarks at the Annual Dinner of the Knights of Malta in New York, New York (January 13, 1989),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1988-89* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), 1734.

Reagan intervened in court cases in support of the moral agenda, and his judicial appointments, more than any previous president, were consistently conservative, helping to initiate a shift to the right in the nation's courts. While *Roe v. Wade* was still the law of the land, states continued to chip away at it, and the consensus on the Supreme Court was weakening. The original case had been decided by a vote of 7 to 2, but the subsequent rulings during Reagan's presidency were decided by narrower margins (6-3 and 5-4), in part due to Reagan's appointee, Justice O'Connor (Scalia and Kennedy were not involved in either decision). In addition, the majority had consistently upheld the Hyde amendments restricting federal funding of abortion and, in a handful of instances, maintained states' rights to legislate some abortion-related restrictions.⁹²⁸ The passage of silent prayer, though largely symbolic, represented progress in Congress. More important was equal access, which provided Christian conservatives access to the nation's public schools, offering opportunities beyond prayer. Overall, the number of bills introduced, and hearings held on key issues such as school prayer, abortion, and tax credits/vouchers rose dramatically in the 97th (1981-1982) and 98th (1983-1984) congresses compared to the 96th (1979-1980), in no small part due to the influence of both the Religious Right and the White House on the congressional agenda.⁹²⁹

Broadly speaking, the administration endorsed Christian conservative-friendly policies (the family, free-enterprise, and a muscular anti-communist foreign policy). Most importantly, and in relation to the contributions noted above, Reagan effectively used the power of the bully pulpit to promote, and subsequently normalize, the movement and the moral agenda, even if they failed to gain popular support among the public. Issues such as abortion and school prayer had become, not just central planks of the Republican Party, but also serious, if not successful, congressional agenda items and mainstream topics of discussion within the public-political discourse.

⁹²⁸ Nesmith, *The New republican Coalition*, 88; Ronald Reagan to Teresa Asheraft, July 23, 1986, in *Dear Americans: Letters from the Desk of President Ronald Reagan*, ed. Ralph Edward Weber and Ralph A. Weber (New York: Broadway, 2003), 273 (Reagan notes the "progress" made in terms of the courts in this letter to a disappointed anti-abortion advocate); Curtis J. Sitomer, "Abortion a Clash of Rights and Ideals," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jan 12, 1988, 16; "The news-briefly: Court upholds abortion-notice law," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Mar 24, 1981, 2; and Curtis J. Sitomer, "High court abortion ruling favors individual rights," 3.

⁹²⁹ Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress*, 57, 142-143.

Conclusion:

Wrapping Up and Looking Forward

While Christian conservatives' political engagement, spurred on by secular activists, manifested in the emergence of the Religious Right, which Reagan was largely responsible for legitimizing, the groundwork for the movement was laid over decades and rooted in a religious spirit that can be traced to the Puritans and the earliest days of colonial America. While not quite technical theocracies, New England colonies were heavily infused with a Protestant religious influence.⁹³⁰ Central to this was the Puritans' view of government, which was rooted in Old Testament theology, specifically the idea of a covenant with, or sanctified by, God.⁹³¹ While this influence ebbed and flowed over the first hundred-odd years of (largely British) European settlement in the New World, it served to provide the foundations for a religious revival, the Great Awakening, in the early-mid 1700s, which gave birth to a new movement, evangelicalism. Over the next roughly two centuries, evangelicalism and its more democratic religious outlook came to supplant puritanism and its more rigid, hierarchical approach, and, building on the idea of a covenant, helped provide the impetus for the revolutionary spirit that fueled the war for independence from the British Empire. Consistent with both approaches was a belief that religion ought to play a prominent role in culture, society, and politics, even while that role, and its influence, continued to remain inconsistent. A Second Great Awakening in the late 18th-early 19th centuries revitalized a lagging religiosity in the decades following the American Revolution and the ascendance of Enlightenment ideas. In the process, it "Christianized" the nation and added a spirit of social reform, particularly in the North.

Religion, overwhelmingly evangelical and conservative in nature, flourished in the United States during the better part of the 1800s, enjoying, perhaps, its most prominent place in society since the early-

⁹³⁰ Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 39, 108; Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 1-2; Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture*, 29-31; also see Carroll, *Puritanism and the Wilderness: The Intellectual Significance of the New England Frontier, 1629-1700*, 8-9.

⁹³¹ Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 38-48; Hall, *Puritans in the New World*, 161, 162, 178-179; Wilson, *Public Religion in American Culture*, 29-32.

mid seventeenth century. But by the closing decades of the 1800s, this standing faced serious challenges as a result of cultural and social changes, marked by industrialization and urbanization, coupled with an intellectual revolution in science and philosophy, encapsulated in what was termed “modernism.” In the wake of this secularist assault, the evangelical movement suffered a series of schisms. Moderate and liberal evangelicals adapted to these changes, reconciling their biblical beliefs with naturalistic theories, while more conservative Protestants condemned accommodation and further entrenched themselves in their traditional views. Many of these uncompromising evangelicals adopted a pessimistic dispensational premillennialist interpretation of the Bible and gravitated toward the principles - including biblical inerrancy, creation according to the account in Genesis, the Virgin birth, Christ’s resurrection, and the Second Coming (of Christ) - being espoused in a series of essays, collectively referred to as the fundamentals. These fundamentalists waged a losing war against modernism in both the church and in the nation’s classrooms; after which their movement was discredited, with Protestant Christianity, generally, suffering a similar fate. Fundamentalists and evangelicals largely receded from the public sphere into separatist sub-cultures. Internal dissention lead to a split within the fundamentalist movement in the early 1940s, with the more moderate conservative wing taking the name neo-evangelicals. This group, led by Billy Graham, would spearhead a, largely Christian, religious revival in the post-World War II period as the United States faced off against atheistic communism. Weaving religion and nationalism together, Graham did much to elevate the relevance of conservative Christianity in American society while contributing to the rehabilitation of evangelicals’ image.

Simultaneously, the intellectual community saw a resurgence in two schools of thought, classical liberalism, which stressed individual freedoms and liberties, and traditional conservatism, rooted in religion, virtue, order, and authority, inspired by, among others, the writings of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, and Richard Weaver and Russell Kirk respectively. While these two philosophies espoused antithetical principles, they came to form an ideology, modern American conservatism, unique to the United States. Initially bound by a common enmity towards communism abroad and New Deal

liberalism at home, the two groups eventually coalesced around Frank Meyer's theory of fusion, which posited that the core principles of classical liberalism and traditionalism, were dependent upon one another.⁹³² While Meyer never really reconciled the differences between the two schools of thought, fusion would serve as the underlying theory around which an emerging political movement was based. This modern, or "new," conservative movement was centred in the Republican Party. In 1960, it began what amounted to a twenty-year campaign to take over the GOP and shift the political center to the right. In this assault on the liberal status-quo, politicians, most notably Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, were aided by prominent activists, significantly individuals such as William F. Buckley Jr. and Phyllis Schlafly, who were building an infrastructure comprised of think tanks, journals, foundations, lobbyists, and academics.

The vast majority of evangelicals and fundamentalists, ensconced in their separatist sub-culture since the late 1920s, were not active in politics, and those who did vote, particularly those in the South, generally supported the Democratic Party's New Deal economic policies. A small constituency – including Carl McIntyre, Billy James Hargis, and, most notably, Billy Graham – had broken from this norm and become politically active, largely in terms of anti-communism, in the early postwar period. McIntyre and Hargis were more ideological than partisan, while Graham began developing ties with Republican politicians, helping to draw a growing, but still relatively small, number of evangelicals into the Republican fold. These Protestant Christian conservatives were a small constituency of a growing grassroots movement that emerged in earnest in the early 1960s in support of Barry Goldwater and, in the case of evangelicals, in opposition to the Catholic John F. Kennedy, in the presidential election. Goldwater became the first modern conservative political icon, but in the wake of his electoral loss to Lyndon Johnson in 1964, the movement's leadership passed to Ronald Reagan, whose California

⁹³² Meyer, "Freedom, Tradition, and Conservatism," 8-9; also see Meyer, *In Defense of Freedom: A Conservative Credo*, particularly 1-7 for one of the first articulations of "fusionism."

gubernatorial win in 1966 helped signal the conservative movement's transformation from an intellectual endeavor into a respectable "mainstream political alternative."⁹³³

Goldwater had put modern American conservatism on the political map, but he was not really the ideal individual to represent the ideology. He made rhetorical attempts to appeal to both constituencies within the conservative movement, but he was, at heart, a libertarian who later opposed the Religious Right's moral agenda.⁹³⁴ His successor, Ronald Reagan, was much more an embodiment of the fusion Frank Meyer had envisioned. Reagan, too, identified more with classical liberalism, but his political ideology was rooted in strong religious principles, which, while not "conservative" per se, instilled in him basic cultural and social mores common to traditionalist thought. His father imparted to him a belief in the individual and self-determination, while his pious mother and the teachings of the Disciples of Christ reinforced the basic tenets of classical liberalism within the context of Christian values. Central to this political-religious philosophy was a belief in divine destiny and the providential nature of America and its role in the world, the power of prayer, an optimistic view of human nature, individual responsibility, respect for capitalism, opposition to communism, and a preference for church and neighborly charity. For much of his early-adult life, Reagan kept his religiosity relatively private, but his writings, public pronouncements, friendships, and policy objectives reveal that religion played a prominent role throughout his entire life.

Reagan's journey from his childhood in Dixon, Illinois to conservative icon was marked by a series of events that transformed him from a classical liberal Democrat to a modern conservative Republican. While his political affiliation changed, his core philosophy remained largely consistent, and his belief that religion and politics were inseparable provided him with a predisposition towards the idea of fusion. Prior to the cultural and social changes in the mid-late 1960s, Reagan's religiosity was revealed, with exceptions such as school prayer, through his positions on issues surrounding economics, freedom, and

⁹³³ Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP*, 140.

⁹³⁴ Frank Rich, "The Right Stuff," *New York Times*, June 3, 1998, A25; David Brooks, "The Consistency of a Conservative," *New York Times*, Jan 3, 1999, SM30.

foreign policy. With the emergence of the counterculture and second-wave feminism, it would find expression in his views on social issues. The most controversial of these was at the centre of the public-political discourse as Reagan took office as the Governor of California.

Largely absent from the public discourse since the late 19th century, the re-emergence of the abortion issue in the mid-1960s was both a driving force behind the liberal socio-cultural shift and one of its most visible manifestations. Prior to the late 19th century, the practice had been, if not common, certainly not rare. Its legal status was governed by British Common Law and its practice was not criminal if carried out before what was referred to as “quickening.” After that period, around the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy, the act was illegal, but was not considered murder and did not bring serious charges. Most religious groups, like most Americans generally, recognised the concept of quickening and were comfortable with, or at least accepting of, the legal status of abortion as interpreted through British Common Law. The Catholic Church in the United States, despite several official declarations over the centuries from the Vatican, did not hold an official position on the issue, nor did any major Protestant denomination, which relied on Scripture for guidance and found little direction on the subject in the Bible.

When, in the mid 19th century, a campaign to criminalize abortion was fought, neither the Catholic Church nor any other major Protestant denomination took part. As such, religion contributed little to “the origins and evolution of anti-abortion attitudes” during this period.⁹³⁵ Instead, it was “regular” (or elite) doctors who spearheaded the effort, which, by the late 1880s, had succeeded in having abortion outlawed across the country. These physicians seized on the issue largely as a means to gain control over the practice of medicine in the United States. To achieve their objectives, they weighed in definitively on an ongoing debate, with its origins in ancient Greece, that had traditionally been the purview of philosophers and theologians - whether an embryo/fetus constitutes a life and whether its destruction constitutes murder.⁹³⁶ When physicians argued that life begins at conception, they “claimed scientific authority to

⁹³⁵ Mohr, *Abortions in America*, 191-196.

⁹³⁶ Noonan, Jr., “An Almost Absolute Value in History,” 1-59.

define life and death,” not only eroding the church’s moral authority, but also delegitimizing over two thousand years of theological and philosophical debate. In doing so, they weakened the moral foundation for abortion at any stage and reshaped future debates on the subject.⁹³⁷

The liberalization of abortion laws, a result of shifting attitudes, during the mid-late 1960s and the subsequent legalization of the practice in the wake of the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, sparked a second anti-abortion crusade. Unlike its predecessor, this 20th century campaign was heavily influenced by religion. Initially, this was the Catholic Church, which responded to the court decision with a concerted effort to overturn *Roe*. The legal ruling, however, elicited little opposition from Protestant Christians, many of whom supported some liberalization of the law, and their role, with exceptions, was very limited in the early years of the campaign to recriminalize abortion. While many traditional, largely Catholic, conservatives opposed the *Roe* decision, the issue was not a priority on its own for classical liberals and Protestant Christians when it came to perceived societal ills. Before abortion came to best symbolize both the Religious Right as well as its association with Ronald Reagan, traditional conservative concerns were directed toward broader, more urgent societal problems - the spread of secular humanism and the crystallizing culture war, manifest in “liberal” court rulings (on issues such as school prayer and Bible reading), racial unrest, counterculture revolt, the entrenchment of feminism, and the emergence of a gay rights movement.

While the late 1960s and 1970s saw conservatives grappling with a shifting socio-cultural milieu, they were also engaged in a struggle for control of the Republican Party. Goldwater’s loss to Lyndon Johnson led the establishment to push back against the conservative insurgence. Right-wingers were purged from party organizations, including Dean Burch, the RNC chairman, and NFRW vice-president Phyllis Schlafly. Many, significantly Ronald Reagan, resisted these actions, but they were, for the moment, kept in check by the moderates. While Republicans made inroads in the Senate and the House in

⁹³⁷ Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*, 31-32; Reagan, *When Abortion was a Crime: Women, Medicine and Law in the United States, 1867-1973*, 13-14.

the mid-late 1960s and 1970s, Democrats maintained control of both congressional chambers. On the state level, conservatives won several governorships, including California (Reagan) in 1966 and 1970. Richard Nixon regained the White House for the GOP from 1968-1976, though many on the right were sceptical when it came to his commitment to conservative values. Some even supported a last-minute attempt to sabotage his nomination by backing Reagan at the party convention. Their fears were eventually confirmed when Nixon ended up, with exceptions, governing as a moderate.

The 1970s' saw an intensification of the culture wars, significantly the battles over equal rights for women and homosexuals. While these issues, and the efforts of individuals like Billy Graham, drew growing numbers of Christian conservatives into the world of politics, neither women's rights or gay rights, nor school prayer or abortion, served to ignite any large-scale activism on the part of evangelicals or fundamentalists. They may have had strong feelings about some, or all, of these matters, but none were seen as an overt threat to their sub-cultures. All this changed when the Internal Revenue Service, under Nixon, began enforcing the Civil Rights related non-discrimination policy as it pertained to private Christian schools, which evangelicals and fundamentalists saw as a direct threat to their separatist autonomy. In the spring of 1975, the IRS informed Bob Jones University, a prominent fundamentalist institution which practiced segregation, that they were in violation of the law. Before charges were officially brought against Bob Jones, in January 1976, a presidential election took place. The Democratic candidate (and then president), born-again Baptist Jimmy Carter, was a pivotal figure, both in terms of reimbuing the political discourse with a religious spirituality and in mobilizing an evangelical voting bloc. But disappointment with his policies ultimately drove this constituency into the Republican Party. Most significantly, Carter's administration did nothing to alleviate the issue of tax exemptions for Christian schools, which was the impetus behind the formation of what would manifest into the Religious Right at the close of the decade.

A loose coalition of organizations, founded by New Right political activists, significantly Paul Weyrich, Howard Phillips, Ed McAteer, and Bob Billings, and several influential fundamentalist leaders,

notably Jerry Falwell, Francis Schaeffer, Tim LaHaye, and Pat Robertson, the Religious Right's platform expanded beyond the matter of tax exemptions to include a whole host of issues centred around morality and the family, though one in particular came to symbolize the movement. Conservative political activists and evangelical and fundamentalist leaders, despite having expressed little opposition in the past, co-opted the abortion issue, much as the 19th century physicians had. Abortion came to encapsulate many of the social issues associated with the culture war, most significantly feminism, which conservatives saw as a threat to the nation's moral fabric, symbolized by the traditional family. As such, it provided New Right and fundamentalist leaders an ideal issue upon which to unify religious and secular conservatives and build a national movement to advance a broader socio-political vision.

Aligning themselves with the Republican Party, Religious Right organizations, significantly Moral Majority, Christian Voice, and Religious Roundtable, emerged in force for the 1980 presidential election in support of Ronald Reagan, who fully embraced the movement's moral agenda. Evangelicals and fundamentalists helped sweep the former Hollywood actor into the White House, along with numerous conservatives into the House of Representatives and the Senate. This rightward shift in the American zeitgeist, symbolized by what came to be called the "Reagan era," or "Age of Reagan," included a fusion of religion and politics best characterized by the rise of the Religious Right. By the mid-1980s, Christian conservatives and their social agenda had regained a level of prominence and political influence not seen since the early 20th century, prior to evangelicals' retreat in the face of modernism.⁹³⁸ Over two decades later, one writer observed that "Evangelicals' presence in the public square is now taken for granted, which is quite remarkable from a historical perspective..." Adding, "now it is quite rare to find

⁹³⁸ Hopson and Smith, "Changing Fortunes," 2; Nesmith, *The New Republican Coalition*, 137; also see Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*, 405.

On the Religious Right's influence on state politics, also see Kimberly H. Conger, *The Christian Right in Republican State Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

evangelicals, especially pastors, who are not actively involved in issue advocacy and promoting particular candidates who support evangelical conceptions of the good society.”⁹³⁹

It was no accident that the Religious Right’s ascendance occurred during Ronald Reagan’s presidency. Indeed, he was one of the individuals most instrumental in helping to bring it about. During his eight years in the White House, Reagan served as a virtual spokesman for the movement and their policy objectives, which he supported through traditional conservative-friendly policies, administration and judicial appointments, intervention in the courts, congressional legislation, and liberal use of the bully pulpit. He endorsed Christian conservatives’ participation in politics, embraced Religious Right influence in the Republican Party, and afforded its leadership unequalled access to the White House. The president and members of his administration maintained good relations with prominent Christian conservatives, particularly Jerry Falwell, with whom they appeared with at public engagements, met with in private meetings, and shared copious correspondence, both personal and governmental in nature. The mainstream press as well as fundamentalist and evangelical leaders emphasized these connections in their respective publications and television broadcasts giving the Religious Right a great deal of exposure.

In providing this support, Reagan helped to mainstream the movement and its social agenda, providing his most valuable contribution to their cause – credibility. While he was not able to popularize the Religious Right, or much of its social agenda, with the majority of the American people, he cultivated, in great part through rhetoric, an environment conducive to the values endorsed by its leadership, while helping to legitimize and fuel the intensifying culture war. More broadly, he helped transform discourse in the United States by injecting religion and religious rhetoric into politics on an unprecedented level, regularly referencing God, the Bible, and Scripture, proclaiming 1983 the “Year of the Bible,” and declaring a National Sanctity of Human Life Day in every year of his second term.⁹⁴⁰ That “religious

⁹³⁹ Evans “White Evangelical Protestant Responses to the Civil Rights Movement,” 246.

⁹⁴⁰ Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5018 - Year of the Bible, 1983 (Feb. 3, 1983),” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983*, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 179; Ronald Reagan, “Proclamation 5292 - National Sanctity of Human Life Day, 1985 (Jan. 14, 1985),” *Public Papers*

commitment and theological conservatism have become increasingly important factors in voting behavior,” can also be attributed, in part, to Reagan’s long-term influence on the American zeitgeist.⁹⁴¹

In attempting to advance the Religious Right’s social agenda, Reagan and his administration exerted efforts on several fronts, but prioritized three key issues - tax relief for Christian schools and those who attended them, recriminalizing abortion, and restoring school prayer. All of these, controversial on some level, faced resistance from some combination of public opinion, Congress, the courts, and opposition interest groups. Disagreement within the movement itself only served to add an additional obstacle. Ultimately, these forces proved too strong to overcome. Despite sincere efforts over the course of his presidency, these three goals had yet to be achieved when Reagan’s second term ended in January 1989. Still, inroads had been made, significantly the passage of equal access and silent prayer legislation, and the Hyde Amendments restricting federal funding of abortion. More importantly, Reagan elevated, in rhetoric and in policy, these issues, and others associated with traditional conservatives and the Religious Right, to a place of prominence, if not always equality, with those of libertarians. By the end of his presidency, the moral agenda had become fused with that of the conservative movement and, by extension, the Republican Party, on both federal and state levels. In the process, Reagan helped make “the Republicans a more overtly religious party.”⁹⁴²

By the time Reagan left office on January 20, 1989, Christian conservatives had made great strides. The loose group of organizations and individuals that had emerged at the close of the 1970s, a manifestation of decades long grassroots efforts, was, by the end of the 1980s, a nationally known,

of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1985, vol. I (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986), 39; Stecker, *The Podium, the Pulpit, and the Republicans: How Presidential Candidates use Religious Language in American Political Debate*, 49; Coe and Domke, *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America*, 61 (Note: While it seems commonplace today, prior to 1980, “God bless America” had been used only once in a major national address by Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal); Coe and Domke, “Petitioners or Prophets?,” 317-318.

⁹⁴¹ Hopson and Smith, “Changing Fortunes,” 4-5.

⁹⁴² Hugh Heclo, “The Mixed Legacies of Ronald Reagan.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (December 2008): 30. Pointing to “mounting evidence,” two scholars argued “that public religiosity is a central component of Republican Party strategy.” See Coe and Domke. “Petitioners or Prophets? Presidential Discourse, God, and the Ascendancy of Religious Conservatives,” 325.

influential political force within the GOP, whose message reached, and resonated with, millions of Americans. Moving forward, the movement would evolve in an effort to expand its constituency and strengthen its power within the Republican Party. Part of this evolution included a change in leadership. One of the first, and most visible, changes came with the shuttering of Moral Majority in the summer of 1989. Some observers suggested that its closing was indicative of the Religious Right's waning influence. This was not the first, nor would it be the last prediction of the movement's demise. Kevin Phillips argued that it was "just ratification of a political tide that's come and gone." One evangelical leader, associated with Americans United for Separation of Church and State, declared that "the religious right is wounded (sic) and this is a way for Falwell to cover his tracks." While there was no denying the group's declining membership and fundraising numbers, Falwell demurred, insisting that "The purpose of Moral Majority was to activate the religious right. Our mission has been accomplished."⁹⁴³ Political scientist James L. Guth offered a more perceptive explanation as to why Moral Majority disbanded when he reasoned that "... the organization in some ways was part of the vanguard for the Christian right but a lot of the action has moved into other organizations and other movements now." Falwell, for his part acknowledged this shift, singling out Focus on the Family's James Dobson as a "rising star."⁹⁴⁴ The most significant new group to emerge was Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition.⁹⁴⁵

While the Religious Right accomplished a great deal during Reagan's eight years as president, some, perhaps even many, Christian conservatives failed to appreciate their progress. Having anticipated much greater success, an expectation due, in part, to a lack of political and legal experience, they were disappointed and believed that Republicans had "disregarded their voices and views."⁹⁴⁶ One of these individuals was Pat Robertson, who determined that the only way to achieve the change they sought was to bring it about themselves. By the summer of 1985, the disillusioned televangelist was privately

⁹⁴³ Laura Sessions Stepp "Falwell Says Moral Majority to Be Dissolved," *Washington Post*, June 12, 1989, A11.

⁹⁴⁴ Sessions Stepp "Falwell Says Moral Majority to Be Dissolved," A11.

⁹⁴⁵ For an exploration of the Christian Coalition during the 1990s, see Justin D. Watson, *The Christian Coalition: Dreams of Restoration, Demands for Recognition* (New York: Martin's Press, 1997).

⁹⁴⁶ Mark Shields, "Those Who Voted for Robertson," *Washington Post*, February 16, 1988, A19.

considering a run for the Republican presidential nomination, suggesting that “we have enough votes to run the country.”⁹⁴⁷ Robertson drew support from these disaffected Christian conservatives, chiefly “motivated by cultural and moral values.”⁹⁴⁸ Still, these supporters were largely charismatics and Pentecostals. The Virginia Beach preacher failed to garner widespread support from more traditional evangelical and fundamentalist sects, which was in part a reflection of their deep suspicion of charismatics (and Pentecostals) and their identification with the “gifts of God.”⁹⁴⁹ Falwell, for his part, “hoped that none of our pastors, preachers would run,” but suggested that he supported Robertson’s right to do so. At the same time, he expressed concern, shared by others, that it may bring “harm” to the movement. “We pray for Pat that Pat will have the wisdom to realize that he represents all of us, not just himself,” remarked the Lynchburg preacher who had already committed to backing George Bush.⁹⁵⁰

Beyond church affiliation and the fear of negative fallout, Robertson was also the victim of the growing “sophistication” of the Religious Right, characterized by a less emotional and more pragmatic approach to politics. As such, Christian conservative leaders and their constituents were, consequently, less willing to commit early to any one candidate. Many, including Rev. Jimmy Swaggart, were unsure if Robertson could win the nomination, let alone the general election. Beverly LaHaye, who called herself “a friend” of the candidate, was concerned that Robertson may not be up to the job, given some of his public comments during the campaign. “He better check his sources,” LaHaye remarked, “because it’s coming across as a man who doesn’t really know a lot about what he’s talking about.”⁹⁵¹ Robertson made

⁹⁴⁷ Thomas B. Edsall, “TV Preacher Eyes GOP Nomination,” *Washington Post*, August 19, 1985, A1.

⁹⁴⁸ Mark Shields, “Those Who Voted for Robertson,” A19.

⁹⁴⁹ Dan Morgan, “Evangelicals a Force Divided: Political Involvement, Sophistication ...,” *Washington Post*, March 8, 1988, A1.

⁹⁵⁰ Donald M. Rothberg, “Robertson’s Colleagues are Uneasy,” *Washington Post*, August 30, 1986, B6.

⁹⁵¹ Dan Morgan, “Evangelicals a Force Divided: Political Involvement, Sophistication ...,” A1; Donald M. Rothberg, “Robertson’s Colleagues are Uneasy,” B6.

an impressive showing in the Iowa caucus, placing second, but fared poorly after that, suspending his campaign in early April.⁹⁵²

Most Christian conservatives ended up supporting Vice President George Bush who went on to win the nomination and the White House. One evangelical minister remarked that “He wasn’t our first preference, but we’re satisfied with his platform, if he’s committed to it.”⁹⁵³ As it was, social conservatives played a leading role in shaping the party platform. Centred around “family values,” it opposed federal funding of abortion, supported “a human life amendment to the Constitution,” and called for “legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children.” It also supported voluntary prayer in school and tuition tax credits for parents of children attending private school.⁹⁵⁴ Despite this Religious Right friendly platform and their support in the election, the movement was not a visible presence in Bush’s administration. And it was the more moderate Billy Graham, not Jerry Falwell or James Dobson, that led a prayer at the inauguration and sat at the head table at the prayer breakfast.⁹⁵⁵

Robertson may have lost his bid for the presidency, but he did not see his endeavor as a failure. “Out of the seeming defeat of my campaign and the demise of what had been called the Moral Majority came an extremely effective force,” Robertson explained, “which I believe is the wave of the future, and which is toppling historic liberalism and will bring about a conservative era in the United States.”⁹⁵⁶ He founded Christian Coalition, “built from the ashes of Moral Majority,” and helped initiate, or perhaps more

⁹⁵² David E. Rosenbaum, “Robertson Ends Active Campaigning: Republican nomination is conceded to Bush,” *New York Times*, April 7, 1988, D23.

⁹⁵³ Julie Johnson, “Showing by Robertson in Iowa Race Buys Conservatives,” *New York Times*, Feb 12, 1988, B24; Howard LaFranchi, “Deep doubts about Bush surface among GOP conservatives,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, June 13, 1988, 3

⁹⁵⁴ 1988 Republican Party Platform, August 16, 1988, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1988>; On conservative influence re: Republican Party platform, see Donald L. Rheem, “GOP platform process 'open,' but Bush controls,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Aug 12, 1988, 3.

⁹⁵⁵ Colman McCarthy, “On Piety from The Presidential Pulpit,” *Washington Post*, February 12, 1989, F2.

⁹⁵⁶ Pat Robertson quoted in Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 298.

accurately, refine and accelerate, a shift in the movement's strategy.⁹⁵⁷ In the 1960s and 1970s, conservatives fought a battle with the moderate establishment for control of the Republican Party. The 1990s and beyond would see a similar struggle between social conservatives and classical liberals to determine which school of thought would shape the party moving forward.

While Reagan had embraced the idea of fusion and brought the Religious Right into the GOP, which adopted much of the moral agenda, the more moderate and libertarian-leaning establishment resented, and resisted, their influence. Republican strategists had always been reluctant "to criticize the Christian right movement publicly," but "privately" they were determined to keep "the conservative Christian vote as a reliable but subservient part of the Republican coalition..."⁹⁵⁸ Faced with this opposition, Christian Coalition's Executive Director, former secular political activist Ralph Reed, suggested that the movement's primary objective was "to take over the GOP from the bottom up." To accomplish this, they looked to harness "the growing sophistication and savvy of millions of Americans, operating primarily at the grass-roots level, to bring moral solutions to social problems."⁹⁵⁹ Christian Coalition provided training for grassroots organizers and political candidates. They developed a strategy for "taking over" local Republican Party organizations using only a handful of strategically placed people, eventually applying the same tactics on the state and federal levels.⁹⁶⁰ Paul Weyrich credited Robertson with recognizing that "if you want to have an influence on politics in this country, then elect people at the local level. Grow the movement from the bottom-up. Don't worry about the presidency," he added – "the presidency will take care of itself."⁹⁶¹

⁹⁵⁷ David Mutch, "A Co-founder's Look at the Christian Coalition," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Aug 19, 1996, 15

⁹⁵⁸ Thomas B. Edsall, "TV Preacher Eyes GOP Nomination," A1.

⁹⁵⁹ Mutch, "A Co-founder's Look at the Christian Coalition," 15; Ralph Reed quoted in Conger, *The Christian Right in Republican State Politics*, 2. Pat Robertson declared that "the group would try to take control from what he called the inside-the-Beltway Republican operatives." See Gustav Niebuhr, "Christian Coalition Vows to Exert More Influence," *New York Times*, Nov 7, 1996, B4.

⁹⁶⁰ Paul R. Wieck, "Family Values and Negative Campaigning," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 4, 1992, 19.

⁹⁶¹ Paul Weyrich quoted in Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 308.

By the time of the next presidential election in 1992, Christian Coalition had “seized control of the GOP political apparatus in several states.” On the national level, the movement’s influence was on clear display in each of the nominee’s platforms, which all emphasized “family values,” and the party platform, which included a ban on abortion and all related federal funding, as well as support for school prayer and tuition tax credits/vouchers.⁹⁶² The party convention’s “family values” message took on a “mean spirited and intolerant” tone with speeches by individuals, principally Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan, which demonized “homosexuals, feminists, welfare recipients and women who identify with Hillary Clinton.”⁹⁶³ Indeed, moderates were so troubled by the convention message and “Bush’s alliance with the Christian evangelical movement,” particularly his pro-life position on abortion, which they viewed “as a political concession to pressure from the Christian Coalition,” that some admitted that “they may have to vote for Clinton.”⁹⁶⁴ When Bill Clinton defeated George Bush, “large segments” of the party blamed “the hardline social message” espoused by the likes of Pat Robertson, Jesse Helms, and Pat Buchanan, which they suggested “may push the GOP too far to the right in the eyes of the voting public.” Ralph Reed argued that the election had been about the economy, while pointing out that Bush’s “social platform” was no different than Reagan’s.⁹⁶⁵ Despite losing the White House, “hundreds of politically conservative religious fundamentalists” were elected to office in state and local elections across the country. However, many of these candidates were accused of running “covert candidates” and “stealth campaigns” because

⁹⁶² Paul R. Wieck, “Family Values and Negative Campaigning,” 19; Alessandra Stanley, “Many Delegates See an Immoral and Scary America,” *New York Times*, Aug 20, 1992, A17; 1992 Republican Party Platform, August 17, 1992, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1992>.

⁹⁶³ Timothy Egan, “Oregon G.O.P. Faces Schism Over Agenda of Christian Right,” *New York Times*, Nov 14, 1992, 6.

⁹⁶⁴ “Can the ‘Conservative’ Bush Hold Onto GOP Moderates?,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 20, 1992, 19.

⁹⁶⁵ John Dillin, “GOP Peers into Post-Election Looking Glass,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 12, 1992,

they failed to share their true agendas on several social issues including prayer, abortion, creationism, and women's rights.⁹⁶⁶

Moderate Republicans, who had been disturbed by the nature of the 1992 convention but convinced that “the incendiary and exclusionary rhetoric” would be replaced with a more centrist message, were proved wrong. “The Christian Coalition ... has” in the words of one journalist, “emerged a powerful phoenix...” and the party has been described as one in “which many are fearful of alienating the religious right and equally fearful of embracing them.”⁹⁶⁷ The chairman of the Oregon Republican Party, Craig L. Berkman, lamented that “I can't tell you how many people deserted this party in the last election.” Adding, “We have simply got to take the party back from the mean-spirited, intolerant people who want to inject big government into people's personal lives.”⁹⁶⁸ As the clash between the two wings of the party “over whether social issues will form a central part of the Republican message” intensified, moderates responded by forming the Republican Majority Coalition (RMC) in late December 1992-early January 1993. The organization engaged in “a heated duel in grassroots organizing” against Christian Coalition. But it was an uphill battle for the fledgling group. Robertson's operation was already well-established and had the advantage in terms of membership and finances.⁹⁶⁹ Resistance also came from more moderate and liberal Christians, who formed the Interfaith Alliance in the summer of 1994 as a counterweight to the disproportionate influence wielded by the Religious Right. When Colorado established a chapter in 1998, its chairman, Rev. Michael Carrier, explained that “For close to twenty years now, the religious right ...

⁹⁶⁶ “‘Stealth’ Candidates in American Politics,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 2, 1992, 19; Seth Mydans, “Evangelicals Gain with Covert Candidates,” *New York Times*, October 27, 1992, A1; Seth Mydans, “Christian Conservatives Counting Hundreds of Gains in Local Votes,” *New York Times*, Nov 21, 1992, 1.

⁹⁶⁷ Anna Quindlen, “What They Stand For: The G.O.P. and the religious right,” *New York Times*, July 6, 1994, A19.

⁹⁶⁸ Egan, “Oregon G.O.P. Faces Schism Over Agenda of Christian Right,” 6.

⁹⁶⁹ Max Boot, “GOP Wages War at Grass Roots,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 5, 1993, 3; also see R.W. Apple, “Republicans Form Group to Regain Centrist Votes.” *New York Times*, December 16, 1992, A24.

has pretty much been the group that weighed in on political issues as they relate to religious life. But,' he made clear, 'it does not speak for all Christians, nor does it speak for all people of faith.'"⁹⁷⁰

Christian Coalition also moved to "broaden its agenda beyond traditional – and often divisive - social issues." In an attempt to widen its appeal and "dispel the image that they are a band of moral extremists concerned about only a few issues," the organization began to talk about subjects such as taxes and term limits.⁹⁷¹ It also made efforts to expand its base through appeals, centred around the traditional family, to conservative Catholics and Jews who shared similar positions on issues such as "abortion, homosexuality, and ... school choice."⁹⁷² Over time, the movement also learned "how to work with candidates who aren't 100 percent on their issues," observed Mark Rozell, a policy and governance scholar.⁹⁷³ This accommodation was most controversial when it came to the subject of abortion, which saw Republicans split nearly down the middle. An inter-party survey revealed that 48% of respondents were pro-life, while 43% said that they supported abortion rights.⁹⁷⁴ Ralph Reed was, perhaps, the most astute when it came to incorporating an element of pragmatism, without abandoning the broader objectives, in his approach to politics, earning him backlash from some of the more rigid elements within the Religious Right.

Speaking to their grassroots success, Paul Weyrich remarked that "We have lots of friends now on city councils and county boards and school boards and in state legislatures - something we never had before."⁹⁷⁵ In fact, by the mid-1990s, Christian Coalition wielded "substantial influence" in more than half of all state Republican organizations, eighteen of which were judged to be basically controlled by the

⁹⁷⁰ Richard L. Berke, "Mainstream Religions to Form 'Alternate' Lobby, *New York Times*, July 14, 1994, D23; Jillian Lloyd, "Rocky Mountain Backlash Against the Religious Right," *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 11, 1998, 3.

⁹⁷¹ Scott Armstrong, "Religious Right Seeks to Cast A Wider Net, Extend Agenda," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 14, 1993, 1.

⁹⁷² Linda Feldmann, "Christian Coalition Proselytizes Blacks, Catholics, and Jews," *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 11, 1995, 3 (Much like Falwell, though, Robertson had difficulty appealing to Jews, as he and his organization also faced charges of anti-Semitism).

⁹⁷³ Paul Rozell quoted in Linda Feldmann, "United States: Abortion Litmus Test Eases for GOP Candidates," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 7, 1997, 3.

⁹⁷⁴ Richard L. Berke, "G.O.P. Plays Down 'Ideas' Survey, Finding Some Are Divisive," *New York Times*, Mar 23, 1994, A22.

⁹⁷⁵ Paul Weyrich quoted in Martin, *With God on Our Side*, 308.

Religious Right.⁹⁷⁶ The movement was also instrumental in helping the GOP retake the House and the Senate in the 1994 midterm election and in securing Bob Dole the party nomination in 1996, while in the process further shifting “the South towards the Republican Party.”⁹⁷⁷ Suggesting that “our movement is now in many ways thoroughly integrated and enmeshed into the machinery of the Republican Party,” Ralph Reed referred to Christian conservatives as a “lynchpin” in the GOP coalition, with about 1/4 to 1/3 of the population’s support. Despite Pat Robertson’s earlier boast that they had “enough votes to run the country,” Reed acknowledged that “we cannot govern by ourselves. We do not have a majority.”⁹⁷⁸ Still, if the Religious Right was not powerful enough to “govern” on their own, most observers agreed that they had “become a permanent fixture in the calculus of Republican political strategists.”⁹⁷⁹ And while the Religious Right’s political “fortunes” have “ebbed and flowed” (its demise has been predicted on more than one occasion) since its inception in 1979, the movement has remained “a part of the political landscape,” and research has shown that “its basic political ideas ... continue to guide the political choices of millions of American voters.”⁹⁸⁰

⁹⁷⁶ Hopson and Smith, “Changing Fortunes,” 5.

⁹⁷⁷ Mutch, “A Co-founder's Look at the Christian Coalition,” 15.

⁹⁷⁸ “Reed on His Life and the Christian Right,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 8, 1995, 10; Edsall, “TV Preacher Eyes GOP Nomination,” A1.

⁹⁷⁹ Conger, *The Christian Right in Republican State Politics*, 1-2.

⁹⁸⁰ Conger, *The Christian Right in Republican State Politics*, 1.

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